

Zionism And History

Reading the wrong lessons
from the persecution of the
European Jews

Michael Levine

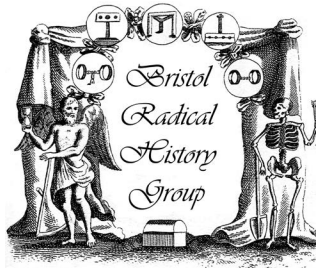
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the persecution of the European Jews

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The argument put forward in this essay is my own. However, this has been a long journey and many friends have given me advice and encouragement along the way, mainly concerning presentation and also concerning some of the details of the historical account.

Introduction

This book is about nationalist ideology and history. It is particularly concerned with Zionist ideology and its deep roots in a collective Jewish memory of persecution. This is not only a memory of modern European disasters but stretches back through history from biblical times through the Crusades and the massacres that accompanied them and on to include the Nazi Holocaust. The founders of Zionism attributed these persecutions to the fact that the Jews did not have a country of their own.

The undeniable history of past persecution is used by the leading politicians in the State of Israel to justify the claim that they are therefore entitled to continue taking Palestinian land away from its inhabitants in the present.

The Israelis say that the creation of the Jewish state has at last brought to an end the cycle of persecution and they discount the price paid by the Palestinians as being small in comparison. For this reason, Zionists demand unquestioning support of Israel. Criticism of Israeli policy frequently evokes charges of antisemitism and if this comes from Jews they are dismissed as self-hating Jews or traitors. Reasonable debate with supporters of Zionism becomes impossible.

The Palestinians don't see it this way and remain opposed to the continuing encroachment on their land. This impasse is a major obstacle to be overcome if there is to be any hope of real peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. Thus, the memory of Jewish persecutions in Europe is an obstacle standing in the way of peace between Israeli Jews and Palestinians in the Middle East. The account of these persecutions given in this essay also contains a warning from history about how things can go wrong and have done repeatedly in the past. There is a very real danger that the continuing dispossession of Palestinian land will leave a long-lasting legacy of antagonism against Jews in the Middle East, where it didn't exist before. In the event of some future shift in the power relations in the region, this could rebound on the Israeli Jews.

Israeli politicians show foreign dignitaries around the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and explain that it couldn't happen again because Israel is there to protect the Jews. However, the same politicians find it necessary to demand, and get, huge amounts of American military aid and diplomatic support. It is obviously true that an anti-Jewish fascist party could not gain power in Israel while the Jews are in the majority. It is also true that Israel can invite threatened Jews to migrate there. However, could Israel actually prevent another persecution of Jews happening ever again, at some point in

the future? What if the Americans changed their view about their interests and Israel got sucked into some future war in the region.

More generally, for which of the causes of past Jewish persecutions does the existence of the Jewish state constitute a remedy? In other words, the message of history is not so simple.

It seems that a more detailed approach to the history of Jewish persecution, and the conclusions that Zionists draw from history, is required. My reading of that history has led me to a different understanding of the lessons that we should learn from it. This extended essay is an account of that journey. My main motivation in writing it is to help in some small way, by changing the terms of the debate between supporters of Zionism and its critics. It is hard to find a balanced critique of the way that Zionists co-opt the history of Jewish persecution to stifle debate and bolster their claims to the land, although there are many articles and books with information upon which such a critique could be based. This short book aims to fill that gap in a concise and accessible way. It is meant to provide an alternative, more thorough-going, historical analysis. It covers the history of the persecutions of the Jews in Christian Europe and also the modern history of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel and its relations with the Palestinians and the Arab states.

Whether in two states or one, peace would necessarily require major changes with regard to land and rights. This would need seismic changes in the ideology of the main parties in the governing coalition in Israel and also of those Palestinian groups wishing to recover the whole of the territory between the Jordan and the sea. Apart from its importance in regard to the relationship between the Israeli government and the Palestinians, it is also a key issue generally for peace in the Middle East.

The populations of Israelis and Palestinians are there, and most of them were not born at the time of the creation of the State of Israel. The past cannot be completely undone without a further major human catastrophe. A reasonable person would hope that, even at this late stage, some way would be found to avoid further bloodshed, so that both populations could live safely and at peace with each other, both externally and internally.

1. Overview of the main themes to be discussed in this essay

1.1. The Zionist movement: origins and prospects

There is no doubt that the European Jews were subject to persistent antisemitism over long periods and that they did suffer horrific violent persecutions and expulsions, especially in the middle of the 20th century.

The modern Zionist movement had its origin in the ideas first formulated by Leon Pinsker and Theodor Herzl. Pinsker wrote in response to the anti-Jewish riots (pogroms) in Russia in 1881, which followed the assassination of the Tsar. Herzl wrote in response to the antisemitic furore in France in 1894, occasioned by the trial of Dreyfus, a Jewish captain in the French army. Alfred Dreyfus was falsely charged with spying. He was convicted and sent to the prison colony on Devils Island. Subsequently he was proved to be innocent and released after several years.

The founders of Zionism maintained that the different Jewish persecutions could be explained by a single cause. They believed that the cause of the past persecutions could be attributed to a generalized tendency of the Gentiles to hate Jews, seen as an ahistorical 'thing in itself', a kind of unanalysable psychopathology, an unalterable natural force. It would never go away and will one day threaten Jews again with violent attacks from the people amongst whom they were living.

Pinsker said:

Judeophobia is a psychic aberration. As a psychic aberration it is hereditary, and as a disease transmitted for two thousand years it is incurable¹

Herzl said:

We have honestly endeavoured everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow-citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers and often by those whose ancestors

1 Leon Pinsker 'Auto-Emancipation: an appeal to his people by a Russian Jew.' 1882

were not yet domiciled in the land where Jews had already had experience of suffering.²

This analysis led to the idea that the Jews could be protected only through their possession of a 'Jewish State', in which Jews had dominant power.

Herzl and Pinsker sought to start a renaissance in Jewish life based upon the creation of a homeland for the Jews. This was a departure from the ancient religious Jewish vision of the recreation of the Kingdom of David, which was only to happen after the coming of the Messiah. The new Zionist movement, which Herzl founded in 1897, sought to replace this with an explicit intention to start on the state building project now, rather than in the indefinite future.

This movement only received mass support from world Jewry after the murder of the European Jews by the Nazis. The Holocaust dominates Jewish consciousness and the difficulty of explaining why it occurred means that people grasp hold of the idea of an untreatable psychopathology of Gentile society. This idea is Herzl and Pinsker's legacy and their argument still underlies modern Zionist thought, particularly among the supporters of the Likud party governing in Israel at the time of writing. It is even more powerful today than in their time, both in Israel and among Jews elsewhere. A consequence is that many Jews firmly believe that history teaches us that only the existence of a state where effective power rests overwhelmingly with Jews can ensure that such persecutions never happen again. The consequence of this insistence on dominance is to exclude, in principle, any lasting peace agreement between Israeli Jews and Palestinians.

There are two questions I set out to answer in regard to the modern Zionist programme.

1. Do the facts of history support Pinsker's interpretation of the cause of the Jewish persecutions?
2. Has the creation of the State of Israel changed the situation of the Jews and their future prospects in the way that Zionists claimed it would?

The first question, about historical interpretation, is the subject of chapters 2, 3 and 4 below. The emphasis is on factors relevant to Jewish persecution and the historical circumstances surrounding each of the major violent persecutions and expulsions that took place, at different times, in various European countries. The second question is dealt with in chapters 5 and 6, where the development of the modern Zionist movement and its subsequent relations with the Palestinians are discussed.

2 Theodore Herzl 'The Jewish State' (1896)

It is the main thesis of this essay that the historical evidence does not support a simplistic explanation of the persecution of the Jews. Antisemitism did exist in the past, as it does now, but this does not in itself provide an adequate explanation for why the violent attacks occurred *where* and *when* they did. Each case was different and requires a particular explanation, but there are three main features which must be discussed:

1. Different social and economic relations during the long centuries when the Jews flourished as distinct minorities in spite of religious and social tensions, protected by the rulers because some Jews were useful to them.
2. Changes in economic and political circumstances in the wider society which triggered persecution.
3. Crucially, failure of the alliances between the state and the Jews, resulting either in direct persecution by the state or the failure of the state to afford protection to Jews.

The relation between Jewish history and the course of general European history may be unfamiliar to some readers. So this discussion of the sequence of past Jewish persecutions, which relates their occurrence to the complex and turbulent background of European history, is worth presenting with considerable accompanying historical detail.

It might be said that trying to explain why people attacked Jews could be seen as justification of those attacks. This is certainly the way in which history has been used by antisemites, for instance by the Nazis. However, trying to understand the causes of past tragedies does not in any way imply justification. On the contrary, only by understanding the causes of racial persecution can one try to prevent it happening.

In regard to the second question, whether the existence of the State of Israel has changed the prospects of the Jews, the present dispute between Israel and the Palestinians is not well understood either. Nor are the implications for possible future disasters for the Israeli Jews generally appreciated.

Now, nearly 70 years after the State of Israel was established, we are in a better position to assess the progress of the Zionist enterprise. As it has transpired, there is still no genuine peace with the Palestinians. The Israeli army still dominates the West Bank. Gaza is under siege. Israel is still officially in a state of war with some of the Middle Eastern states. In spite of having an independent country, the Israeli Jews live in a condition of existential insecurity and, paradoxically, rather than Israel guaranteeing the safety of Jews in the diaspora, the Jews of America and Europe are relied upon to exert their influence on American politicians.

Consideration of the historical evidence reveals striking parallels between the present position of the Jews in Israel and the situations in which Jews have found themselves during the last 1000 years in Europe. It seems that the Jewish state has reproduced something resembling the age-old pattern, albeit in a new different form. An obvious difference is that the Israeli Jews possess a more powerful army than any other state in the Middle East. What is similar, is that they depend also, as they did in the past, on the support of a superior power. At some point in the future, power relations in the Middle East could shift. The Israeli Jews could find that the bitter legacy of the unequal relationship between themselves and the Palestinians rebounds on them. This puts into perspective any Zionist claim that the Jews have now escaped their catastrophic history by having a separate nation state of their own, in which they are in the majority. The conclusion is that Israel has a vital interest in achieving an agreement about land and human rights with the Palestinians. Linked to this, Israel's long-term security is also clearly at risk, due to the general state of chaos in the rest of the Middle East.

The Middle East is in a highly unstable state and no one can predict the outcome of the present turmoil. The current horrific Iraqi and Syrian civil wars indicate how all this could go out of control as different outsiders get involved. Israel could well get sucked into these wars, which might bring immense destruction to both Palestinians and Israelis. Jewish nationalism is not necessarily the remedy for antisemitism, is oppressive for the Palestinians and indeed may also pose great dangers for the people of Israel. The enmity of the Palestinians is evidently not to be explained by some ancient and unanalysable 'Jew Hatred'. It is of recent origin. It is specifically due to the modern dispossession of the Palestinians. Before that, Jews had lived for centuries in the Middle East and North Africa. A peaceful resolution of the conflict becomes ever more urgent, either in the form of one state with equal rights for all or two states side by side.

Many people have written about the injustices visited upon the Palestinians³. Unfortunately, the Zionist state takes no notice. This essay approaches the problem from a somewhat different angle. It is mainly about the credibility of the Zionist program itself as a way of achieving its main purpose, as outlined by Herzl, i.e. the ending of Jewish persecution. It is a critique 'from inside', so to speak. I do not propose any certain way of preventing persecution of Jews in the future but this essay calls into question

3 Other books which aim to expose the 'Myths of Zionism' are important, but do not deal comprehensively enough with the way in which European history is used in support of Zionist ideology. Many of these books tend rather to concentrate mainly on details of the more modern history of the struggle between Arabs and Jews for control of the land.

the Zionist solution and, in particular, the politics of those right-wing nationalists at present in control of Israeli policy. The Likud party led by Binyamin Netanyahu pursues an uncompromisingly nationalist program, based upon an ideology which combines a national sense of historical victimhood with a reliance on military force, rather than negotiation, to settle all problems with the Palestinians.

Whatever view one takes, whatever one thinks of the morality or wisdom of the Zionist plan to create a Jewish state in Palestine, we cannot simply ignore the history upon which the Zionists base their claim. The question, however, is whether their use of this history stands up to examination? On the one hand we have to face the chilling, undeniable fact, that those who disagreed with Herzl and Pinsker and stayed in Western and Eastern Europe, opposing emigration because they saw acceptance of the Jew coming from the gradual liberalisation of society or from socialist revolution (e.g. the Jewish Bund), nearly all perished. This is the central event in modern Jewish history. The revelations of the death camps, many of whose survivors ended up in Palestine, clearly had a major part in eliciting international support for the creation of the Israeli state in 1948, not least among the Jewish Diaspora. However, on the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the creation of the Jewish state entailed the dispossession and expulsion of the Palestinians who became refugees. This is the central event in their history. How are we to balance these two claims on the land?

What this essay is not doing is questioning the right of Israelis and Palestinians to continue to live in the territory that at present comprises Israel and Palestine. It raises questions about the consequences of continuing the conflict between them, about human rights and possession of land. Does history present an insuperable barrier between the two groups? Can the Israelis make enough concessions to the Palestinians to achieve some mutually acceptable agreement? Can further bloodshed be avoided or are they destined for a further human catastrophe?

Could the Jews have followed a different path? That is uncertain. Can the Jews of the world follow a different path in the future? I think the answer is yes. A successful modern industrial state has been established in Israel. The question is what kind of state should it be, one in which Jewish nationalism dominates or one in which all the people who live there will be equal? In modern industrial states, religion is not an essential pillar of state power. In Israel, if the pressure of a continual state of war with their neighbours could be removed, there is every possibility that a modern state could emerge, in which all the diverse populations including Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian), could live together.

Together with many of my generation, as a Jewish teenager in the 1950s, I was convinced of the Zionist cause. A major attraction for me was the opportunity to be part of the idealistic utopian socialism of the kibbutz. Especially after the Nazi Holocaust, Jewish attachment to the idea of a Jewish state seemed right. The scenes that confronted the first liberators of the camps sent shocks throughout the world⁴. On the left, Zionist Socialism was viewed as a respectable progressive movement, not only among Jews but also by many non-Jews.

The plight of the Arab refugees was not discussed. It was only following a visit to Israel, a few years after the 1956 war, that my eyes were opened to the military aspect of the enterprise. The Arabs had not simply fled voluntarily in 1948 to make way for the Arab armies to drive the Jews out. They had been forcibly expelled by the Zionist forces. I became aware that even before 1948, the creation of the kibbutzim entailed dispossession of Arabs. The land was bought from Arab landlords and tenant farmers had to be driven off. This seemed incompatible with my youthful idealism. I eventually abandoned involvement in the Zionist movement.

For many years subsequently I had a simple, rather detached, understanding of the Israel/Palestine problem. A historic injustice had been committed which could not be entirely reversed without further human catastrophe. There were reasonable people on both sides who would patch up some sort of imperfect but acceptable compromise with equal treatment for all inhabitants leading to fading of ethnic conflict. However, in later years (after the assassination of Rabin and the first and second Intifadas and the first Gulf War) it became apparent to me that there were also people on both sides with the power to frustrate any agreement and who were succeeding in doing so, in an escalating pattern of mutual violence.

The spectacle of young Jewish soldiers, sheltering behind steel and concrete fortifications, shooting stone throwing Arab children in the head, or air strikes on homes in Gaza, killing people within, is unbearable. Apart from those who support such things because they believe God promised the land to the Jews three thousand years ago, how could I account for the fact that many Jews, and others that I knew, justified and supported this? I am sure that the very same people were horrified by the Bloody Sunday killings in Ireland, the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam, the revelations of torture in Abu Ghraib and the gassing of civilians in Syria. It is common to find normally liberal Jewish people suppressing their doubts and opting for 'my country right or wrong'. The reason seems to be the powerful influence of Herzl and Pinsker's ideas about the persecution of the Jews, which still resonate today.

4 'Witness to Evil: Bergen Belsen 1945' Isaac Levy (1995) Peter Halban Publishers, London

1.2. The historical account: The long centuries of Jewish history

The focus of the history recounted in this essay is on persecutions of Jews in Christian Europe⁵. The emphasis is on factors relevant to Jewish persecution and the historical circumstances surrounding each of the major violent persecutions and expulsions that took place, at different times, in various European countries. We find, on reading the history that, preceding each of these disasters, Jews had lived for a long time as a separate protected alien minority, in comparative peace with the majority because some Jews made themselves useful to the rulers. While they were subject to prejudice and discrimination, they were tolerated, in spite of the fact that they rejected Christianity, even at times when other religious dissenters were being suppressed violently. In section 1.3, I discuss some of these long-term causes of anti-Jewish prejudice which operated across the different historical periods.

There was a cyclical pattern consisting of long periods of more or less peaceful interaction between Jews and the host communities, interrupted by upheavals. The important question is, why did the different attacks on the Jews occur when and where they did? While religious rivalry between Christians and Jews, and a consequent hostility to the Jews as 'the strangers

5 In the Biblical period conflict between Jews and others was of a national character as the people living in Palestine came into conflict with their neighbours and with the ancient empires. These conflicts were quite different to those later persecutions in Europe, although there is a tendency among some to conflate them. Jews existed in all parts of the Babylonian, Greek and Roman empires with large communities in the cities and as farmers in the countryside. Their numbers increased rapidly, probably through a combination of conversion and intermarriage. Their religion was allowed. Before the Jewish Revolt was put down and the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E., they were not compelled to worship the statues of the Roman emperors as long as they offered sacrifices in the Temple for the Roman Emperor and the Roman people. After the Temple was destroyed, they continued to live in Palestine and in the rest of the Roman Empire. They were allowed to carry on with their religion as long as they paid the Temple tax directly to the Emperor, instead of to the Jerusalem Temple authorities. In contrast, before Constantine, Christianity was persecuted. The Jews were competing directly for converts and were often more successful than the Christians who were, after all, an underground sect until Constantine made Christianity the religion of his empire in 313 C.E. After that the Christians gained the upper hand in that empire. Later, Jews lived in Byzantium, the Arab Caliphates and what later became the Ottoman Empire. In Spain, the Jews flourished in that part ruled by the Muslim Umayyad Dynasty between the 9th and 11th centuries. There was much cross fertilisation of cultures. With the subsequent coming to power of more religiously intolerant Muslim regimes in this part of Spain, there was hostility towards Jews and they migrated to the Christian parts of Spain. There they again flourished, existing at all levels of society.

within the gates', was a necessary part of the cause, it is itself not a sufficient explanation. In the first place the particular social and economic position of the Jews varied from one epoch to another as did the inter-communal tensions. It required particular triggers, usually a change in the economic or political circumstances in the wider society and also, crucially, the failure of a king or prince to afford protection to the Jews. Each instance is different. Thus, the pogroms during the Crusades were carried out by the armies on their way to Jerusalem and those during the Plague took place during the panic of a generalized social collapse. In England and Spain internal social and political changes in the wider society led to expulsion of the Jews. In Poland, the disasters which befell the Jews followed invasion of the country by external powers, both in the late eighteenth century and later by the Nazis in the twentieth.

Thus, in this essay, the account of Jewish persecution is divided into different sections as follows:

- a. During the 1st Crusade, attacks on the Jews occurred in the Rhine and Rhone valleys as the armies passed on their way to Palestine in 1086. (See sections 2.1, 2.2)
- b. Jews were invited into England in 1066. A wave of massacres took place in 1189 and 1190. Jews were expelled from England in 1290 (See sections 2.3, 2.4)
- c. During the Black Death in 1348 there were widespread massacres of Jews in Europe. (See section 2.5)
- d. Jews flourished in Christian Spain and there was much cultural interaction with the wider society from the 11th century on, only interrupted by the Black Death of 1348 and pogroms in 1391. Eventually, in 1492 the Jews of Spain were given the choice of conversion to Christianity or immediate expulsion. In the event the converted Jews were pursued by the Spanish Inquisition thereafter. (See section 2.6)
- e. In the 15th and 16th centuries Jews were expelled successively from many towns and principalities in Germany, although they continued to form communities outside the main cities. (See section 2.7)
- f. After the 15th century, the main concentrations of Jewish population were to be found in Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Italy and Holland and also in the Ottoman Empire. By and large they grew and flourished. There was a peasant rebellion in Ukraine in 1648 during which Jews were attacked. Jews were not attacked in Poland and its different partitions or in Lithuania, until the late 19th century. The pogroms which took place between 1880 and 1920 caused a mass migration from there to Western

Europe, including England and also to the Americas and the European colonial empires. (See sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

- g. Most of the Jewish population remaining in those parts of Europe which were occupied by the Nazis during the Second World War was murdered (See sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)

1.3. Analysing the causes of the long history of antisemitism: A proposed framework

The first question we have to deal with is an explanation for the general antagonism towards Jews over long periods of history. This was directed at both rich and poor Jews, merchants, financiers, artisans and unskilled labourers. After that one has to understand why the violent physical attacks occurred when they did.

The culture of antisemitism tends to manifest itself in the form of beliefs about Jews being ‘other and threatening’ and some of these beliefs appear to persist over historical time and in different places. My proposal is that it is possible to account in some sense for the apparent persistence of these cultural beliefs in terms of the changing historical context. The account given in this essay tends to contradict both Pinsker’s assertion that antisemitism can only be discussed in terms of an ahistorical and unanalysable psychopathology and it also contradicts the distortions of history upon which antisemites base their propaganda.

We also have to ask why antisemitic propaganda works? It is not usually true that mobs can be incited to attack anyone at all. There are generally existing tensions which precede actual violence. Opposing religious beliefs are dependent on social institutions for their propagation and social stereotypes are reinforced and recapitulated through economic and political forces. Whatever the precise causal relations were, the fact is that the situation in which the Jews found themselves generated long term tensions between them and the dominant Christian society.

The long-term tensions are a pre-condition for the occurrence of the persecutions of the Jews, which were triggered by particular conjunctions of political and social crises and perpetuated crucially by the failure of the authorities to protect them. All of these factors must be part of any discussion of causes. Concentration on any one of them must lead to an inadequate account. These things are not independent. It is in the interplay between them that we can find explanation.

Christian religious beliefs

As parts of Europe became progressively Christianised, a main cultural source of hostility towards Jews was their opposition to the main tenets of the state religion. In this regard, there are the writings of Christian theologians and their preaching in the churches⁶, rehearsing the founding theme of crucifixion and resurrection and the rejection and betrayal of Jesus by the Jews. The Mystery plays were an annual event and must have made a profound impression⁷.

It is important to note however that attacks in the early Christian writings on those Jews who would not accept the new ideas seem to have been motivated by anti-Judaism (that is, religious and philosophical rivalry). In the beginning this was an internal dispute between different factions of essentially the same cult. These pronouncements against Judaism as an unreformed religion entered into the sacred texts of the Christians. They are studied as a source for antisemitic ideas up to the present ^{8,9}.

The inadequacy of this in explaining why attacks occurred when they did is highlighted by the stated policy of the Catholic Church for much of the European history surveyed in this essay, which was to tolerate the Jews and to eschew forced conversion. This in spite of the fact that Jews were a group who specifically denied the main tenets of the Christian faith. It is instructive to remember that heretical Christian views were not tolerated for long, and up until the 17th century, questions of religious orthodoxy were very often settled violently. Apart from burning heretics at the stake, full-scale war was used, as in the Albigenian Crusade and the Wars of Religion in Germany.

The ‘Blood Libel’

An instructive example of a belief with a long history is the ‘Blood Libel’. It was an accusation of a ritual sacrifice of a human child and the drinking of its blood. It was levelled at the Jews in England in the 12th century and last appeared, as a specifically anti-Jewish phenomenon, in the trial of Mendel

6 Leon Poliakov. ‘A History of Antisemitism Vol 1’ University of Pennsylvania Press (2003).

7 It is clear that, in fact, the situation is rather more complicated than a simple two-sided clash of social groups. Anti-Judaism persisted for centuries in England and in France in the virtual absence of Jews after the expulsions from England in 1290 and France in 1394. For instance, we must assume that the figure of Shylock was a readily apprehended stereotype of the Jew for Shakespeare’s audiences. Anti-Judaism in this case can have had nothing to do with the actual presence of Jews but everything to do with the part Jews played as scapegoats in the sacrificial nature of the Christian story.

8 (e.g. Matthew 23,27.20-25; John 19.1-16)

9 John Chrysostom ‘Eight Homilies Against the Jews’

Beiliss in Russia in 1913, just before the First World War. Norman Cohn¹⁰ gives an illuminating discussion of the general history of this accusation, using written sources from Roman writers onwards.

In fact the Blood Libel was initially used in the persecution of Christians. Some of the classical writers believed that the Eucharist consisted of cannibalistic night time ceremonies in which a child is killed and eaten in obedience to the New Testament injunction about drinking Christ's blood and eating his body. Later, Christians used the same accusation against Christian heretics, a great many of whom were burned alive. Inquisitorial reports relate how torture was used to extract confessions from members of dissident ascetic Christian sects. Obscene ceremonies are described in which the devil is worshipped, sexual orgies take place and children are sacrificed. These accounts were obviously believed (though not perhaps by everyone) and are even repeated in Papal decrees. Similar stories featured again in the witch trials of the 15th to the 17th centuries.

Jewish religious belief and its persistence over long periods

The remarkable persistence of Jewish religious communities, which were distinct from the surrounding Christian population throughout this history, itself requires explanation. Distinct Jewish communities existed in the ancient world and are still numerous and widespread today. Various explanations have been proposed and include the strength of tradition, internally generated social pressures, external pressures and economic necessity.

Some Marxist explanations assign the primary role in the long survival of Judaism to economics^{11,12}. For them the adherence of Jews to a distinct Jewish religion, separate from Christianity, stems from their role in the economy (for instance as financiers and traders). Abram Leon thought that those Jews not engaged in trade or finance simply assimilated to the dominant Christian religious culture over a few generations. However, this may be too simple. It is apparent that religious communities have a way of persisting for centuries after the economic foundations of the societies in which they arose have changed.

The obverse of the Christian desire to exclude Jews was the desire of Jews themselves to remain separate. Which comes first is not clear. This desire for

10 Norman Cohn 'Europe's Inner Demons' Random House UK (1993)

11 Karl Marx 'Der Judenfrage'

12 Abram Leon 'The Jewish Question: A Marxist interpretation' (1980) Pathfinder Press N.Y. Abram Leon wrote this influential book, renouncing his former Zionist affiliation, while working clandestinely in Nazi occupied Belgium. He was arrested and died in Dora concentration camp.

separation was built into Jewish institutional life. Of particular relevance are those parts of Jewish religious belief that have had the function of a unifying ideology, designed to ensure that Jews continued to be a separate 'Jewish People' who, although temporarily without a land of their own, expected one day to return to the land of Palestine (from where their ancestors may or may not have come).

Social cohesion within religious communities is commonly reinforced by frequent everyday rituals, different diet and clothing rules and the prohibition of marriage to someone outside the group. Even today, the idea that a son or daughter could 'marry out' is abhorrent, even among those Jewish parents whose religious involvement is slight. This applied to the relations between Jews and Gentile society, preventing easy social mixing. Pressure from within the family and from the Jewish community made breaking the rules difficult and the threat of excommunication was always there. In the event of an individual's leaving the confines of the Jewish community, existence could become precarious in a stratified feudal society, especially for recent immigrants.

In the ancient empires it was common for the separation of the different religious communities to be legislated for by separately defined individual charters from the rulers. This was still the case for the Jews in 18th and 19th century Russia and Poland. They had a degree of autonomy in running their internal affairs so long as the local headman delivered the required taxes. Racial stereotypes can easily be created when the population in a single place is divided by religion. When language and/or culture are also mutually incomprehensible, then the forces of xenophobia and prejudice are insidious

Religious beliefs, cultural differences and political and economic forces combine in the generation of religious hatred

While it is true that specific details of the different beliefs about religious practices and supernatural worlds *were* important sources of conflict, in fact it is quite clear that the outbreaks of extreme Christian hatred of Jews cannot be explained solely in this way. As well as being transcendental belief systems, both Judaism and Christianity are also social and political movements and it is in the different social and political contexts in which Jews and Gentiles

met that we must look¹³. Whatever the precise causal mechanisms were, the fact is that the situation in which Jews found themselves generated long term tensions between them and the dominant Christian society.

A feature of long enduring hostility towards Jews is the belief that Jews are rich exploiters of Gentiles and this idea seems to have persisted from medieval times to the present. It is clear that a historically based account is necessary. The complicated economic changes in Europe from the medieval period through to the 21st century meant that the position of the Jews also changed.

Clearly, in any economically and socially differentiated society there are intrinsic sources of conflict (e.g. between feudal landlord and serf, merchant and peasant, creditor and debtor or capitalist and proletarian). It is unlikely that the Jews were a single economic category. We cannot tell what the class divisions within the Jewish communities were in the early period but they certainly did exist later on, as feudalism decayed and capitalism eventually developed. Some Jews became financial agents for kings and princes, big traders, bankers etc. Many became doctors, lawyers and professors. However, many were poor artisans, labourers and petty travelling salesmen. It was not then the case that all merchants, moneylenders or capitalists in any country were Jews or that all Jews fitted into one class, so a simple explanation for *generalised* Jew hatred based upon class alone is not adequate

A simple proposal for the way in which religion, culture and economics combine to generate these tensions is that, when, in confrontations between class or status groups, there happened to be some Jews on one side and Gentiles on the other (i.e. when class/status was superimposed upon the religious and

13 The long persistence of the Christian churches in Europe is a separate enquiry. However, one can at least say that Kings and Emperors found Christianity useful and wished to control it, and the Church found the rulers useful and tried to control them. The operation of state power is legitimated and sanctified by priests, from the anointing of Kings to the blessing of troops before a battle. Priests accompanied men to the gallows. The claim for the historical veracity of the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus and his imminent return for the last judgement, was a powerful argument for the preservation of the power of the church and its material possessions. The church claimed to be the only possible mediator between man and God and proclaimed an imaginary cosmic war between good and evil in which the church was the main bulwark against evil. In this way the priests, bishops and theologians appropriated all discussion of morality in everyday life. It is not therefore difficult to understand why religious uniformity was imposed and heresy persecuted. Without constant priestly propaganda, people tend to abandon Christianity with its strange beliefs, which seem incoherent and difficult to grasp. Polytheistic legends can make sense of the circumstances of everyday lives such as the cycle of birth and death and the sequence of the seasons. Animistic ideas attribute will and 'spirits' to things around that move, such as wind and plants and streams. Magic rituals are attractive if they can be used to influence those spirits.

cultural divide), then all Jews, even those not involved in the specific conflict, were drawn in and became objects of hostility and fear. When Jewish traders drove a hard bargain, when Jewish money-lenders insisted on payment, then all Jews became wily and devious exploiters.

A different case was when economic competition occurred between two distinct religious/cultural groups within the same class, say Jewish and Christian merchants or Jewish and Christian artisans or Jewish and Christian labourers, competing in the same marketplace. The large presence of poverty-stricken Jews in the poorer parts of towns and big cities often gave rise to fears of economic competition from among their slum dwelling Gentile neighbours. This all gains plausibility when we observe the same happening in some of the modern inter-ethnic conflicts occurring in large polyglot cities (e.g. Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, poor whites and blacks in America and in South Africa).

In the next chapters, in order to test the usefulness of these ideas as a framework to further understand the historical attacks on Jews, I will discuss each of the main persecutions. In each case I describe the historical events and then the general historical context, and I try to identify the possible economic or other long-term sources of conflict and the particular contingent circumstances in which this conflict became actual persecution. In the penultimate chapter, I discuss the struggles between Zionists and Arabs and, in the last chapter, the implications for current Zionist politics.

It is not possible to encompass the full horror and cruelty of the age long persecution of Jews in a short essay like this and, anyway, I would not presume to attempt it. Therefore, I have confined myself to a rather bare-boned account. I also do not attempt to give a complete account of antisemitism itself, in all its psychological, cultural, religious and philosophical manifestations. While inter-communal violence does indeed reflect the dark side of human nature, especially in the behaviour of crowds, others have written about this and I do not say much about it.

2. 11th to 17th Centuries in Western Europe

2.1. The economic position of Jews in the feudal economy

Many authors have discussed the roots of European antisemitism in terms of the special position of Jews in the feudal economy. It was certainly true, as they point out, that kings relied on Jewish financiers. Access to money was an essential basis for maintaining royal military power over the rest of society and also for financing wars with other powers. The situation of Jewish financiers was specifically arranged so that they themselves could not exert their own independent military power. Their separate religious allegiance helped to ensure their inferior dependent status. Since they were not Christians they could not be integrated into the feudal structure¹⁴ (and for the same reason they could not be members of Guilds). Although some Jews became very wealthy in medieval society, they were in fact legally the property of kings and emperors and under their protection. Under these arrangements Jews *were* subject to humiliating discriminations but, on the other hand, they were not tied to the land of a local landlord, as were the serfs belonging to individual landowners. They had to be able to travel around in order to carry out their function.

Existing as an alien minority, Jews were never the principal contestants in power struggles in society. They were nevertheless, willy-nilly, compelled to make themselves useful to those with the power to protect them. This was often mediated by the few wealthy Jews who had enough influence to negotiate with the rulers¹⁵. Often there were particular formal charters governing the status of the Jews. While the alliances between the different European rulers and the Jews had similar features in the different states during this period, the circumstances surrounding the breakdown of these alliances were generally different in each place. It was when the wider political and socio-economic arrangements changed or were threatened, (e.g. as a result of famine, plague, or war) that Jews found that the alliances that had protected them proved unreliable and they suffered terrible persecutions. Thus the sufferings of the Jews were a function of the wider tragic history of Europe, which has so often been punctuated by wars and catastrophes.

14 This kind of arrangement existed elsewhere. The Ottoman official class and the army were made up of slaves who were completely dependent upon the Sultan. They obtained Christian boys as slaves for this purpose and educated them in the Muslim religion.

15 Eli Lederhendler 'The road to modern Jewish politics' 1989 Oxford University Press, New York, London.

Salo Baron¹⁶ locates a cause of antisemitism in the economic success of Jewish long distance traders. He suggests that Jews had an advantage over other traders of possessing a common language and culture, enabling links which spanned feudal Europe and reached the Arab Mediterranean. According to this theory, the common religion constituted the basis for commonly agreed legal codes between Jews in one region and another. This would facilitate operation of contracts. The ability to make reliable credit agreements would obviate the necessity of transporting actual money over long distances. Post-Temple Judaism may have been an appropriate ideology for the traders. Their god was above those of the people amongst whom they travelled. Their religious practice fostered literacy, which was essential for business, and a feeling of cultural superiority, which was useful in bargaining. However, other traders would have been multilingual and literate and adherents of a common religion (e.g. Christianity).

2.2. The first Crusade: The terrible summer of 1096

The first great shock to Jewish existence in Feudal Europe was a series of attacks and massacres accompanying the first Crusade¹⁷. The Crusades represent an example of the breakdown of the normal social order, which permitted anti-Jewish prejudice to fuel large scale violent attacks. In this case the disorder was brought about by the passage of an army.

The attacks were directed at the Jews settled along the Rhine and Rhone valleys. It seems that the Crusaders on their way to kill infidels in the Holy Land decided to start on the Jewish heretics they encountered before they got there. Large numbers were killed all along the routes taken by the Crusading army. Attacks occurred at Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Cologne, Trier, Metz, Bamberg and Prague (see Map 1). Generally, counts and bishops as well as local citizens tried at first to protect the Jews who served a useful function as traders and financiers. But they were swept aside by the mob. In the later Crusades more massacres occurred, although with fewer victims.

A vivid account of the first Crusade is given in a book by Thomas Asbridge¹⁸. The Crusading armies, travelling through Europe on the way to Jerusalem, consisted of thousands of religious zealots who had been told by Pope Urban II that killing non-Christians was God's work and would save

16 Salo Baron, Arcadius Kahan et al. Ed: Nachum Gross. 'Economic History of the Jews' (1975) Schocken Books. N.Y.

17 Leon Poliakov. 'A History of Antisemitism Vol 1' (2003) University of Pennsylvania Press

18 Thomas Asbridge 'The first Crusade: a new history', 2004 The Free Press: Simon and Schuster UK.



Map 1: Massacre sites of Jews in Europe during the 1st Crusade.

them from eternal damnation in the next world. There was also the advantage that it allowed them to get wealth and territory in this world. Their religion seemed genuinely to enable them to combine a fervent spirituality with extreme violence.

This blend of spirituality with cruelty is illustrated by the conduct of the Crusaders when they besieged cities. It is a tragic irony that Crusaders massacred Christian inhabitants of cities they conquered, as well as Muslims and Jews. Antioch had been a Byzantine city from 969 until 1085, when it was conquered by the Seljuq Turks. A major aim of the Byzantine Emperor in calling for help from the Latin West was to regain Antioch. It was ruled by the Turks but the population consisted of a mixture of Greek, Armenian and Syrian Christians, Arabs and Jews. When Antioch fell to the Crusaders they killed thousands indiscriminately, anyone they could find inside the city. They also carried out a massacre at Jerusalem which resulted in as many as 10,000 deaths. They had been meant to conquer the cities for the Byzantine emperor but in the event they hung on to them, quarrelling among themselves for control.

2.3. The Jews in England: The massacres of 1190 and the expulsion in 1290

The protected status of Jews in medieval England and the eventual breakdown of this was clearly related to the deliberate financial and political decisions of successive kings. William the Conqueror brought some rich Jewish merchants to England in 1066 shortly after the conquest. The Jewish presence in medieval England lasted for two centuries. Jews were expelled from England by Edward I in 1290, by which time there were about 5000 of them.

A series of attacks on Jews at the end of the 12th century stands out. In 1189, at the time of the coronation of Richard I, there was a massacre of Jews in London after two Jews arrived at Westminster Abbey with gifts for the new king. In 1190 there was a massacre at York. The Jews took refuge in Clifford's Tower, the keep of the Norman castle (a later castle keep still exists on the site), and were besieged by the citizens. In the end the tower was set on fire and many of the Jews chose suicide rather than being captured. Their houses were burnt by the crowd, together presumably with their financial records. It is noteworthy that the Jews sought safety in the castle and that, again, the leaders of the mob were punished. Attacks occurred in other towns at around the same time. In Bury St Edmunds 57 Jews were killed and anti-Jewish outrages occurred at Lynn, Stamford, Norwich and Lincoln.

Throughout their settlement in England, some Jews were notable as money-lenders, although records are scarce before the Exchequer of the Jews was established. At the beginning of the period they were important financiers of the king and the Norman barons as well as helping to finance the building of new monasteries and cathedrals. At the end of the period they were more involved in smaller loans to lower levels of society. The interest rates were very high, so as to cover losses through default. Figures of one to two pence in the pound per week are mentioned, which could add up to as much as 43 % per year. At this rate the Jews appeared to have inexhaustible supplies of money and some became very rich. Aaron of Lincoln was known as the richest man in England. The Jews lived rather separate lives within the English towns, although not restricted to ghettos, and they were always outsiders¹⁹.

The main reason given in the older historical literature for the money-lending role of the Jews is that usury was forbidden to Christians but not to Jews²⁰. Actually, lending with interest to co-religionists was forbidden *within* both Jewish and Christian communities but not in financial transactions with outsiders. Therefore, the prohibition against usury did not apply to Jews in their dealings with Christians. Later, this account goes, the requirements of economic development made the practice of financial transactions involving interest payments more and more necessary and acceptable and the presence of Jews became redundant²¹. Their place as financiers was taken by other groups (e.g. Italian bankers, rich monastic foundations). Expulsion of Jews followed but the stereotype of the Jewish usurer persisted as the main image of the Jew for centuries afterwards..

The above account, while accurate as far as it goes, does not really explain the peculiar nature of the Jewish experience. It begs important questions. The Jews were not the only financiers. William Cade was a non-Jewish Flemish money lender in the 12th century whose wealth compared with that of Aaron of Lincoln. The monasteries became very wealthy and also lent money extensively. Even the parish clergy accumulated surplus money and invested it. It is therefore necessary to ask what was special about the Jews' relation to the feudal economy. Why were Jews so prominently associated with finance and money? Why did the attacks in 1189-90 occur when they did and why were the Jews expelled in 1290?

19 Reva Berman Brown and Sean McCartney 'The Internal Exile of Medieval English Jewry' *The Medieval History Journal* (2003) 6: 55-73.

20 Salo Baron 'A Social and Religious History of the Jews' (1967) Vol XII *Economic Catalyst* 1200-1650 Ch. LII Banker.

21 P. Elman 'The Economic Causes of the Expulsion of the Jews in 1290' *The Economic History Review*, 7:145-154 (1937)

Jews were certainly not responsible for introducing a money economy into England. Trade involving money already existed in Anglo-Saxon England before the arrival of the Normans. For instance, the Vikings were traders as well as raiders and exchanged goods for money. There are plenty of Saxon coins in English museums. Large amounts of money were needed by Anglo-Saxon kings, before the Normans, to pay for war and the hiring of mercenaries and also for tribute paid to Viking raiders (Danegeld). The Danish kings Canute, Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut ruled England between 1016 and 1042. They maintained their power with the aid of mercenary troops and paid for them by imposing annual taxes on the value of property (the Heregeld). People had to pay or lose their land, which would pass to whoever had the money to pay the tax.²²

I think that the distinction between Jewish moneylenders and the others lay in their relation to the rule of the Norman and Angevin kings. The Jews were a source of royal finance, independent of the rival baronial factions and with the advantage that they themselves could never constitute a centre of power outside the kings' control, on account of their marginal position in the feudal system. They could not become vassals providing military service to the king or anyone else. Their legal status was that they and their property belonged to the king. The terms on which they could hold the land they acquired through money-lending were restricted. They could only use the income generated while the land was in their possession, until the debts were discharged or acquired by someone else.

The Normans, starting with William the Conqueror, did not simply take over the English social structure as previous invaders did. They purposefully tried to institute a centralised hierarchical state. All the great English landlords were replaced by Normans. The Norman barons held their estates as vassals of the king, who ultimately owned all the land, in return for military services. They had to hold down the country on the king's behalf, to maintain certain numbers of trained knights and to build castles. They in turn handed out fiefs and so on, in a branching set of feudal relations. Unfortunately it did not quite work out as smoothly as this. The Norman barons were continually fighting against the king and amongst themselves as they disputed the right to rule, in both England and Normandy. They also fought against the neighbouring territories in France.

Paradoxically, although the king in principle owned everything, all the Norman kings were in constant need of money to finance frequent military

22 M.K. Lawson 'The Collection of Danegeld and Heregeld in the Reigns of Aethelred II and Cnut'. *The English Historical Review* (1984) 99:721-738.

campaigns^{23,24}. Rewarding knights, hiring mercenaries, building castles and ships, paying ransoms, all of the costs of war had to be paid for with either land or money. In the first phase of the conquest, land and money could be simply appropriated from the conquered population. Thus in 1069 William ordered a search of all the monasteries for the money that had been deposited there for safe keeping by wealthy Anglo-Saxons. Subsequently, in 1086, he ordered a stocktaking of his kingdom, recorded in the Domesday Book, so that he could identify taxable property. Accurate knowledge was doubly necessary as taxes had to be limited by the need to allow agriculture and trade to continue and he had to leave sufficient surplus to the barons so that they could continue their military functions.

It is perhaps here that Jews were particularly useful to the kings. Taxes imposed by the king had to be paid and, if necessary, the money had to be borrowed from whoever could provide it, in spite of high interest rates. Debts were secured on the land or future production of the manors. In the case of Jewish lenders, the king got a share of the profits. The Jews also paid heavy taxes to the king and frequently had to pay very high extra levies when money had to be found in a hurry. This might be for a ransom or a military campaign. When Jews were unable to pay these levies, some of the debts owed to them would be taken by the king. Then, if the debtor defaulted, the land that had been pledged would be forfeit to the king instead of the Jews. Also, when a Jew died, the inheritance belonged to the king, who might take all of it or leave the family enough so that they could carry on in business. Further, as the kings were desperately in need of cash, the debts owed to Jews would be sold and end up in the hands of other landlords and also monasteries, who would buy them up. Thus Jewish money lending became a mechanism for expropriating landowners and generally concentrating the landholdings in the hands of the larger landholders²⁵. All this gave rise to political problems between the barons and between the barons and the knights and also led to grievances against the king and his Jews.

Although Jews were the property of the king, legally his serfs, Jewish financiers lived more like rich Norman nobles than agricultural labourers. They spoke French. They built houses of stone and had a high level of education. Since they were the king's serfs, no one else could interfere with them or extract tolls from them. They were legally free to travel unmolested throughout the kingdom. Yet they had their own strange religion and denied

23 J.O. Prestwich 'War and Finance in the Anglo-Norman State.' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. Fifth Series. (1954) 4: 19-43.

24 Michael Prestwich 'War, Politics and Finance Under Edward I.' (1972) Faber and Faber, London.

25 H.G. Richardson 'The English Jewry Under the Angevin Kings' Chapter V (1960) Methuen

the Christian religion. It is not surprising that Jews could find themselves the targets of hostility among the general population.

In this context it may be possible to obtain further insight concerning the wave of attacks on the Jews of London and elsewhere at the time of the coronation of Richard I in 1189. The coronation riot has most often been explained solely in terms of religious tension i.e. the coronation was a sacred occasion at which Jews were not welcome. This is possibly part of the cause of the massacre. It is apparent from the above discussion that it was in the interest of the King to keep the Jews in a marginal social position, unable to exert independent military or political power, and anti-Jewish prejudice was important in ensuring this. In the inflamed religious fervour surrounding the Crusades it would have been easy to arouse hatred of the population against the Jews.

However, it is also obvious that the appearance of Jews bearing valuable gifts at the coronation of a king was a political act. On assuming power, the medieval English kings were in the habit of issuing their charters, laying out laws by which the kingdom was to be ruled. Jews were subject to special laws, different from those for the rest of the population. Some of these differences, such as freedom to pass around the country without interference, under the kings' protection, would have been seen as preferential. The Jews were clearly at the church to influence the new king. King Richard I only spent a few weeks in England altogether and there was little time to waste. Others present might have feared the outcome and the Norman aristocrats were very warlike and generally solved problems violently.

As another possible explanation of why the wave of attacks on Jews in different towns occurred at this particular time and were rare at other times during the two hundred years of the Jewish settlement, it seems worth noting the coincidence that Aaron of Lincoln died in 1186 shortly before the accession of Richard I and the start of the persecutions. Richard's predecessor, Henry II, had taken possession of all of Aaron's enormous wealth, instead of the more usual one third. A special court had been set up to recover all the debts owed to Aaron. It took 15 years. It seems too much of a coincidence that the different attacks on Jews occurred so soon after this court was established. There would have been no time to waste before the King got his hands on the records. The records of the Jews in York were deposited for safe keeping in York Minster and the rioters broke in and destroyed them. It seems reasonable to assume that this was generally the aim of those who instigated the attacks. (William Malebis, the Percy family and the Bishop of Durham have been cited as culprits by a contemporary, William, canon of the priory of Newburgh.)

After these events, the king took the records of money owed to the Jews safely into his own possession. They were stored in special chests in a number of towns and a special centralised exchequer, the 'Exchequer of the Jews', was set up to supervise all financial exchanges between Jews and Christians.^{26, 27} Thereafter it was not possible to avoid the debts owed to the Jews by murdering them or by destroying their records. This also made the repayment of the debts more enforceable and of course made the levying of taxes on the Jews easier. (Later other official registries of financial transactions were set up for non-Jews to facilitate their legal claims concerning debts.) During his reign (1199-1216), King John was involved successively in wars in Wales, Scotland, and France and he was in frequent need of money. In 1207, in order to finance his wars in Poitou, Normandy and Anjou, King John levied a tax of a tenth of all Jewish bonds. (He also levied a thirteenth on the moveable property of Christian subjects, yielding 60,000 marks). Also in 1210 a demand for a further 60,000 marks from the Jewish community was enforced by arrest and torture. The consequent sale of Jewish bonds again led to division and discontent among the dispossessed barons and was probably a contributing factor in the Magna Carta rebellion²⁸. It is notable that two clauses of the Magna Carta of 1215 contain references to debts owed to Jews (clauses 10 and 11). They deal with what happens if someone dies owing money to Jews. Minors and Widows were to be protected from destitution.

This process of transferring landed property was not a small scale phenomenon. Robert Stacey²⁹ reports estimates that in 1240, at the zenith of their prosperity, the wealth of the Jewish community, in bonds, cash and other valuables, was about 200,000 marks, when the total circulating coinage was about 600,000 marks. By 1258, the rising level of royal taxation of the Jews under King Henry III and then under Edward I had reduced this wealth by half and this was reflected in loss of estates, as the kings sold Jewish debts.

It was the debts of the knights which were most vulnerable to royal appropriation towards the end of the Jews' legal residence in England. This was because the major function of money-lending to the kings and higher

26 P.R. Schofield and N.J. Mayhew (Ed.) 'Credit and Debt in Medieval England c.1180-c.1350' (2002) Oxbow Books, Oxford.

27 Reva Berman Brown and Sean McCartney 'The Exchequer of the Jews Revisited: The Operation and Effect of the Scacciarium Judeorum'. (2005) *The Medieval History Journal*. 8:303

28 Robert C. Stacey. 'The English Jews under Henry III' in 'The Jews in Medieval Britain' Ed: Patricia Skinner (2003) The Boydell Press, Woodbridge.

29 Robert C. Stacey 'Parliamentary Negotiation and the Expulsion of the Jews from England' (1995) In: *Thirteenth Century VI. Proceedings of the Durham Conference (1995)*. Edited by M. Prestwich, R.H. Britnell and R Frame.

levels of Norman society had passed to others, notably Italian bankers. The Exchequer of the Jews shows that Jews were involved in finance at a lower level. As a consequence, each time a royal tax was granted, the knights demanded, in return, restrictions on Jewish financial transactions. Thus, in 1269, King Henry annulled perpetual fee rents in Jewish hands (that is, debts that had been transformed into rent that had to be paid for ever) and prohibited transfers of such rents to Christians. Also, sales of Jewish debts were only allowed under license from the King. Interest on these loans was prohibited. In 1271, in return for another grant of tax, the King forbade Jews from lending with interest and from holding freehold land. In a parliament called by King Edward, in 1275, the knights consented to another tax in return for a total ban on Jewish money-lending. Of course, none of this affected the Jewish bonds that had fallen into Christian hands in the past. These continued to be a burden on the knights.

Stacey gives an illuminating account of the political context in which Edward I decided to expel the Jews from England. The King had returned in 1289 from a three-year absence on the Continent, in a campaign to secure his possessions in Gascony, and he needed to raise large sums of money to pay his debts. During this time grievances had accumulated against him and the government which had ruled in his absence. The major landlords were concerned about the loss of long standing customary rights. The King and his ministers were trying to rule that only titles specifically sanctioned by written charters were to be allowed. The Bishops were critical of Royal encroachment on the liberties of the Church. The town merchants, especially the London ones, were fighting against the extortions of church courts and also wanted the King to restore their rights of self-government, which had been removed four years before.

Therefore, the King called a parliament attended by representatives from the counties and large towns to generally settle outstanding grievances and to get agreement on his tax. By making concessions on these matters and others, he succeeded by the end of the negotiations in persuading the parliament to accept a tax of one fifteenth on the value of all lay moveable property and also one tenth of ecclesiastical property. The decree expelling Jews came as one of the last in a series of concessions the King had to make. Stacey shows that hostility towards Jews had been accumulating for many years (for reasons mentioned in previous paragraphs) but suggests that the explanation as to why the alliance between the Crown and the Jews collapsed at this time must be understood as another element in the economic deals struck between the King and his subjects during this parliament. He states that it was specifically the knights who demanded the expulsion of the Jews.

2.4. Arbitrary royal expropriation did not happen only to Jews

Some other notable trading groups were dispossessed by kings in Medieval Europe.

The Templars were formed as a Christian order of knights to provide protection for the Crusades and the transport of funds. They became extremely rich and were an important source of loans to the papacy and to the kings of Europe. Their property was confiscated by the King of France and the order was suppressed in a dramatic series of trials in 1307. They were tortured into confessing to the performance of ceremonies involving desecration of the Cross, devil worship and obscene sexual rituals. Many, including the leaders of the order, were burnt, with the sanction of the Pope.

Long distance Italian trading companies became very large in the first half of the 14th century and dominated the grain and wool trades. They lent enormous sums to the English king, Edward III, during the Hundred Years War with France. He defaulted on the loans and this, together with the collapse of the grain trade during a great famine in 1315, caused the collapse of the companies.

The most dramatic and far reaching royal expropriation of property in England, after the Anglo Saxons were dispossessed by William the Conqueror, was of course, the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII in the 16th century. At least one third of the land was involved in the transfer.

2.5. The 14th century: Famine and plague

Persecutions of the Jews in the 14th century, in contrast to those of the 12th and 13th centuries, were triggered by natural disasters. The famine and plagues of that century gave rise to persecutions that seem to have been due to a combination of things. The widespread death and starvation caused a breakdown of the social order which released a destructive anger in the population, seeking scapegoats. In addition, there was organised persecution by the very authorities entrusted with the preservation of local order.

In 1315 and in the years following, there was very bad weather and consequent poor harvests, causing terrible famines throughout Europe, possibly the worst in history^{30, 31}. This bad weather has been linked to a huge volcanic eruption in Indonesia, which threw so much ash into the atmosphere

30 Barbara W. Tuchman, 'A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century,' pub A.A. Knopf USA 1978

31 Edwin S. Hunt and James M. Murray 'A History of Business in Medieval Europe 1200-1550' CUP 1999

that it spread all around the earth blocking out the sunlight.³² The poor tended to starve or get into debt and lose their livelihoods. Peasants were uprooted. Millenarian movements arose.

In 1320 there was a new and sudden series of massacres of Jews in southern France, accompanying an abortive new Crusade (called the Shepherds' Crusade) which never reached the Holy Land. Crowds of peasants and other poor people gathered in a march towards the Holy Land. Again, looking at the social and historical context, it turns out that this 'Crusade' developed into what was, in fact, more of a generalised uprising of the poor against the landlords, Church and Monarchy rather than simply a religiously inspired Crusade.

In the path of the Crusading March through France, castles and abbeys were attacked and tax records were destroyed. Also, debts owed to Jewish moneylenders were expunged, by wholesale massacre of the moneylenders and their communities. The order of society was threatened. The Pope intervened, excommunicated the Crusaders and the movement was suppressed by force.

Thus attacks against the Jews cannot be attributed simply to their religious opposition to the Catholic beliefs of the majority. The Jews in France had a relationship to the French King which was similar to that of Jews in England to the English King. They were legally under the King's protection as the King's property (*Servi Camerae*). Some Jews lent money at very high interest and they paid a proportion of their profits in taxes directly to the King. The French King decided in 1306 to expel the Jews from France and collect the debts owed to the Jews himself. This involved a very large mobilisation of royal officials, who travelled round the country forcing the peasants and townspeople to pay. The peasants could easily connect the Jewish moneylenders with the descent of royal officials upon them. Hostility towards Jews would have been intensified when the King invited the Jews back in 1315 and encouraged them to resume collecting the debts still owed to them.

In 1348 the first plague appeared in Europe. It is estimated that about a third of the population in a place died within a few months of the disease appearing there. No one knew the actual cause of the plague outbreaks. The Jews were a large, powerful and visible group, who opposed the central tenets of the Christian religion. It was easy to impute to them the desire to kill the Christians and take over.

Poliakov describes how Jews were accused of poisoning the wells and he, and most other historians, attribute the large scale massacres of Jews that took

32 Norman. F. Cantor 'In the wake of the plague: the black death and the world it made.' (2002) Harper Collins N.Y.

place to a mass hysteria which spread amongst the population of the towns.³³ In a recent paper describing a study of original archive sources, Samuel Cohn³⁴ suggests, however, that in the main the persecution was actually instigated by the authorities. They also had no idea of the actual cause of the plague and the accusations about poisoning wells provided an explanation. Jews were forced to confess to the most bizarre conspiracies through the use of torture, and massacres and looting followed. The result was the virtual extermination of the Jewish communities in the plague areas.

As before, some princes and mayors tried to protect Jews and were overruled. In Strasbourg in 1349, the municipality investigated the accusations against the Jews and rejected them as unfounded. The municipal officials were thrown out, a new council was elected and Jews were arrested and burnt alive. The Pope, Clement IV, issued a bull in which he opposed the persecution and pointed out both that Jews died of the plague and that there was plague in places where there were no Jews.

Others thought the plague was sent by God as a punishment for the sinful times and again millenarian movements grew. Bands of penitents went from town to town flagellating themselves. An element of social revolt was also part of these processions and preachers attacked the corrupt authorities and churchmen and set themselves up as priests independent of the Catholic Church. They also organised massacres of Jews in each town on their arrival. The authorities banned the processions and had the leaders hanged and beheaded. The movement vanished.

2.6. The persecution of Jews in Spain, the pogroms of 1348 and 1391, the Spanish Inquisition, and expulsion of 1492

In Christian Spain, in addition to the plague of the 14th century, the fate of the Jews was clearly linked to the political and military history of the Catholic kingdoms and to their struggle with the Muslim states. There were four large-scale persecutions. As in the rest of Europe, Jews suffered from a wave of pogroms during the Black Death of 1348 and its recurrences. There was a resurgence of anti-Jewish violence in 1391. Subsequently many Jews, including important Rabbis, converted to Christianity and were baptised. Conversion to the majority religion did not, however, ensure safety, and, paradoxically, the Spanish Inquisition, beginning in 1480, was directed almost entirely at former Jews who had converted to Christianity, the 'Conversos', and at their

33 Leon Poliakov. 'A History of Antisemitism Vol 1' University of Pennsylvania Press (2003).

34 Samuel K. Cohn 'The Black Death and the Burning of Jews'. (2007) Past and Present 196: 3-36

descendants. Finally, the expulsion of 1492 was directed specifically against non-baptised practising Jews.

The attacks on the Spanish Jews in 1348 may be explained, as in the rest of Europe, as the result of fear and dislocation caused by the plague. Understanding the causes of the later post Black Death pogroms requires examination of circumstances specific to Spanish history. Why did anti-Jewish riots in 1391 take place when they did, forty years after the Black Death? What drove the persecution of the Conversos, many of whom were important officials? Also, the sudden decision to expel Jews seems a very sudden change of heart on the part of Isabella and Ferdinand. The Jews were under royal protection up until the eve of the expulsion.

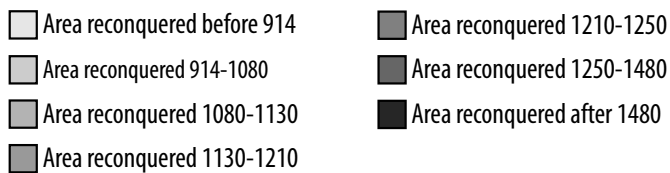
The history of the Iberian Peninsula is one of conquest and re-conquest, and Jewish history there must be interpreted in relation to this. There were probably Jews in Roman Iberia and they were present in the successor Visigothic kingdoms. In the 8th Century the Berber invasion drove the Christian Visigothic rulers out of most of the peninsula until they were confined to small kingdoms in the north. At some point the Moorish empire broke up into smaller units. There were also a number of Christian kingdoms and there was intermittent warfare between them. During the next 700 years the Christians expanded their rule at the expense of the Moors, until the final conquest of Granada in the south in 1492 (see Map 2).

The Jews in Muslim Spain: The first ‘Golden Age’

Jewish life in Muslim Spain, al-Andalus, from the 9th century until the 11th century, is looked on as a golden age, when, for a few centuries, Jews lived at peace. They were an important part of economic life, engaged in all sorts of skilled crafts, and in farming, trading and financial activities. There was considerable fruitful interaction with the advanced Moorish civilisation, and Jewish culture flourished. Jewish philosophers, scholars and poets of al-Andalus wrote in Arabic. The original Muslim conquerors were not interested in forcing non-Arab people to convert to Islam.

One source for the condition of Jews in the ancient Muslim world is a collection known as the Geniza Documents³⁵. This was a store of about six thousand documents found in 1864 in the basement of an ancient Cairo Synagogue which had been deposited there mainly between 969 and 1250. The depository or Geniza was a place where documents with Hebrew writing that were no longer needed were disposed of. Hebrew writing was supposed

35 S.D. Goiten 'A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza' Voll1: Economic foundations. 1999 University of California Press, Berkeley.



Map 2: Progress of the Christian reconquest of Spain after the Moorish invasion of 711 (the Reconquista).

The Moors occupied most of the peninsula, apart from a small Visigothic kingdom in the far north. The period is known as the Golden Age for the Jews in Spain. When the wars finally ended in 1492 the Jews were expelled.

to be sacred and could not be destroyed. The documents consist of letters, accounts, contracts, court records and other writings. Historians have been able to construct a picture of the social history of the Jews throughout the Mediterranean and also of the civilisation of the Arabs at the time.

Significantly for our enquiry, Jews were not confined to trade and commerce. They were engaged in a wide range of occupations from labourers to skilled craftsmen to rich merchants. Traders travelled freely from Spain to India and the documents show that Jews participated in this. Jews continued to form a large part of the population of big cities like Alexandria and Cairo as they had in the Roman world. There were Jews at the highest levels of government. Maimonides was the advisor and doctor to Saladin, in addition to being an advisor to Jews in his spare time and writing interpretations of Jewish texts and practices.

Later, with the break-up of the ruling Muslim Umayyad dynasty in the 11th Century (replaced by the Berber Amoravides, who were then replaced by the more intolerant Almohads) Jews were less fortunate and many seem to have migrated to the Christian north of Spain.

The second 'Golden Age' in the Christian Kingdoms: The Convivencia

The structure of Spanish Christian society, and Jewish and Muslim roles in it, were determined by the progressive reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslims. Within the Christian kingdoms, Christians, Jews and Muslims co-existed, each within their own communities, which interacted more or less harmoniously.

Castillian society was rather different from the feudalism found in other medieval European states³⁶. The process of reconquest meant that there was plenty of land, which the kings could allocate for settlement both as large noble estates and also to many small freeholders. The kings were not in a position to control all the new territories by military force and thus granted land to the nobles as of right and not as royal fiefdoms. These nobles and also the small freeholders became important sources of mounted cavalry for the wars. If a man could provide himself with a horse and armour he could become a commoner knight (a 'caballero') and was exempt from tax in return for military service.

After each Muslim kingdom fell, the Muslim ruling classes left, leaving the mass of Muslims under the control of the new noble or royal landlords. Muslims were expelled from the cities to the countryside, or forced to leave Spain altogether, and the process of resettlement, known as 'repartimento',

36 Elena Lourie, 'A Society Organised for War: Medieval Spain' Past and Present (1956) 35:54-76

created a new urban civilisation in which Jews played a part. Some wealthy Jews were able to occupy influential positions in the resettled towns, particularly as they spoke Arabic and could act as intermediaries with the Moorish population. Jews were to be found in a wide variety of skilled crafts (tailors, weavers, dyers), as well as farming. They were also prominent as merchants, doctors and lawyers, scholars and philosophers. Jewish scholars worked in collaboration with Christian clerics to translate and transmit Hebrew, Arabic, Greek and Latin learning to Europe. Although most Jews were not particularly wealthy, influential Jews were to be found in the upper classes in the cities as merchants who traded in goods, tax farmers who collected taxes on behalf of the authorities in return for being allowed to keep a percentage for themselves, and financiers who lent money. Jews also acted at the highest levels as royal advisors and financiers; kings and archbishops had Jewish doctors.

The Jews had a separate communal existence and were ruled by special Royal Charters. The legal status of all Jews was that they were under the direct jurisdiction and protection of the kings, technically their serfs. They had their own judges, places of worship and schools. Taxes were paid directly to the king and Jewish communal authorities were responsible for collecting and apportioning the taxes within the Jewish communities. Thus, Jews were linked to the wider society, in a legal sense, through their relationship with the king. This could cause them trouble when there was civil war between contending claimants to the throne.

There was a new 'golden age' for the Jews in the Christian kingdoms. However, because they were always a separate community, their separate customs and denial of the Christian faith was always liable to expose them to hostility from the Catholic Church and the Christian population. The fact that some of the major collectors of taxes came from this readily identifiable community would tend, in itself, to reinforce prejudice against all Jews.

This uneasy but largely peaceful coexistence, known as the 'convivencia', lasted until the coming of the Black Death (1348) which led to dire consequences for the Jews, as in the rest of Europe. Again there were accusations of well poisoning, which led to violent attacks on the Jewish communities

The pogroms of 1391

The hostility to Jews, leading up to the main wave of pogroms, was manifested during a period of political and economic instability in Castile during the forty years after the Black Death ³⁷.

37 Joseph Perez 'History of a Tragedy: The expulsion of the Jews from Spain' (2007) University of Illinois Press, Urbana.

Two articles are helpful in understanding the wave of attacks on Jews which spread from town to town in 1391. Phillipe Wolff, in a study which concentrates principally on Barcelona, links attacks on the Jewish quarters to a wider social revolt in the city which was happening at the same time³⁸. He also relates the Spanish events to a wave of similar social crises which occurred in the few decades across Europe from 1378 to 1391, including the peasants' revolt in England in 1381. Angus Mackay carries this on to study the wider Castillian context³⁹.

Attacks on Jews started during a dynastic civil war (1355-1369) in Castile between the King of Castile, Pedro I, and Henry of Trastamara, his half-brother, who eventually took over. Renewed hostility towards Jews seems to have been deliberately instigated by propaganda against the incumbent, Pedro I, who was portrayed as favouring the Jews who were legally his serfs. Jewish quarters and Synagogues were destroyed in Toledo and Valladolid among others. The incoming king, of course, forgot his propaganda against his brother's Jews, and took over their protection and accepted their taxes and services.

In 1390 his successor Juan I died, leaving a minor in charge as King with a council of regents to supervise. The weakness of the regency administration led to rising social revolt and there were anti-Jewish pogroms in 1391, which spread from town to town. Phillipe Wolff shows that in Barcelona the revolt involved conflicts between the Guilds and the Patrician town council, which was forced to change regulations governing representation on the council, the taxation of the poor, and the condition of the peasants. The revolt was put down when royal troops arrived and there were large-scale public hangings. Because of these pogroms many Jews voluntarily converted and were baptised.

That the attacks on Jews and converts were a secondary consequence of three-way class struggles between the King, the nobility and the common people, is illustrated again by the circumstances of disturbances in Toledo in 1449. The King's constable, Alvaro de Luna, imposed a new heavy tax on Toledo. This led to a popular tax revolt in which citizens were supported by the heir to the throne, Enrique IV, and a group of nobles. This civil war coincided with a severe subsistence crisis in Spain and the conflict was part of an ongoing class struggle. Jews were accused by rebels of being the source of the troubles. The tax was collected by a convert named Alonso de Costa. Abraham Bienvenista, the Jewish chief rabbi, was also the chief tax collector

38 Phillipe Wolff 'The 1391 Pogrom in Spain. Social Crisis or Not' (1971) *Past and Present*, 50:4-18

39 Angus Mackay 'Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth Century Castile' (1976) *Past and Present* 55:33-65

for the kingdom. This made the townspeople hostile to Jews and converts. The result was legislation restricting the rights of both Jews and converts.

The policy of Ferdinand and Isabella: The paradox of the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews

When Ferdinand became King of Aragon (1479) he was already married to Isabella of Castile and so the crowns of the two kingdoms were united in their persons. They brought to an end a period of civil wars in Christian Spain. The policy of the King and Queen seems to have been to make arrangements that limited the possibility of internal conflict. Apart from civil wars, there were differences in the social structures of Aragon and Castile. The development of Castillian society has been discussed above. In contrast, Aragonese social relations conformed more to the pattern of feudal hierarchy existing in the rest of Western Europe. A developing strategy for maintaining royal power is discernible as a common thread in the politics of Spain during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella and was also followed by their successors. They set out on extensive travels around the country, brokering agreements and making alliances with the cities and great landlords and generally bringing order and pacifying their kingdoms. Unification was achieved by attaching the nobles to the dynasty, by imposing religious uniformity, and by abolishing separate religiously based jurisdictions. Thus they started on a path which would eventually, step by step, end the coexistence of the three religions in the peninsula. The hunt for heretics within the church, first among the baptised Jews and later among the converted Muslims, the conquest of the remaining Moorish kingdoms in Andalucia, and the expulsion of the remaining unbaptised Jews and Muslims from Spain, may be understood as the working out of this basic policy of unification. In the end everyone came to be included in the Catholic Church and religious dissent within that church was eliminated.

There has been a debate among historians about the motivations for these policies, whether they were driven by religious conviction or by 'reasons of state'. It seems to me that these are not mutually exclusive and in fact tend to reinforce each other. Again, we do not know whether there was a pre-conceived plan in all this, or whether the decisions were arrived at ad hoc in each case. We can however deduce something about the mind-set behind the actions of the monarchs.

The Spanish Inquisition

Part of that mind-set was belief in the purposes and necessity of the Inquisition. A year after the establishment of their joint reign, in 1480, Ferdinand established the Holy Inquisition for the first time in Spain, three

hundred years after the original Papal inquisition was instituted by Pope Gregory IX in 1179. That earlier inquisition was aimed at the Cathars of Languedoc. The new Inquisition was rather different to the old one. It had the sanction of the Pope but was directly under the personal control of the Spanish monarch, who insisted on appointing his own inquisitors. This in itself suggests that there were 'reasons of state' behind the Spanish Inquisition, which could not be trusted to the Pope. It instituted a reign of terror that was directed specifically at finding evidence against secretly practising Jews among those former Jews and their descendants who had been baptised into the Christian church. They were known as 'New Christians' or 'Conversos' and they were the main targets of the Inquisition at least until the middle of the 16th century.

The Inquisition followed a set procedure^{40, 41}. When the inquisitors arrived in a city they would summon the population to assemble in the main church. At this gathering a list of heresies and heretical practices was read out and the congregation was invited to confess personal heresy and denounce heresy in others. It was a crime to conceal knowledge of heresy. Many were imprisoned. Typically the prisoners would be left isolated for three weeks or so, without being told what they were being charged with. When they were judged to be in a suitably malleable frame of mind, they would be interrogated, still not knowing the charges or the identity of the accusers, and tortured if they did not make a suitable confession. Those who confessed and showed repentance could be accepted back into the church after performing suitable penance, depending on the seriousness of the offence. In the most serious cases, those who were judged unrepentant were burnt alive, although a last-minute reconciliation with the church could be obtained by suitable confession and recantation and the victim could avoid this fate. Those reconciled in this way would be garrotted before being burnt. Many were convicted in their absence, having escaped abroad, and would be burnt in effigy or, if they were already dead, their bones would be dug up and then burnt. The property of condemned heretics and that of their descendants was confiscated.

Reading about this induces a sense of shocked recognition when one realises that one could be reading about Abu Ghraib, or any other of the secret torture centres set up during the Iraq War. We can be helped to imagine the past by reading about the present! Although there were no organised burnings in Iraq, there are common features about the two reigns of terror 500 hundred years apart. The procedures were the same, including the

40 H. Kamen 'Inquisition and Society in Spain: a new interpretation'

41 Joseph Perez 'The Spanish Inquisition: A History' (2006) Profile Books, London

methods of torture. Water torture, where the victim was turned upside down and water was poured on a cloth held over the nose and mouth, inducing a sense of drowning, was used in both cases. Also used was suspension by the wrists in an upright position for extended periods, as well as various methods of applying pain directly without killing the person.

Jews who had not converted were immune from the inquisition and were under the protection of the Monarch (at least until the expulsion of 1492).

Targeting the Conversos

It is a horrible irony of history that Jews who decided to assimilate and merge into the majority culture were the specific target of horrific persecution. It seems, on the face of it, very hard to imagine what the reason was for this new inquisition. It suggests, contrary to the whole underlying thesis of this essay, that Herzl's proposal concerning the unassimilable nature of the Jews is right. The following paragraphs are an attempt to deal with this crucial question.

An aspect of this question which strikes one as odd is that the converted Jews and their descendants were still identifiable as late as 1480, ninety years after the mass conversions began in 1391. The assimilation of the 'New Christians' could not have been very successful. There are some interesting comments about this in a paper by David Nirenberg⁴². The tax system helped to ensure that Conversos and their families would remain administratively identifiable as a separate group for decades after the original conversion. They were required to continue to pay a proportional share of the taxes and debts of the Jewish communities they left. These long-lasting obligations necessitated continuing financial ties with the Jewish community authorities. It was necessary to set up an organisational framework among the Conversos to allocate and collect the taxes and this implied a degree of formal self-government. Thus Jews, Old Christians and now New Christians were separated in a concrete way in regard to the contentious matter of taxes.

Sociological explanations also seem relevant. Although some Jews changed their nominal religion, they remained in the same towns and neighbourhoods and presumably most of them retained their same occupations. Attempts were made to break community ties by making unbaptised Jews wear distinguishing marks on their clothes and confining them to walled residential areas within the towns.

Some social mobility was acquired by upper class Conversos, as restrictions that applied to Jews no longer affected them. They could now occupy official positions in the Church, on town councils and in Royal offices. The bishop

⁴² David Nirenberg 'Mass conversion and genealogical mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth Century Spain' (2002) *Past and Present*. 174: 3-41.

of Burgos was formerly a prominent Rabbi. This very social mobility would bring them into competition with Old Christians.

Racial arguments about purity of blood began to appear. All three groups tried to protect their status by raising claims based upon history and genealogy. The Jews were concerned to ensure that converted Jews who did so under duress could still be considered Jews and welcomed back into the Jewish community. Individual family history was obviously very important in this. The idea of inherited cultural characteristics appeared. The Jews assumed the superiority of their culture, inherited from biblical times. The Old Christian upper classes claimed aristocratic descent from the Visigoths and aristocratic descent meant inherited capacity to lead and serve noble ideals of fighting and horsemanship. For them, Jewish blood entailed a grasping cleverness, which exploited other peoples' misfortunes. (In the real material world, aristocratic status meant exemption from taxes if nothing else). Conversos defended themselves by claiming descent from the original Jewish Christians, and the Old Christians cited the Jewish blood of the Conversos as evidence of an inherited tendency to 'Judaize'. It is not clear what this was supposed to mean but it may have amounted to no more than an emphasis on study of the Old Testament and being lukewarm about the Trinity. Racial as opposed to purely religious antisemitism may be said to originate at this time. 'Pure Blood' laws were introduced to discriminate against New Christians, prohibiting them and their descendants from holding public office (this idea of pure blood was later taken up to feed anti-black racism).

There is no reason to doubt that Ferdinand and Isabella were sincere in their concern for orthodox Church doctrine. They may have believed that torture was a way of getting at the truth. However, it is legitimate to ask how the persecution of heresy served them in their role as rulers of Spain? Were there 'reasons of state' operating in the Spanish Inquisition?

The curious ability to combine a spiritual message of love and peace with extreme savagery is reminiscent of the Crusading mentality, but this time it is a Crusade against internal enemies (or imagined internal enemies) of the Christian church, instead of the external ones of the earlier Crusades.

In order to fathom this mentality, it may perhaps be helpful to go back to the earlier European Inquisition and examine *its* role in preserving the power of the Catholic Church and the medieval state. Why were *they* so frightened of heretical beliefs? Why had heretics to be burned? A useful paper by R.I. Moore, discusses this⁴³. Power in feudal Europe depended not only upon the naked force of the mounted knight in armour, but also on the underpinning by

43 R.I. Moore 'The war against heresy in medieval Europe' Historical Research (2008) vol. 81 no. 212 pp 189-210.

priestly authority, which sanctified the whole feudal structure. This authority stemmed in turn from the unquestioning faith of the Christian population in the claims of the Catholic religion to be the only true possessors of knowledge of God, and to possess miraculous powers of salvation, dispensed by the priests. This was reinforced by arcane rituals which impressed both the learned and the ignorant majority. The persuasive effect of a weekly religious spectacle, consisting of the miraculous transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, brought about by invocations of a priest clad in gorgeous robes, in a magnificent church accompanied by wonderful singing and the powerful smell of incense, would be difficult to resist.

This perspective does not imply a cynical motive in the minds of the rulers or the priesthood. They clearly also believed. What's more, they believed in Satan and his devils and thought that the Catholic Church was engaged in a life or death struggle with a cosmic evil, a struggle that was not yet won. The Church had at all costs to be protected. However, the role of the Church in bolstering secular power does seem to help in making sense of the way in which 'reasons of state' and religious zeal were mutually compatible and reinforced each other⁴⁴.

This, perhaps, was why the Catholic Church was able to obtain such vast allocations of land, buildings and other wealth with which to support its institutions across Europe, at a time when elementary food security was a major problem for the overwhelming majority. The material evidence of this is still all around us in the form of the beautiful and magnificent buildings of churches and monasteries

The central importance attached by the Church hierarchy to orthodoxy of belief in the Eucharist, the subtleties of the Trinity, the efficacy of baptism and the other sacred rituals of the Church makes sense, if the questioning of these arcane aspects of doctrine could fracture the illusion of miraculous occurrences and endanger the whole structure. Also any criticism of the Catholic hierarchy, whether of its wealth and materialism, its corruption or its direct oppression of the poor, also tended to threaten the power of the Pope's religious empire in Europe, and was treated as heresy too. (A heresy that they could not tolerate, for obvious reasons, was the belief that the sacrament of baptism was annulled by the sins of the priest who administered it.) It would be a mistake, however, to think that the Catholic Church was facing its enemies as a completely united and monolithic institution. There were

44 In our time, the particularities of religious belief have not got these consequential implications attached to them, at least in Europe and North America, and thus religion is regarded as a private matter. State power is only weakly dependent on religion. No one will care if you start a new one. You are free to split your God into any number of aspects, as you please.

disputes between the scholars that also gave rise to accusations of heresy. Some of these heresies dated from the early days of Christianity. Thus there was always an obsession with the 'enemy within'. After 1517, the enemy without was ever present in the form of the Protestant Reformation.

We may characterise the Inquisition as a 'reign of terror' designed to unify and consolidate the Papal Empire across Europe. It was particularly concerned with internal dissent. In the Spanish case, the converted Jews were an identifiable group, now within the boundaries of the Church, of whose orthodoxy the King and Queen were persuaded to be suspicious; hence, their targeting by the Inquisition.

The expulsion decree of 1492

Some of the closest royal advisors and functionaries were unconverted Jews. Indeed, some Jews helped in supplying and financing the final Christian conquest of Granada. The last charter defining the legal status of the Jews under royal protection was issued by Isabella in 1490. In spite of this, soon after the victory in 1492, while still encamped outside Granada and without warning, the Queen decreed that all Jews had to convert to Christianity, leave Spain or die. Those who refused to be baptised were given three months to arrange their affairs and go. This sudden change in policy would seem to us to be at odds with all previous arrangements. Some of her principal advisors were Jews⁴⁵.

It may be helpful here to put the cruelty of the expulsion decree in the context of the violent events taking place at the time. The war against Granada was the culmination of a 700-year old tradition of more or less frequent wars. Although at various times there had been shifting alliances between the different Christian and Moorish kingdoms, the overall effect had been to bring most of Spain under the rule of Catholic monarchs. The final war against Granada had the nature of a Crusade against Islam, and had been declared so by the Pope. Like the Crusades to the Holy Land, it gave young aristocrats an opportunity to gain favour in heaven and also to obtain land and noble reputation. It was a very bloody conflict. It involved prolonged siege warfare and starvation of cities into surrender. Cannons were used to batter down the walls. Medieval military doctrine was brutal when cities refused to capitulate. The entire population of Malaga was enslaved (some managed to buy their freedom, notably the Jews among them, who were aided by the other Jewish communities in Spain). The Queen had been personally present at these scenes of aggressive war, death and carnage.

⁴⁵ Joseph Perez 'History of a Tragedy: The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain' (2007) University of Illinois Press, Urbana.

The war accomplished the final destruction of Moorish rule in every part of Spain. However, two non-Catholic religious groups, Jews and Muslims, still existed in her kingdom. She settled the matter of the Jews immediately and unilaterally, with the expulsion decree, suddenly bringing to an end the alliance between the crown and the Jewish religion. That this was not primarily a consequence of the economic role of the Jews is evident, since the Jews were given the option of converting and thereby keeping their positions. The expulsion decree was more plausibly concerned with bringing about the religious unity of church and state.

Abraham Seneor, the rab-mayor (chief rabbi) of Castile, and an important tax collector, was a close collaborator of the crown. He chose baptism for himself and his family, the sovereigns acting as godparents. Many of the rabbis and Jewish elite also chose baptism. Isaac Abravanel was a royal financier of importance and refused to convert. He helped to organise the emigrants and went to live in Italy. Emigration involved great hardship, as can be imagined, and many of those who left found life in exile so difficult that they had themselves baptised and returned. The Muslims were expelled by decree in 1502 and, later, the Inquisition was turned against the converted Muslims (mostly peasants) and also any Protestants or other heretics who entered Spain. In this way Spain remained a Catholic country up until modern times. There was no room for any other religious group and it was not only the Jews who were excluded.

2.7. Expulsion of Jews from cities of the Holy Roman Empire before and after the Reformation

In the 15th and 16th centuries Jews were expelled successively from states and cities in the Holy Roman Empire⁴⁶. An obvious question is whether there was any pattern or any common features of these persecutions, since they happened in one city after another. This is a very complicated subject. I have not been able to carry out a general analysis applying to the whole period. What applies to one city may not be true of another so that I have had to confine my account to a few particular cases.

Anti-Jewish prejudice was a feature of both Catholicism and later Protestantism. The disruptions before and after the Reformation⁴⁷ must

46 Jonathan I. Israel 'European Jewry in the age of Mercantilism 1550-1750.' (1991) Oxford University Press.

47 Clearly the intensifying theological disputes surrounding the Reformation and Counter-Reformation must be implicated in German antisemitism. Certainly, Luther's condemnations of the Jews became part of the long-term cultural tradition of hostility to Jews. Initially he thought that his attack on Catholic belief would cause the Jews to follow him, but, when he found that this did not happen, he wrote vicious tracts against them and advocated driving them out.

indeed have a bearing on this, even though the actual expulsions started *well before* Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg in 1517 (see Map 3). This suggests that, while the wider religious conflict among the Christians was important, behind the theology were other sources for the enmity directed at the Jews.

After the Crusade massacres in 1096, the Jews had been taken under the protection of successive Emperors. As in England and France, charters were given to Jews, allowing them to run their own financial and religious affairs and in return the Jews became 'serfs of the imperial chamber (*servii camerae imperia*)'. They and their property were owned by the Emperor, who levied taxes on them. This picture was rendered very complicated by the fragmented nature of the Empire, with the Emperor at the top, and under him a great many more or less independent states of varying sizes and jurisdictions. Many cities were directly subject to the Emperor and not to the local ruler of the surrounding territory. These cities (the Imperial Free Cities) had considerable freedom to run their own affairs and defended themselves from interference by the ruler of the surrounding territory. The compositions of the governing councils of the towns were continuously evolving under the influence of changing power relations between bishops, lesser clergy, patrician nobles, merchants and guilds. The legal status of Jews was further complicated by the fact that in some cases the Emperors had ceded their taxation rights over the Jews to a local prince, or bishop, although the Emperor remained their overall patron. Some Jewish taxes were paid directly to the Emperor or to the Prince, rather than to the town council, and the problem was that, although the Jews lived in the towns and had lived there for centuries, they were associated with the Emperors and Princes. After the Black Death massacres in 1348, Jews were induced to re-establish their communities with the offer of additional privileges⁴⁸.

For the city of Regensburg, I have found details illustrating how these different tax regimes could cause disputes between the Jews and townspeople and between the townspeople and the Emperor. At the end of the 13th century the town council had to raise taxes to pay for the construction and extension of city walls and for their defence. A study has been published of Rabbinical decisions (*Responsa*) issued at the time⁴⁹. This study shows that the Jews were refusing to pay a tax levied for the work on the town fortifications. The Rabbi maintained that this was unnecessary as the walls

48 Cohn S. K. 'The Black Death and the Burning of the Jews' Past and Present (2007) 196: 3-36
49 Berthold Altman. 'Studies in Medieval German Jewish History. Part I: The origin and development of Jewish citizenship and chamber serfdom in Regensburg'. (1940) Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research. Vol. 10, 5-98.



Map 3: Expulsions from the cities in the Holy Roman Empire 14th-16th Centuries.

Shown are some of the cities discussed in the text from which Jews were expelled. Expulsions took place both before and after Luther started the Protestant Revolution, when he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg.

were in good repair. About a century later, in 1519, the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg took place (some 800 of them). An account of the detailed politics surrounding this expulsion is given in an article⁵⁰ by R. Po-Chia Hsia. What is interesting about this paper is that it draws evidence from contemporary sources, letters to the Emperor during 1516 and 1518, now contained in the Imperial archive of Maximilian I in Innsbruck. The townspeople had been writing to the Emperor demanding to be allowed to expel the Jews from the town. The Emperor had refused to allow the expulsion of 'his Jews' but he died in 1519 and then the expulsion took place. The contents of these letters from Regensburg citizens show how there were various distinct causes of hostility to Jews on the part of different sections of the population. The priests complained about Jewish religious influence and the practice of usury. The town council were aggrieved about non-payment of taxes and the guilds complained about unfair Jewish competition. Apparently Jews traded outside the guild structure and undercut the guild craftsmen. It is unlikely that Jews were able to qualify for membership of the guilds unless they converted, as religion played an important part in maintaining social cohesion within the guilds⁵¹.

Nuremberg was different. In 1349, the city authorities wished to build a market place below the Imperial castle on land occupied by Jews, so the Jews had to move. They moved to a place just outside the walls, which later became a suburb of Nuremberg. In Strasbourg, six Jewish families moved into the city in 1361 but Jews were expelled in 1391 by which time there were about twelve families. Although the Jews were made to move out of Strasbourg, there is documentary evidence of continuous Jewish activity in the town after their expulsion. They were trading in wine, horses and food, lent money and some practised as doctors. Jews are recorded as plaintiffs and defendants in municipal courts. The Jews were forbidden to reside in the city overnight but were able to enter during daylight⁵². Jews were never expelled from Frankfurt but had to live in a Jewish quarter which was locked at night. It turns out that the town council actually allowed new houses to be built in this 'Ghetto', so as to double their number over subsequent years⁵³. In the case

50 R. Po-Chia Hsia 'The Usurious Jew: Economic Structure and Religious Representation in an Anti-Semitic Discourse' In 'In and Out of the Ghetto' (1995) Ed: R. Po-Chia Hsia. Pub: Cambridge University Press

51 During the early part of the Reformation, the Guild as a whole would choose whether to support the Reformation or not. In the event, after the wars of religion, the religion of whole cities and states were dictated by their Princes.

52 Debra Kaplan. 'Beyond Expulsion' (2011) Stanford University Press, Stanford California

53 Fritz Backhouse. 'The population explosion in the Frankfurt Judengasse in the Sixteenth Century' (2008) *Jewish Culture and History* 10(2): 25-44

of Frankfurt, the existence of the walled Ghetto indicates a wish to minimise non-Jewish citizens' contact with Jewish beliefs or perhaps to protect the Jews from attack or both. Thus in these last two cases the discrimination against Jews seems not to have been related to economic competition but may have been due to religious hatred and perhaps also to taxation issues. In addition to the religious element in guild solidarity, there were 7 churches and a cathedral within the walls of Strasbourg, which all had a degree of autonomy.

It may be that the progressive exclusion of the Jews from other cities during the Middle Ages will be explained as a result of similar pressures. Some rather vague discussion along these lines is found in various books^{54, 55}.

The difficulty of the subject is compounded by the very complicated history of the Protestant Reformation, which is different in different places and at different times, both before and after the Wars of Religion. The wars were immensely destructive. The treatment of Jews was also not consistent. Jews were protected by the catholic Habsburg Emperor in his German territories, although he expelled them from Portugal and Naples. Also, Jews were initially tolerated in the Papal States but were progressively expelled during the counter-Reformation. Poliakov⁵⁶ and Salo Baron⁵⁷ both suggest that, once again, Jews became implicated in conflicts between rulers and ruled, although neither of them give details. Nevertheless, it does seem that it might be plausible that the ultimate cause behind the expulsions must be sought in strains that appeared in the hierarchical political structures of the Holy Roman Empire.

The expelled Jews tended to move to other jurisdictions in towns and villages and became a predominantly rural population with small numbers in each place. To overcome their isolation, they created councils (Kehilot), which linked the scattered populations together. Thus, Jewish life in the Holy Roman Empire continued in a rural setting for centuries after the expulsions.

54 Salo Wittmayer Baron 'A social and religious history of the Jews Vol XII Economic catalyst' (1967) Columbia University Press.

55 Salo W. Baron, Arcadius Kahan and others. Ed. Nachum Gross 'Economic history of the Jews' (1975) Schocken Books. New York.

56 Leon Poliakov. 'A History of Antisemitism Vol 1' University of Pennsylvania Press (2003).

57 Salo Wittmayer Baron 'A social and religious history of the Jews Vol XII Economic catalyst' (1967) Columbia University press.

3. 19th and 20th Centuries: after Napoleon and before the Nazis

3.1. Modern nationalism and the Napoleonic interlude

Modern republican ideas of ‘the nation’ started with the propagation of revolutionary ideas about the ‘rights of man and citizen’ at the end of the 18th century, culminating in the French Revolution. The rise and subsequent defeat of the Napoleonic Empire in Europe, which followed the revolution, had widespread and long-lasting effects on European culture and political thought, rather different in each country. Ideas of nationalism changed in Russia, Poland and Germany in response to the French victories but took different paths. Policies towards the Jews and manifestations of antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries were correspondingly different and these differences are linked to particularities of the development of nationalism in the different countries.

Some of the universalistic aspects of the French Revolution persisted during the period of the Napoleonic domination of much of Europe. Feudalism had been abolished in France and liberty and equality before the law were extended to all, including the peasants. As a part of this, restrictions on Jews in Napoleon’s empire were abolished in 1804. (There was a temporary re-imposition of anti-Jewish laws in 1808 but these did not last). This meant that hostility towards Napoleonic domination in the different conquered countries reflected on the Jews, who would have been seen to have benefited from foreign rule.

It is a paradox that the French defeat of the armies of the ruling dynasties, in one country after another, merely succeeded in uniting the different social classes against the invaders. One might have thought French ideas of constitutional government would be popular among the subordinate classes. One reason why this did not happen is the way in which invasions were conducted. The enormous Napoleonic armies supported themselves partly by living off the land. By exhaustively requisitioning the resources of the countryside through which his armies passed, Napoleon was able to maintain very large armies in the field for longer than his opponents. Not having to depend upon his unwieldy supply trains, he could also move them much more rapidly. Not surprisingly this did not win much support for the French as rulers and stimulated the rise of nationalist ideas in those countries too ⁵⁸.

58 Ironically, Napoleon’s foraging policy could be self-defeating in more direct ways. In the retreat from Moscow in 1812, the Russians forced him to return by the same route by which he had come, through an already depleted countryside. This in itself made supplies difficult to obtain and added to the difficulties caused by the Russian ‘Scorched Earth’ policy of destroying everything in the path of the Napoleonic army.

Russian nationalism

In Russia there was an expectation that Napoleon would free the serfs, but when it was clear that this was not going to happen, the serfs resisted the invasion bitterly both as soldiers in the regular army and also in spontaneous guerrilla actions which caused the French so much trouble in the retreat.

1812 was a deep cultural shock to the Russian nobility. This is described in a book by Orlando Figes⁵⁹. Before the French invasion, the Russian nobility spoke French, and generally adopted western styles in dress, architecture and art. This co-existed with a distinctive Russian multi-layered social organisation with the autocratic Tsar at the top and the serfs at the bottom. After 1812 the nobility started to turn away from Western culture. They spoke Russian instead of French and there was a move towards a distinctively Russian style in the arts. Musicians and writers started to study Russian folklore. The Tsarist state tended to be inward looking and xenophobic. They continued to promote economic development in industry and commerce but sought to prevent the consequent disturbance of the social and economic structure. Liberal ideas were suppressed and attempts at reform were defeated. A group of officers tried to mount an armed coup on the death of Alexander I (the 1825 Decembrist Revolt) in favour of their choice of a liberal candidate for the succession. They did not get support from the wider society and the coup failed. Feudalism was not abolished in Russia until 1861 (i.e. not for another 36 years).

After Napoleon, Jews and Poles were considered unreliable foreigners by the Tsarist regime. Jews were subject to repressive legislation. Under Stalin officially inspired persecutions of Jews continued. Just before he died he was planning the arrest of prominent Jewish doctors, whom he accused of killing high up Soviet officials (the famous 'Doctors' Plot').

German nationalism

After the defeat of Prussia in 1806, members of the Prussian nobility started to think about what had gone wrong and to compare their military organisation with that of Napoleon. In France, the revolutionary leaders had been able to mobilise the whole population for war in a way that had not been seen before. The superiority of the French citizens' army, both in its greater numbers and its patriotic fervour, led them to question the rigid organisation of the Prussian state.⁶⁰

59 Orlando Figes (2002) 'Natasha's Dance: A cultural history of Russia' Allen Lane, Penguin Press.

60 Geoffrey Best (1982) 'War and Society in Revolutionary Europe 1770-1870' Leicester University Press and Fontana paperbacks.

Frederick the Great, the King of Prussia (1740-86), had set up a regimented state machine and social order, which was the supporting basis for his military conquests. Serf estates provided an agricultural surplus which could be sold abroad and generate taxes, and they were also a source of peasant recruits for the army, which was very large for its time. The officers were recruited exclusively from the nobles. The failure of this system in the face of Napoleon brought demands for liberalisation of society in general and the army in particular. Ideas of Pan-German nationalism linked to a popular patriotism started to circulate. Reforms like the opening of the officer corps to the middle and professional classes and universal military service became popular among the liberals. The legal status of serfdom was abolished in 1807. (Free men could be more easily imbued with patriotism and, anyway, serf-based agriculture was inefficient when compared to capitalist agriculture).

There was a tension between liberal and conservative conceptions of the way in which society should be organised. The liberals focussed particularly on reform of the absolutist state and the abolition of serfdom and the inclusion of the whole population in the 'nation' whereas the conservatives wished to keep the old system intact as much as possible. This conflict between liberal and conservative ideas regularly re-appeared in later German political developments in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Hannah Arendt⁶¹ identifies Napoleon's defeat of Prussia in 1806 as a cultural turning point in the relations between Jews and the elite of the wider German society. Before 1806 it was common for young aristocrats to attend fashionable intellectual salons in the homes of wealthy Berlin Jews. After Napoleon's victory, in a period of rising nationalist feeling, the social acceptance of the small Jewish elite by aristocratic society suffered. They were too closely associated with the discredited king whose armies had failed to protect Prussia.

Polish nationalism

An important factor contributing to Polish hostility towards the Jews was the rise of nationalist movements after the partition of Poland at the end of the 18th century. During the long history of Poland there were many complicated changes to its borders. Poland at its largest extent was actually a union of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine (see Map 4). In 1772, 1793 and 1795, Poland (by this time considerably smaller) was conquered and partitioned by neighbouring powers, respectively Russia, Austria and Prussia (see Map 5).

61 Hannah Arendt 'Anti-Semitism,' in: *The Jewish Writings* Ed: Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman. (2007) Shocken Books N.Y.



Map 4: The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at its greatest extent.

Initially, there were separatist national movements in the three partitions and also separatist movements corresponding to the different ethnic and religious constituents of the original Polish kingdom (e.g. Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, Byelo-Russians, Galicians).

By the late 19th century a distinctly Polish nationalism had been created. Polish nationalism, rather like Judaism, became the consciousness of a Polish nation which did not have a state. An independent Polish state did not exist between the partitions at the end of the 18th century and 1918, except for the brief Napoleonic interlude. However, it was not a single movement. It took different forms among the different groups that made up Polish society. There were two main trends, which were organised across the boundaries between the partitions. Both sought to recreate a Polish state in the former territories of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Pilsudski's Socialist Party and



Map 5: The final partition of Poland between Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1795.

After this Poland did not exist as a country until 1918, except for a brief period under Napoleon. The experience of the Jews was different in the different partitions.

the liberal Progressive Party were quite inclusive and wanted to recreate a Polish state in which there would be representation of all the sections of the population who considered themselves to be Polish by culture and residence. Jews were included in this. Dmowski's National Democrats, on the other hand, evolved a notion of a state in which the Poles and the Catholic Church would dominate. They were conservative and intensely antisemitic and hostile to other inhabitants of Poland (e.g. Lithuanians and Germans) as well. The National Democrats thought that Polish businesses could advance economically by taking the place of the Jews. To this end, they mounted a policy of boycotting Jewish businesses.

An example of the way in which Jews became embroiled in these political struggles within Polish nationalism is illustrated by the events of

the 1912 elections for a representative to be sent to the 4th Russian State Duma.⁶² (By this time the borders had changed again and Warsaw was in the Russian partition) (see Map 6). Warsaw was a city of about 900,000 people. It was split along religious lines, mainly between Roman Catholics (55%) and Jews (38%). There was one elected seat allocated to Warsaw. The Jewish vote secured the seat for the Polish Socialist Party, to the chagrin of the conservative racists who voted for the National Democrats. The Jews voted for the party that would fight for equal rights for Jews in the Russian Empire.

Both national movements were hostile to domination by the Russian, Prussian or Austrian empires. Polish Catholics resisted penetration of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian partition and the Protestant churches in the Prussian partition.

In the Polish risings in the Russian partition, some Jews fought alongside the Polish rebels. Socialist movements arose as in the rest of Europe. In particular, there was a Jewish Socialist organisation, the Bund. Some Socialists wanted Polish independence, but others were not nationalist and were opposed to this.

Poles rallied to Napoleon against Russia. Polish regiments fought in his Italian campaign and there was a large Polish contingent in the army that entered Russia in 1812. One book mentions 100,000 men but the figures for the size of Napoleon's armies vary from one author to another. The Poles thought that Napoleon would restore the boundaries of the Polish state. But this never happened. Napoleon did create a mini Polish state in the form of the Duchy of Poland, with his nominee as king, but this came under Russian domination after 1815.

3.2. The Jews of Poland

Jews had been welcomed to Poland by Polish landlords to foster trade and manage their estates. They experienced a long period of relative tranquillity and cultural renaissance, a picture which contrasts startlingly with the widespread pogroms of later modern times. This alliance between the Polish rulers and the Jews was disrupted first of all by a peasant revolt in the Ukraine in 1648.

The situation of the Jews changed after the final 1795 partition of Poland by neighbouring powers, Russia, Austria and Prussia⁶³. Each of the

62 Antony Polonsky (2005) 'Warsaw.' In 'YIVO Encyclopaedia of Jews in Eastern Europe', Yale University Press.

63 Norman Davies (1981) 'God's Playground: A History of Poland' Vol 2 Clarendon Press, Oxford.



Map 6: The Russian Jewish Pale of Settlement in 1881

This was the area of Russia in which the Jews were legally allowed to settle. Shown are towns mentioned in the text where the anti-Jewish pogroms started after the assassination of the Tsar.

partitioning powers adopted different policies towards Jews. Differences between the Polish social and political structure before partition and those of Russia, Prussia and Austria were important in this regard. Thus, for instance, in order to understand what happened to the Jews who came under Russian rule after partition, it is necessary to explore the political and social structure of Poland before partition and compare that to Russian society. Similarly for the Austrian and Prussian partitions. This relates to the main argument in this essay, that it is necessary to take into account the specific historical context in studying each persecution.

Polish society and the situation of the Jews before the partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795

Polish society was governed by a landed, serf-owning aristocracy, the 'Schlachta', who elected the king. The economic power of the nobility in Poland (and also of the nobility in Russia and Prussia) was based upon large estates producing grain for the European market, using serf labour. (Later this export trade extended as far as North America). These estates were very large indeed and, in other circumstances, might have been called separate countries.

The social structure was complicated by immigration. Jewish and Scots traders appeared early, and Lutheran peasants from Germany were invited by the nobles to settle and open up uncultivated land in the Baltic provinces. Jews were invited to manage large estates under lease. The immigrants were not reduced to serfdom. The different immigrant groups formed separate 'Estates' and were each subject to a different legal status. The conditions of their existence were granted as 'privileges' e.g. rights of residence or occupation. The particular privileges depended on whose land they settled upon and could be subject to periodic re-negotiation e.g. when the respective king or noble died. This applied to whole towns.

In Poland the Jews spoke their own language, Yiddish, a form of German. Thus, it seems likely that they came from Germany although there is no available evidence of a concerted mass migration.⁶⁴ They dressed differently, lived in separate communities and had different social customs and religious beliefs antithetical to Christianity. Poland became a centre of Jewish life. Many of the small towns and villages were up to 90% Jewish. There *were* Jews who advocated the adoption of the Polish language and enlightenment values (the Maskilim) but most were actively opposed to integration into the wider society.

64 Chris Woodworth 'Where did the East European Jews come from?' (2010) *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*. 11(1): 107-125

Considerable Jewish autonomy was exercised through the 'Kahal' or 'Council of the Four Nations' (Poznan, Cracow, Lwów, Lithuania) which was responsible for the internal affairs of all the Jews in Poland, including justice and the collection of taxes to be paid to the Polish authorities. This lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century (1844) under the Russians.

Many of the noble estates were leased to Jews and the Jews were blamed for squeezing the peasants. The leases were usually short term, which led to pressure to maximise profits and inhibited the improvement of estates. The Jews were also blamed for the alcoholism that was perceived to be a cause of the miserable condition of the serfs. The production and selling of alcohol was important in the agricultural economy, as this provided an outlet for much of the surplus grain, which could not reach the markets. Although this was an exclusive noble landowner privilege, they leased out the rights to this, and this business also came to be dominated by Jews, who owned most of the taverns. These activities were highly profitable and the share that went to the landlords provided a significant addition to estate incomes. Selling liquor to the peasants served to siphon any surplus money accumulated by the peasants back to the landlords. Consequently, Jews could be held responsible for the drunkenness of the peasants as well as the inefficiency of serf agriculture, even though behind them were the landlords, who depended upon income from the leases, and the government, which levied double the normal taxes on the Jews.

As well as lease-holding, Jews were involved in a wide range of other occupations. There were rich bankers to the nobility. There were rich merchants involved in import and export of commodities such as wood, fur and wheat. There were also much larger numbers of small traders in the countryside who bought and sold agricultural produce and supplied manufactured articles to the peasants. Jews were important to the agricultural economy as artisans in the villages: wheelwrights, blacksmiths and carpenters. They lent money. They were traders in locally made articles as well as imported luxury items, providing these services to the peasants as well as to the gentry. Thus, the Jews in the towns and villages and the peasants in the countryside were in close contact economically, but geographically separate and in addition divided by language, culture, religion and legal status. Jews came into religious and economic conflict with other sections of the population in a complex set of relationships.

The first catastrophe to befall the Jews of Poland was the series of massacres attending the Chmielnicki Rebellion. In 1648 there was a great peasant rebellion in the Ukrainian provinces of Poland. The Ukrainian serfs, led by a Cossack leader called Bogdan Chmielnicki, rose against the Polish

landlords. Ukraine had been colonised by Poland and the large estates were predominantly owned by Polish landlords. The peasants were Ukrainian or Ruthenian. The Jews occupied a social position between the aristocracy and the serfs (over half the landed estates in the Ukraine were leased to Jews, who managed them on behalf of absentee Polish landlords⁶⁵). Thus, the class division inherent in the Polish neo-feudal organisation of agriculture was overlaid by a three-way ethnic and religious division with the Jews identified with the Landlords. As such they were vulnerable during the peasant uprising. The peasants and Cossacks attacked and murdered those associated with Polish rule – landlords, officials, Catholic priests *and Jews*. The Poles massacred peasants in an attempt to put down the rebellion and the Chmielnicki army fought back and defeated the Polish army. Chmielnicki made an alliance with the Russians which, after his death, led to their taking over part of Ukraine from Poland. Very few Jews lived in this part thereafter⁶⁶. However, Jews continued to flourish in the remaining part of Poland until the independent Polish state disappeared in 1772, after which their position deteriorated.

Russian society

In order to understand the change in the position of the Jews after the partition it is necessary to understand how Russian society differed from Polish society at the time of the partition. Unlike in Poland, the landlords did not elect the monarch. The Russian Tsars were ruthless autocrats engaged in continuous imperial expansion. The empire was steadily being extended to the West, East and South⁶⁷. The central core consisted of landed noble estates farmed by serfs and was considered to be Russia proper. This part was called Great Russia. Most of the population there were serfs.

An outer zone was recently conquered territory. Here there were also free peasants, who had been persuaded to settle on newly acquired territory in exchange for better conditions. The Tsars had to evolve policies by which to govern these new territories and their different populations and social organizations. Clearly, it would have been difficult to maintain stable control either in the periphery or in the core if they had simply been merged. The Tsars kept the new territories separate and devised regimes that made some use of the existing social structures wherever possible.

65 Levine H. (1991) 'Economic origins of anti-Semitism: Poland and its Jews in the early modern period' Yale University Press, London

66 It is interesting that it was at this time that representations were made to Oliver Cromwell to admit Jews into England.

67 Bartlett R.P 'Serfdom and State Power in Imperial Russia.' *European History Quarterly*. (2003) 33:29-64.

The structure of the Russian state had been set up by Peter the Great in the 17th and 18th centuries. He re-organised his regime so that he could get the manpower and resources to fight his wars of conquest and then hold down the conquered territories. This basic structure was maintained until well into the 19th century.

All were subject to the absolute authority of the Tsar. There was a system of internal passports so that permission had to be obtained to take up residence in any particular place. This was of course important in controlling the serfs, whose subordinate status was imposed in new laws between 1580 and 1649. They were tied to the land and their exact status varied according to the ownership of the land upon which they lived. Some serfs were on the estates of nobles whose property they were, and others were State serfs living on land belonging to the Tsar. Monastic estates also had serfs.

There were three service classes: the noble, the clerical and the urban. The nobles were expected to provide services to the Tsar in running the state and their rank within the noble category depended upon the function they performed, from Ministers of State or Provincial Governors at the top down through the more minor officials and army officers. The top rank of the urban group, the merchants, ran the administration in the towns – tax collection, inspection of manufactured goods, census taking and so on. The categories were hereditary but the rank within each category was dependent upon meritorious service. It was also possible under some circumstances to be promoted upwards from a lower to a higher class for meritorious service.

The Russian Orthodox Church was incorporated into this organisation. The priests were state officials under the control of the Tsar, who ruled personally with divine sanction over his empire which was claimed to be the successor to Byzantium. The various hierarchical grades of the Russian Orthodox Church constituted the clerical category.

The Tsars were particularly careful not to allow any alternative centres of power to develop. Thus, the Tsars' decrees were transmitted and carried out through a hierarchical chain of appointed officials. At the bottom in the serf village the landlord would leave internal affairs to a committee of heads of families. The landlord had ultimate authority over the serfs within his own estate, but a governor appointed by the Tsar would be in charge of provincial affairs and the nobles were subject to his authority. In the towns the local officials would carry out similar functions. The officials higher up the chain had authority over those lower down. There were a number of administrative bodies, which carried out the policy decrees of the Tsar. At the very highest level, there were advisory councils of various sorts and government ministers. The Tsar decided policy and issued decrees and

could heed or ignore advice as he wished. Thus, the administration of the empire could be quite chaotic with different arms of government carrying out contradictory policies.

Catherine II (the Great)⁶⁸ was a German princess who became the ruler of Russia (1762-1796) after she married and then succeeded Tsar Peter III, who was murdered by some army officers in a coup. She grew up during the Enlightenment and in fact corresponded with Voltaire. Catherine started out intending to reform the backward structures of Russian serf society in accordance with Enlightenment ideas. However, shortly after she became Empress, she abandoned radical social changes. It is reasonable to ask why.

At the very start of her reign, her power was threatened by a peasant uprising in the areas beyond the Ural river. The Pugachev rebellion⁶⁹ was led by a Cossack of that name. He claimed to be the assassinated Tsar Peter III and was initially successful in raising a large army of disaffected Cossacks and serfs. Several important towns fell and many people in them were killed. Things looked bad for the regime and the possibility of the rebels reaching Moscow seemed real. However, when a sufficient number of regular Russian regiments arrived, the peasants were defeated. Pugachev was betrayed to the Russian authorities by his associates and was executed.

Catherine realised that her power depended upon the nobles. It was dangerous to undermine their privileges and the structure of Russian society had to be preserved in the face of outside influences. In Russia itself the hierarchical autocratic system based upon serf labour and the Russian Orthodox Church was protected. By maintaining the existing strict censorship and control of political activity and control over the right to travel, she hoped to be able to modernise commerce and industry while still preserving autocratic rule.

She adopted different, flexible, approaches to ruling each of the recently acquired territories by initially using *existing local* structures⁷⁰. It was deemed necessary to allow a certain amount of autonomy to them, with the long term aim of realising the enlightenment ideal of a uniform set of laws for the whole empire. Both Poland and Russia were societies based upon serfdom. The Tsars left the Polish landlords in control of their estates but abolished the elected monarchy.

68 Isabel de Madariaga 'Catherine the Great' (1990) Yale University Press.

69 Alexander Pushkin 'The history of Pugachev.' (1833) Trans: Earl Sampson. Ann Arbor

70 Leonid I. Strakhovsky 'Constitutional aspects of the Imperial Russian policy towards national minorities' (1941) Journal of Modern History 13(4) 467-492

3.3. The Jews under the Tsars: Russian policy towards the Jews after the partition of Poland

Before the 18th century there were very few Jews subject to the Russian Tsars. However, the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century (1772, 1793, 1795) brought a large part of Poland into the Russian Empire under Catherine II and with it large numbers of Polish Jews. Even more Jews came under Russian control in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars.

Illuminating discussions of the origin of Russian policy towards the Jews of the Russian partition of Poland are given by John Klier⁷¹ and Hans Rogger⁷². Klier suggests that the direction of later Russian policy was really set in the first few years of the encounter with the Jews of Poland.

All the Tsars until 1918 (including Catherine), treated the conquered, non-Russian, sections of the population (the 'inorodtsy') with suspicion and imposed social and cultural restrictions on them, aimed at suppressing the development of any opposition to imperial power. It was thought that revolutionary ideas were foreign to the true Russians and were being brought in by outsiders. This applied to the Jews as well as to the Poles. Advancement in government service was restricted to Russian speakers. The language of instruction in schools and universities had to be Russian as was that of administration. The Internal passport system was used to control where people could live. The Orthodox Church was favoured although there was mostly no forced conversion.

Jews were prohibited from living in villages and had to move to towns. They were also restricted to an area of Jewish residence, the so-called 'Pale of Settlement', initially mainly in the newly acquired Polish territory, apart from a strip along the western border about 30 miles wide (see Map 5). The Pale of Settlement was later enlarged after the Napoleonic wars and the conquest of territory from the Ottomans along the Black Sea (see Map 6).

Commonly, these decrees are attributed to an innate Russian antisemitism, not requiring explanation, apart perhaps, in terms of the fanaticism of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was true that Russians were generally hostile to Jews on religious grounds and the Orthodox Church would have been concerned about the influence of Jewish teachings, but this cannot be wholly satisfactory as an explanation. As emphasised before in this essay, we have to look for extra political and economic reasons for these restrictions. The

71 John Doyle Klier 'Russia Gathers Her Jews: The origins of the Jewish Question in Russia 1772-1825' (1986) Northern Illinois University Press, Dekalb Illinois.

72 Hans Rogger. (1976) 'Government, Jews, Peasants, and Land in Post Emancipation Russia.' *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, XVII (2-3): 171-211.

Pale of Settlement originated when Jewish merchants were prohibited from travelling from the Polish partition to the interior of Russia⁷³. This came about in response to petitions from Moscow merchants on the grounds that their competition would upset commercial relationships. This decree has to be seen in the context of laws relating to travel and internal passports applying to all Russians. At the time there was no right of free travel in Russia and it was only nobles and merchants of the first rank who were allowed to move to Moscow anyway. Later, when artisans and even serfs could obtain passports to settle in Moscow, the Jews were still confined to the Pale.

Catherine's policy in Poland was to try as far as was possible to impose a legal code, based upon the existing Russian Table of Ranks. The Polish Jews were a particular difficulty in this regard. They lived in small towns and also in the countryside in small villages and on private estates of the nobility, where they were neither serfs nor noble landlords. They had their own alien, enclosed culture of which the Russian authorities had little knowledge. Also, self-government of internal Jewish affairs via the Kahal continued and was not abolished until 1844. They spoke their own language. They dressed in medieval style. Outsiders saw them as a problem to be dealt with, either by reforming and integrating them or excluding them. Most Jews did not want to be dealt with or integrated, which was a problem for the reformers. The simple way to fit them into the existing categories in the table of ranks was to lump them all together as townspeople and force them all to move to the towns. The Russian government thought that removing Jews from the countryside would benefit the condition of the serfs and raise the level of agriculture.

Jews were forced to register as inhabitants of the towns and attempts were made to prevent them from actually living in the countryside, thus separating them from their means of livelihood. Inevitably this caused severe economic hardship and brought them into competition with the existing inhabitants of the towns. Formally Jews in the towns were to be given the same rights as Christians of equivalent rank (merchants grade 1, merchants grade 2, townspeople etc.), but this was often frustrated by the Christian notables. In the event, many Jews stayed put in the countryside, with the tacit agreement of the landowners, to whom they were providing essential services, but they were always subject to arbitrary expulsions.

Ideas concerning the resettlement of Jews as farmers on virgin land kept being floated in official reports but after some not very successful attempts this was not pursued. This idea of breaking up the traditional social structure

73 Richard Pipes. 'Catherine II and the Jews: the origin of the pale of settlement.' (1975) *East European Jewish Affairs*. 5(2):3-20

of the Jews by converting them into primary producers was a failure in Russia, where it was part of a policy of clumsy social engineering from above, intended to integrate the Jews⁷⁴. With hindsight, we can see that the policy was incoherent and contradictory, being of benefit neither to the Jews nor to the serfs. It increased the hardships of both. It failed in its intention to integrate Jews and it also failed to confront the basic problem of agriculture, serfdom itself. Even after emancipation of the serfs (1861) the law divided the peasants from those Jews remaining in the countryside, since the Jews were classified as town dwellers and therefore not governed by the same laws as the peasants (village assemblies, taxation, road mending duties etc.).

3.4. Persecutions and the Jewish exodus from Russia in the 19th century

New laws restricted the rights of Jews to live where they wished, to manage estates and taverns and buy land. Apart from the social strains caused by disrupting the lives of Jews, these laws had another consequence. The state was telling the peasants and the townsmen that they needed protection from the Jews' supposedly superior commercial skills. This meant that any perceived improvement of Jewish conditions, whether in terms of commercial progress or legal status, caused alarm in the wider society and was often the trigger for physical attacks on Jewish communities. Social attitudes may also be gauged from the descriptions of events during the pogroms. Where we have evidence, it appears that the attacks on Jews during pogroms were aimed at the whole Jewish community, not at specific groups of Jews. Whatever the grievances or supposed grievances that had been the specific trigger for the pogroms, they did not just attack the financiers or the big merchants. They attacked all Jews.

In the last quarter of the 19th century there was an enormous migration of Jews from the Russian Empire. They moved to Western Europe, Britain, and North and South America. In fact, migration was not peculiar to the Jews⁷⁵. Millions of people left Europe for America at this time and they were driven by economic forces as well as oppressive laws⁷⁶. For Jews, the Russian, Polish and Ukranian pogroms were a major extra driving force.

⁷⁴ Remarkably, it was actually carried out by the Jews themselves in Zionist settlements in Palestine in the 20th century. The policy of 'Jewish labour' echoed the language of the framers of Russian policy in 1804, but was, by contrast, a strategy for creating an independent Jewish state.

⁷⁵ John Millar 'The Lithuanians in Scotland' (1998) pub. House of Lochar, Isle of Colonsay, Argyle

⁷⁶ Ewa Moraska 'Labour Migrations of Poles in the Atlantic World Economy' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. (1989) 31:237-272

The modern Russian pogroms started during Easter week-end in 1881 when 40 Jews died⁷⁷. In 1903 there were two days of riots in the town of Kishinev in which 45 Jews were killed. There were more mob attacks during the 1905 revolution, again starting in the major towns and spreading to neighbouring smaller towns and villages. The death toll is reported as 1430⁷⁸, but there are conflicting reports about the numbers. During the First World War and the revolutions that followed, there were extensive pogroms in which the death toll far exceeded the previous figures. (~150,000)

The pogroms of 1881

The pogroms started after the assassination of the Tsar Liberator, Alexander II, when mobs attacked Jews in the South Western town of Elizavetgrad (see Map 6). The pogroms then spread to many of the other towns and villages. The mob attacks followed a pattern in which a crowd would descend upon the Jewish quarter, break into the houses and rob and beat the inhabitants. Some Jews would be killed. Eyewitnesses reported wild scenes of gruesome violence, the kinds of things that happen when mass hysteria and crowd psychology take over. The authorities would typically intervene only after several days, too late to stop the violence. However, when Jews formed armed self-defence groups, soldiers attacked and arrested the defenders.

The older historians⁷⁹ attribute these persecutions to a conscious plan of the Tsarist ministers. According to this idea the new Tsar wished to distract the population from the real cause of their misery by blaming Jews for the assassination.

There is some plausibility in this theory. It would have been a powerful tactic. This was only 20 years after the assassinated Tsar, Alexander II, had liberated the serfs. His murder would have been a cause of dismay among the peasants. There was a genuine horror among many at the assassination. The peasants were not as hostile to the Tsar as the democrats and revolutionary socialist parties wished them to be. Among the peasants there existed a dream of a 'second liberation', in which the Tsar would finally drive the landlords out, leaving them to farm all the land and organise their own affairs. The peasants were dissatisfied with the indemnities they had to pay to compensate the former owners of the land, the feudal nobles. (These payments continued to be extracted until 1906.)

77 I.M. Aronson 'Troubled Waters: The origin of the 1881 anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia' (1990) p61 University of Pittsburgh Press

78 John D Klier, Shlomo Lambroza Eds. 'Pogroms: anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian history' (1992) p231 Cambridge University Press

79 Dubnow S.M. 'History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: from the earliest times until the present day'. (1920) The Jewish Publication Society of America. Philadelphia.

The poorer peasants desperately needed more land to subsist. After the emancipation they found themselves with smaller plots on which to support themselves than they had under serfdom and the population had grown. This is discussed in an interesting study by Teodor Shanin⁸⁰, which explores the independent nature of peasant politics and demonstrates that peasants developed a program which was different to that of the urban parties. This found expression later in the formation of the Union of Russian Peasants, which had representatives in the first Duma which met after the 1905 revolution. Many of the town labourers retained this attitude of belief in the Tsar and hostility to his enemies.

Later historians have questioned the primary role of the Tsarist authorities in instigating the pogroms. They failed to find any documentary evidence of high level planning by the Tsar or his immediate ministers⁸¹. Also, one might think that the authorities would be conscious of the need to keep order and would have been worried by any signs of crowd action.

There was undoubtedly antisemitism among the upper reaches in Tsarist society, many of whom thought that Jews contributed to revolutionary plots (including the assassination of Alexander II). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the regime came under threat from liberals and socialists, conservative patriotic societies were formed (e.g. The Union of the Russian People), and these had support among high officials and also the tacit approval of the Tsar. Orlando Figes⁸² quotes a letter in 1905 from the Tsar to his mother celebrating the way his loyal subjects had spontaneously expressed their anger against the Jews in the attacks of that year. Certainly, these organisations had a hand in encouraging anti-Jewish pogroms.

However, as the attacks were actually carried out by lower class townsmen, industrial workers and peasants, one can ask what drove them to participate in pogroms? When you examine the history, it is apparent that some of the preconditions existed which might cause civil strains to develop into pogroms against the Jews. The stresses and strains caused by rapid development of capitalist enterprises were linked in the official and also in the popular mind with the influx of Jews into the towns of the South West. Antisemitism was widespread. Xenophobia was fanned by antisemitic press campaigns.

In towns, Jewish businessmen, artisans and labourers competed economically with Christian businessmen, artisans and labourers. The

80 Teodor Shanin 'Russia 1907-1905: Revolution as a Moment of Truth' (1986) MacMillan, London.

81 John D. Klier, Shlomo Lambroza, eds. 'Pogroms: anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian history' (1992) Cambridge University Press.

82 Orlando Figes 'A Peoples Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924' pages 196-198 (1996) Random House.

population of towns in the South Western provinces had grown rapidly in the 19th century through immigration of both Jews and poor non-Jewish migrant labourers from other parts of Russia seeking a better life in the economically booming towns of the region. These New Russian territories had been taken from the Turks and were opened for settlement to Jews of the Pale by Catherine the Great. The Jewish population grew very rapidly and the percentage of Jews also increased in relation to the rest of the population. In Odessa, for example, the Jewish population grew from 17,080 (18.5%) in 1854 to 112,335 (33%) in 1892.

Peasants and townspeople were also subject to different laws, particularly in terms of tax regimes which were different for the different grades in the Tsarist table of ranks. The Jews were subject to an additional set of discriminatory laws which applied only to them and this also served to set them apart from the rest of the population. In particular, Tsarist officials at the highest level signalled their suspicion of the Jews by enacting laws restricting their interactions with the peasants.⁸³ The Jews were prohibited from buying peasant land and the reason given was that this prevented Jews with their superior trading skills from taking over in agriculture.

Since the pogroms typically started in the large towns of the South West, such as Elizavetgrad, Odessa and Kherson, and spread from there to the small towns and villages, the wave of pogroms was not primarily a function of the ambiguous economic relationship between peasants and Jews in the villages. The majority of the rioters were small merchants and labourers. However, the legacy of the ancient relationship would have had an influence on the town labourers, many of whom were not long separated from the villages and were not touched by revolutionary influences. Some of them were only temporarily away from their villages as large numbers of seasonal workers travelled south every summer. Many of them came from areas where there were no Jews and this would be their first actual contact with Jews. In addition, in 1881 there was a crop failure and an economic downturn, so there were masses of unemployed labourers, both Jewish and Gentile, competing for a bare subsistence.

The pogroms of 1905

In 1905-6 there were at least 960 reported pogroms. These pogroms took place during the turmoil of a revolution. In the whole of Russia, the normal aspects of the social order seemed to be called into question. In an attempt to stop the unrest, the Tsar issued a decree, the October Manifesto, granting some degree

83 Hans Rogger 'Jews, Peasants and Land in post emancipation Russia'. (1976) *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 17(1): 5-25

of civil liberty in Russia, an elected Duma (parliament) and removal of some of the legal restrictions suffered by Jews. This was greeted with widespread public celebration by liberals and revolutionaries and also by Jews. Conversely it caused consternation among supporters of the Tsarist regime, those whose position depended on it, conservatives who feared increased revolutionary activity and also those who feared more competition from Jews. For instance, any moves on the part of the various governments to ease restrictions on Jews tended to collide with the peasants' basic hunger for more land.

The ways in which civil unrest at the time allowed these pre-existing communal tensions to turn into pogroms against Jews can be identified by examining the details of the events in particular places. The worst of the 1905 pogroms occurred in Odessa with up to 800 murders⁸⁴. Preceding the pogrom there had been wide-spread strikes and gun battles between police and revolutionaries, starting in April, with deaths on both sides. This led up to a general strike in June.

In the midst of the strike the battleship Potemkin arrived at the harbour carrying mutinying sailors. A large crowd went to the docks to greet them. They attacked and looted the grain warehouses, which were set alight, and the harbour buildings were destroyed. The authorities called in the army, which blockaded the dock area and fired on the crowd, killing 2000 people. On the 18th of October, when news of the Tsar's manifesto arrived in Odessa, there was a mass demonstration which marched through the town, accompanied by red flags and demands for the abdication of the Tsar. However, as explained above, opinion in the city was divided in relation to the Tsar.

Apart from the nobility, officials and police whose position depended upon the regime, the workers were also split. The pro-Tsarist local newspaper published inflammatory articles attacking the revolutionaries and the Jews. In the following days there was a large patriotic demonstration against the revolutionaries and supporting the Tsar. This turned on the Jews in a terrible and brutal pogrom during which the pogromists perpetrated horrific acts of cruelty.

A large part of the pogromist mob consisted of casually employed day labourers. Odessa attracted massive immigration from the rest of Russia in search of work. As in 1881, there had been a severe trade downturn and many were in dire poverty, unable to obtain more than occasional work. About half of these workers were Jews and so there was competition for the bare necessities of food and shelter between two culturally and religiously differentiated groups of workers. One of the main sources of casual jobs was

84 Robert Weinberg (1987) 'Workers, Pogroms, and the 1905 Revolution in Odessa.' *Russian Review*. 46(1): 53-75.

the grain trade, which was dominated by Jewish businessmen. The factory workers, on the other hand, were less likely to take part in the pogrom. They were a more settled work force and more likely than the day labourers to be influenced by trade union and political ideas. Many of them came to the aid of the victims.

An official investigation found that some of the police in Odessa had helped to organize the mob, directing it to Jewish houses and supplying it with arms. Significantly the army was not called in to suppress the riot until the third day, when it was easily stopped. No prosecutions of officials or police took place.

Thus, in this series of events there seemed to be at least three simultaneous confrontations in which the cultural/religious divide between Jews and Gentiles was a factor in directing the anger of the crowd towards the Jews. One was an ongoing class struggle between Jewish employers and casual labourers, which was manifested in the burning of the docks. Another was an intra-class confrontation between Jewish and Gentile casual labourers in a time of mass unemployment. A third was the hostility of local notables (state officials, newspaper editors and police) towards Jews. The trigger was the 1905 revolution and the October Manifesto.

3.5. The First World War and the collapse of the empires

The outbreak of the First World War was a disaster for European civilization as a whole, but created extra problems for the peoples of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, including the Jews. During and after the war, vicious nationalisms were unleashed as the Tsarist Empire broke up. A wave of inter-ethnic violence took place as nationalist parties tried to establish their own states in the different partitions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Russian civil war overlapped with these resurgent nationalisms. Jewish communities were attacked and large numbers murdered as the various armies swept back and forth.

Mass expulsions by the Russian army on the outbreak of the world war (1914)

In 1914, when German armies entered Russian territory, Russian generals feared that the subject peoples of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine would prove unreliable and help the Germans with supplies and information about Russian troop movements. They ordered the removal of hundreds of thousands of civilians. These included resident German subjects (300,000), German speaking Russian subjects (250,000) and Jews (600,000). Where they could

not manage to expel all these people, they took hostages and threatened to hang them if any collaboration took place. The expulsions were carried out with great brutality and incompetence. Some of those expelled were crowded into railway boxcars and transported out of the war zone. Others simply had to take to the roads. Many died on the way from disease, hunger and exposure⁸⁵.

The expulsion program served to legitimate violence and the expulsions were accompanied by widespread attacks on the refugees whose property and homes were taken.

Pogroms and the Russian civil war (The Ukraine 1917-1921)

By 1917 the Germans had occupied most of the Western and South Western territories of Russia. They encouraged the formation of national entities under German tutelage so as to separate the populations from Russia. Nationalist parties took the opportunities this offered with alacrity. Unfortunately, most of these places had more than one national group living in them. There was fighting not only over the form of government but also between different national groups for control. This formed the background for the events of the Russian civil war in South West Russia.

The Russian civil war broke out after the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in 1917. It is not adequate to simply portray this as a two-sided struggle between Reds and Whites⁸⁶. There were many contending forces and shifting alliances (see Map 7). There were actually several different civil wars taking place and these formed the context in which the pre-existing anti-Jewish prejudices and cultural and economic conflicts were transformed into actual attacks on Jewish communities, from which large numbers were murdered as the various armies swept back and forth. These pogroms were different in scale to the earlier ones, with a death toll at least 100 times greater. Figes gives a figure of 150,000. Also, hundreds of thousands fled their homes. It has been claimed that the main cause was mob behaviour and the quest for plunder. That this was a factor seems likely but, in that case, the wealthier people in all communities in the towns would have suffered equally. In fact, Jews were especially picked out.

This time it was not poor and hungry day labourers in the large towns who initiated the attacks as was the case in 1905, but armed detachments of soldiers. With their training and their use of firearms and bayonets, it is not surprising that the death toll was so high. Elias Heifetz⁸⁷, who headed a Red

85 Eric Lohr 'The Russian Army and the Jews: Mass Deportations, Hostages and Violence during World War I'. *Russian Review*, 60(3): 404-419

86 Vladimir N. Brovkin. 'Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War' (1994) Princeton N.J.

87 Elias Heifetz. 'The Slaughter of the Ukrainian Jews. (1921) N.Y.



Map 7: Ukraine 1919.

Contending forces during the Russian Civil War.

Cross mission to the Ukraine to help the victims of the pogroms, collected many eyewitness accounts. He relates how the pogromist bands of soldiers came from outside. In some cases, the peasants protected ‘their’ Jews from the soldiers. The complete breakdown of the normal order of society has to be seen also against the background of the mass killing in the recent World War. In two and a half years the armies of the Russian Empire had suffered five million casualties. Killing people had become routine. The first requirement for turning ordinary civilians into soldiers is to enable them to kill without compunction or hesitation. The group solidarity of a military unit can be made to relieve the individual from any sense of responsibility for the barbaric acts he carries out in the name of the group. He can maintain a sense of righteousness while doing things which would be unthinkable in civilian life. He knows that he is on the right side and it is a necessary duty to kill the enemy. It does not take much to transfer this to the killing of unarmed men, women and children. That other essential feature of military training, the rigid discipline which keeps soldiers under the control of a central command and ensures that they don’t go on the rampage on their own account, seems to have been absent or to have failed.

The question is, what made Jews a particular target of the soldiers? Some authors blame the governments. Others describe a situation in which local detachments themselves decided to attack Jews specifically and were not under central control. In this version the commanders could not have prevented pogroms even if they had wished to.

All the armies in the Civil War in the Ukraine committed pogroms, with or without direction by their supreme commanders (see Table 1 below). The fact that pogroms took place under all successive regimes makes us look for some common underlying causes. There is considerable controversy. Nevertheless, in line with the general theme of this essay, it is possible to identify preconditions for hostility towards Jews and also to identify what precipitated the attacks at this time.

The attitudes of the generals and politicians are certainly important. The White officers inherited the traditional Tsarist belief that the peasants had been stirred up by revolutionary ideas imported from the West by agitators, namely Jews. The Cossack leaders were also hostile to the Jewish population and came to believe that the Bolsheviks were led by Jews. In contrast, the Provisional Government and the Ukrainian Nationalists were officially, in theory at least, against pogroms. The Bolsheviks and the Germans were the only ones to take strong action against pogroms, whose occurrence decreased markedly in the areas that they controlled.

The demographic details of the Ukraine, the inherited beliefs about Jews and the sequence of events in the various battle zones are all crucial in trying to understand this. An important common factor is that all the armies were put together in a great hurry by recruiting existing Cossack bands and also peasants. Many Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants came to believe that Russian Bolshevism was a Jewish led plot to rob them of their freedom, their land, and their crops.

Demography in Ukraine

The Ukraine had been colonised by the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth since the 16th century and the demography still reflected this. At the end of the 19th century over 70% of the population were Ukrainian language speakers and most of these were peasants living in the countryside. Great Russians were about 12% and Poles 1%. Jews constituted about 8%.

Very few Jews were wholly engaged in agricultural labour. Their economic role had not changed much. Absentee Polish and Russian landlords still owned very large estates and they leased the running of these to Jews who also leased the right to distil alcohol and to run taverns, flour mills and saw mills. Jews provided outlets for agricultural produce, traded in manufactured

goods and worked as artisans. There were also bigger merchants and industrial capitalists operating in the cities, as well as doctors and lawyers etc. Thus, Jews in the towns and villages and Ukrainians in the countryside were in close relations economically but geographically separate and divided by language, culture and religion. The preconditions for anti-Jewish attacks may be said to have still existed in 1917 in much the same way as they had in 1648, 1903 and 1905. However, the events that triggered the violence were specific to the period and require more detailed enquiry.

The different political forces in the Ukraine (1917-1921 (See Map 7))

The peasants

In 1917, peasants occupied the landed estates as they had in 1905. The promise that peasants would get land was a major factor in the defeat of the Tsar and also in the defeat of the Provisional government by the Bolsheviks. The peasant conviction that they were entitled to land and to freedom to run their own affairs, without interference by landlords or government, also played a determining role in the progress of the civil wars. Each of the contending armies depended on massive recruitment of peasants and Cossacks, and also on obtaining food and other supplies from them. All the armies resorted to direct requisitioning of supplies from the villages and forced conscription of peasant soldiers.

The rate of desertion was very high and Arthur E. Adams⁸⁸ describes how the fate of each army was decided as peasants at first joined it in large numbers, leading to victory, and then deserted in equally large numbers leading to defeat. He suggests that the peasants were very aware of their own interests and were prepared to fight in response to promises by the different political parties in turn that land and freedom would be theirs. When these promises were unfulfilled the soldiers deserted. There were widespread peasant uprisings in the villages behind the various fronts and there were numerous armed peasant bands of deserters operating in the woods (the so-called Greens). They fought against outside interference and for peasant autonomy. Also, the anarchist Mahkno led a peasant army which fought at different times against the Germans, the Whites and the Reds.

The Don Cossack Republic and the Bolshevik invasion of the Ukraine

The Cossacks were a fighting military caste who had settled on land along the Southern and Eastern borders to defend the conquests of the Russian Empire. They also performed a crucial role in suppressing internal rebellion against the

88 Arthur E. Adams 'The great Ukrainian Jaquerie' in 'The Ukraine 1917-1921: A study in revolution. Ed: Taras Hunczak

Tsarist state and the landlords. They were given a certain autonomy under the Tsars and fought to preserve this. When the Cossacks settled along the Don river attempted to set up an independent Cossack Republic, the Bolsheviks, who regarded the Cossacks as class enemies, sent a military force into the region, which crushed the Cossack rising.

The Ukrainian Central Council (the Rada) 1917-1918

The Ukrainian National Government, headed by the Rada or Central Council, was set up under the Provisional Government with Symon Petliura as head of its military committee.⁸⁹ They initially attempted to set up a multi-ethnic autonomous government within the Russian Empire. Ukrainians, Poles, Great Russians, Muslims and Jews would exercise a degree of autonomy over their own affairs, with each having a special government minister to represent their interests in the democratic Parliament. This was the most enlightened legislation regarding Jews that had ever existed in the lands of the Russian Empire. In the event, all this was in vain. The war with Germany/Austria, the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent Civil War forced ethnic consciousness and nationalism to the fore. Pogroms started to occur with increasing frequency. The Ukrainian National Council was blamed for instigating these pogroms but whether they were fully responsible or simply not in control of their army is a matter which is still a subject of controversy.

The Rada had declared independence for the Ukraine and signed a separate peace treaty with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk⁹⁰. They preferred independence, albeit under German domination, to being a part of the Russian empire. The German army occupied the Ukraine and drove the Russian Army out. This brought the Rada into conflict with the Bolsheviks.

The military dictatorship

The treaty with the German army had obliged the Rada to supply large quantities of iron, coal and agricultural goods (e.g. grain and horses) to sustain its war effort. Germany was starving owing to the allied naval blockade. However, the democratic Rada was not very successful in fulfilling its obligations, especially as the peasants were in control of the land. The Germans engineered a coup which put a military dictator, the Cossack General Skorapadski, in charge. With the backing of the German army, he

89 Henry Abrahamson 'A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times 1917-1920' (1999) Harvard University Press

90 The Germans had invaded Russia in 1914 and when the Bolsheviks took over in 1917, they decided not to fight any more. An abortive peace conference took place at Brest Litovsk. When the Bolshevik delegation under Trotsky refused to sign anything, the German army continued to advance. This eventually forced the Bolshevik government to continue the war.

instituted brutal forced requisitions, seizing grain and livestock from the peasants. He immediately started to reverse the land occupations and restored the landowners to their property. Soon there were armed peasant resistance bands in the woods. Both the Cossacks and the peasants wanted to take back the land that they had been forced to return and fought both Germans and the Skorapadski regime.

Petliura and the Directory

With the defeat of Germany in 1918, the German Army left the Ukraine. The German sponsored military dictatorship was overthrown in 1918 and a new Ukrainian National Government was set up under a council called the Directory, again with Petliura in a leading position. They came into conflict with the Ukrainian Bolsheviks and a Russian Bolshevik Red Army advanced again into the Ukraine to support the local Bolsheviks, who had insufficient local support. This was seen by the Ukrainian Nationalists and the peasants and Cossacks as further outside Russian interference. The pogrom outbreaks rose to a crescendo in 1919.

The Volunteer Army (The Whites)

The commanding generals of the Russian army fell out with Kerensky's Provisional Government shortly before the Bolshevik seizure of power and thereafter fled to the South West, where they proceeded to assemble an army (the Volunteer Army or the Whites) to fight the Bolsheviks. This was initially formed entirely of Tsarist officers and their aim was to restore the Constituent Assembly⁹¹, although many of the individual officers wished to go back to the old regime in all of Russia. Many were sons of noblemen who had lost their estates in the revolution. They planned to march on Moscow. In the event, and after initial defeats, they did advance to within 100 miles of the Russian capital. This automatically meant that war in the Ukraine was a life or death matter, both for the Ukrainian government and the Bolsheviks in Moscow. The Whites forced the peasants to restore the land that they had occupied in the revolution to the former noble estate owners. They also resorted to forced requisition of supplies and conscription of peasant soldiers in the Tsarist manner, which was also motivated by revenge for the loss of their inheritance. This generated peasant resistance and certainly contributed to the eventual victory of the Bolsheviks.

⁹¹ The setting up of an elected Constituent Assembly had been a long term aim of opponents of autocracy long before the Russian Revolution of 1917. Its purpose was to have been to agree a new constitution for Russia. In the event it was closed down by the Bolsheviks.

How it came to be believed that the Jews were the source of Bolshevik terror

The soldiers of the White Army carried out many pogroms. The officers were themselves deeply antisemitic, and there was a widespread belief among them that the Bolsheviks were Jews. This reflected the old Tsarist belief that the foreign ideas that had upset the order of society were brought into Russia by the Jews. It is significant that the commanding generals and officers who had implemented the mass expulsions of Jews from the war zones in 1914 were the same ones who organised the White army in Ukraine in 1917. It is not surprising that they carried their antisemitic attitudes with them.

There is still much controversy concerning Petliura's responsibility for the pogroms carried out by the troops of the Rada and later the Directory. In his 1921 report, Heifetz concluded that Petliura had deliberately used antisemitism as a political tool. In this version of the origin of the pogroms, labelling the Bolshevik party as Jewish made it possible to use the ancient cultural memories to mobilise peasant and Cossack soldiers to the nationalist anti-Russian cause.

Propaganda of this type definitely existed and there are numerous reported manifestations of it. However, the fact that propaganda was so effective, and the scale and pervasiveness of the pogrom horror so great, requires more in the form of concrete historical explanation. Peasant violence against Jews had not occurred on such a scale in the Ukraine for hundreds of years. We have to examine how the actual circumstances of the conflicts in the civil war contributed directly, both to the hostility of the peasant soldiers towards the Bolsheviks and to their attacks on the Jews.

In the beginning, the Bolsheviks had encouraged peasant autonomy but when peasants established elected Soviets, the Bolsheviks seldom achieved majorities. They abolished free elections to the Soviets by outlawing competing parties. The Bolshevik government had very quickly run up against the problem of agricultural supplies to feed the Red Army and the cities. Industry had collapsed and there was nothing that they could give the peasants in return for food. In the Ukraine, as in central Russia, they sent armed requisitioning detachments into the countryside. Instead of the promised land reform, the peasants were subject to forced grain seizure and conscription into the Red Army. This was accompanied by brutal measures—beatings, torture and arbitrary shooting of anyone who resisted. The resulting terrorising of the peasant villages inflamed resistance. To the Ukrainian Nationalists and the peasants, the Bolshevik invasion could be seen as a reassertion of former Tsarist power in a new guise.

The tragedy for the Jews was that it was widely propagated and believed that the Russian Bolsheviks were Jews and that all Ukrainian Jews were

Bolsheviks or Bolshevik supporters. The whole Jewish community was labelled as the main source of Bolshevism, although most Bolsheviks were not Jews. It was true that there were some prominent Jews among the leadership of the Bolshevik party (including Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev) and it was a fact that there were numbers of Jews amongst the Bolshevik detachments⁹². This would have been astonishing for the Ukrainians, as Jews had never been allowed to occupy official government positions before. Thus, when the Cheka (the Bolshevik security police) and the Bolshevik requisitioning squads arrived in the villages of the Ukraine, the story spread among the peasants that the Bolsheviks were led by Jews. Again, when the landlord estates were turned into collective state farms, instead of being divided up and distributed to the peasants, this seemed to some to be a re-imposition of serfdom and that Jews were taking control in place of the landlords. The ancient folk image of the Jew as an agent of the Polish landlords was also to hand, reinforcing this belief

All this became more bitter when, in 1919, Lenin instituted a policy of 'de-Cossackisation', which amounted to physical elimination of Cossack leaders and dispossession of their lands. These lands were to be settled by non-Cossack peasants. The policy was designed to end the separate existence of the Cossacks as a group. For the Cossacks, the fight against the Bolsheviks was a matter of life and death and many held the belief that Jew equals Bolshevik. When the Cossack regiments entered a village or town they immediately set about killing and robbing Jews. Heifetz reports statements and communiques from Cossack commanders expressing approval of the pogroms and blaming Jews for the excesses of the Bolshevik commissars.

Abrahamson gives some statistics for the number of pogroms perpetrated by the different armies:

	Number of Pogroms
Petliura and the Directory	16706
The Whites	5235
Independents	4615
Red Army	725
Others 1	71

92 Sergei Pavliuchenko 'The Jewish question in the Russian revolution, or concerning the reasons for the Bolsheviks' defeat in the Ukraine in 1919' *Revolutionary Russia* (1997)10(2):25-36

The different governments of the Ukraine all had a tenuous hold on authority outside their immediate capitals. None of them lasted very long until the Bolsheviks finally took over. For example, between 1917 and 1919, Kiev had ten different governments: the Tsar; the Provisional Government under Kerensky; the Ukrainian National Government and the Central Rada; the Bolsheviks; then again the Rada; then the Rada subordinated to the German Army; then the military dictatorship under the Cossack, general Skorapadski, first under German tutelage then under the White army; then the Directory when the Germans withdrew in 1918; and finally the Bolsheviks.

By a dreadful irony of history, when the Bolsheviks finally took over, the specifically anti-Jewish pogroms became much less frequent and finally ceased, to be replaced by the rigors of the Red Terror and War Communism.

3.6. The Jews in the Austrian partition of Poland: The Polish-Ukrainian war and the pogrom in Lwów (Modern Lviv)

With the withdrawal of the Austrians after the Habsburg Empire collapsed in 1918, the question was whether the vacated territory would be incorporated in the newly declared Polish state or the new Ukrainian state as, in 1920, 3.3 million of the population were Greek Catholic Ukrainians, 1.35 million were Roman Catholic Poles and 900 thousand were Jews.

Lwów was the major city. The main population groups in the city were Poles (~51%), Ukrainians (~19%) and Jews (~28%). Ukrainian and Polish nationalists fought for control in bloody street fighting. Jewish organisations had previously staged a mass meeting at which it was declared that they were neutral in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. This proved to be a dangerous move as it meant that whichever side succeeded in gaining power, the Jews would be seen as potential supporters of the other. This is what in fact happened. Victorious Polish soldiers carried out a devastating pogrom in the city. William Hagen⁹³ gives an account of the pogrom based upon eye-witness statements. These describe gruesome acts of violence and murder accompanied by cruel and degrading public humiliation of the victims. The eyewitnesses report the soldiers celebrating their violent acts with triumphalist statements to the effect that they were enacting justifiable revenge against the Jews.

It was estimated that between seventy and one hundred and fifty Jews lost their lives.

93 William Hagen. 'The Moral Economy of Ethnic Violence: The Pogrom in Lwov, November 1918' *Geshichte und Gessellschaft*. (2005) 31:203-226

3.7. The 'Eastern Jews': The situation of the Polish Jews who found themselves in the Prussian partition of Poland

The Polish Jews who found themselves in the Prussian partition after 1772 (the Ostjuden) were caught up in ethnic conflicts which were different from those in the Russian or Austrian partitions⁹⁴. The Prussians wished from the start to Prussianise their new territories. The Polish national movements opposed this, hoping to re-establish the Polish state. The Polish political system had been replaced by an imposed Prussian bureaucracy which, however, left the power of the Polish landlords over their serfs more or less intact. Under Bismarck in the 19th century, a program was started to 'Germanise' the Polish lands. A colonisation society was established to buy land from Polish estates and settle German peasants on it. Later, when this had limited success in changing the proportions of Polish and German peasants, direct expropriation was tried. The Polish language was prohibited for education, justice, government business and public gatherings. Poles were passed over for public office in favour of Germans. There was a particular struggle over the decree that religious classes in school should be conducted in German, giving rise to large-scale strikes by school children in the years 1901 to 1907. These were supported and spread by the Polish nationalists and the Catholic clergy.

The Jews did not want to abandon their separate customs, schools, religious courts and their language, Yiddish. Thus, the Poles became hostile to the Germans and both were against the Jews. The Jewish immigrants, without citizenship rights, could not legally settle in Germany. There were periodic expulsions of these illegals⁹⁵. In the last quarter of the 19th century large numbers of Jewish immigrants from the Tsarist Empire began arriving. These poor immigrant Jews without citizenship rights could not legally settle in Germany. There were periodic round-ups of these 'illegals' and many were conveyed to the ports and put on ships to Britain or America⁹⁶. It was only later, after the removal of residence restrictions, that the Jewish population of the cities grew. They were concentrated in impoverished districts, scraping a living. They gave rise to worries, familiar to us, about how the host society could possibly absorb these poor asylum seekers.

94 William W. Hagen (1980) 'Germans, Poles and Jews: The nationality conflict in the Prussian East 1772-1914' The University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

95 Jack Wertheimer 'The unwanted element: East European Jews in Imperial Germany' Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook (1981)

96 Jack Wertheimer 'Unwelcome strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany' (1987) Oxford University Press.

4. The Holocaust

In this chapter I deal with the mid-20th century disaster which overtook the European Jews and the circumstances that allowed it to take place. The main thesis put forward in this essay has been that the existence of widespread antisemitic prejudice is not sufficient in itself to explain the violent attacks and persecutions of the Jews *when* and *where* they happened. Thus again we have to ask the question, why did it happen in the period 1934-1945?

The facts of the Holocaust might be thought to provide a powerful and irresistible proof of the main Zionist contention, namely, the Pinsker and Herzl theses about an irremediable, specifically anti-Jewish psychopathology of all Gentile society, which requires as a remedy a separation of the Jews in an armed state of their own. Thus the Holocaust is a major test for the whole of the alternative thesis being put forward in this essay

The account given here of the Holocaust and its origins demonstrates the main thrust of this essay, namely that, in order to adequately discuss this catastrophe which overtook the Jews, it is necessary to take into account both the long-term causes of antisemitism and also the unique contingent circumstances leading to the victory of the Nazi party in Germany and its conquest of parts of Europe. It turns out that examination of the detailed social and historical context allows us to question Herzl and Pinsker's ideas and possibly to anticipate and prevent circumstances in which such things might happen again.

The history of the Jews before and after the takeover of Germany by the Nazis, illustrates a repeating pattern which has been identified in the previous sections. Jews had lived in the states of the Holy Roman Empire and later Germany for at least 600 years. Their role during the earlier period has been discussed above. Although they denied the truth of the Christian religion (this at times when heretical beliefs were generally suppressed violently), they were allowed to live separately as a separate minority. Their separate religion meant that they were subject to humiliating discrimination and most Jews were excluded from living in the cities. However, their separate religion and pariah status was an advantage to the rulers since it meant that although some Jews commanded great financial assets, they could not acquire independent political or military power, either in the feudal structures or in the government of the cities. These discriminations did not finally disappear until the 19th century.

Germany was an advanced and prosperous European nation by the time of the First World War. It is an irony of history that the militaristic Prussian state, ruling over a disciplined society, tended to protect the Jews, who were

not physically attacked. Jews were protected both because some Jews were useful and also by the general order imposed upon society by the Prussian state^{97, 98}. Jewish communities thrived in Germany under the Kaiser, in spite of the small pre-First World War antisemitic movements. Many German Jews were culturally integrated into the wider society and Jews were inter-marrying in large numbers. All legal restrictions on German Jewish citizens had been abolished in the emancipation of 1871, yet by 1933, only fifteen years after the collapse of the Kaiser's regime in 1918, the Nazis were in charge. As late as the elections to the Reichstag in 1928 the Nazis were a small minority with 2.6% of the vote and few, least of all the Jews, could have expected that, five years later, they would be in power. The Weimar Republic was too fragile to deal with the political and economic consequences of the post war inflation and the financial crash of 1929.

It is not obvious why Jews became the particular target of Nazi persecution. The Jewish population of Germany was quite small—about half a million out of a total population of eighty million. Jews had been prominent in the German war effort during the First World War. Many Jews had served in the trenches. Fritz Haber, a Jewish Nobel Prize winner, had saved German agriculture with his process for producing ammonia and had also invented the poison gas first used by the Germans on the Western Front. Walther Rathenau, who was Jewish, had been an important official under the Kaiser and was the foreign minister in the Weimar Republic until he was assassinated in 1922. Further back, Bismarck had relied on the Jewish Bleichroder banking firm to enable him to carry out his policies. However, now it was to be different. For the Jews, Hitler's anti-Jewish ranting turned out not to have been empty rhetoric.

It is sobering to compare the fates of Jews in Ukraine when the German army arrived in 1914 and then again in 1941. The Kaiser's army prevented pogroms in the territory it occupied, whereas Hitler's army made the SS extermination possible and indeed participated in it. It is a horrific irony that, when the German army arrived in 1941, some Jews refused to leave. Victoria Khiterer quotes her Great Grandmother's husband:

I remember the Germans from World War 1. This is a civilised nation. When they come to Kiev, I and my son will open the store and we will trade.

97 Adolf Kober 'Jewish Communities in Germany from the age of enlightenment to their destruction by the Nazis' (1947) *Jewish Social Studies*, 9: 195- 238

98 Kurt Grunwald 'Europe's Railways and Jewish Enterprise: German Jews as pioneers of railway promotion'. (1967) *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*

He and his son died when the Germans rounded up the Jews of Kiev and shot them all in a ravine called Babi Yar.⁹⁹

4.1. The circumstances that led up to the sudden and unexpected reversal of the fortunes of the European Jews

It seems hard to grasp the reality of the organised massacre of Jews in the 1940s. It seems not possible to fully comprehend, or adequately write about, the horror in human terms. However, it did happen. In what follows, an attempt is made to investigate the *circumstances* that precipitated this 20th century disaster.

The period between 1914 and 1945 was certainly a period of social upheaval, war, regime change, and the breakdown of the normal rules of civilised life in Germany. The horror of the First World War and the economic, political and social upheavals, which followed, seem to have led to a generalised insecurity in which the Nazi party could grow. Like previous periods, such as the Crusades or the Black Death, social and cultural antisemitism could transmute into racist attacks. In this case, it was the state itself, rather than rioting mobs, which organised and carried out the murders.

It was the change of regime in each country that spelt catastrophe for the Jews of Europe. In 1933, the Nazis were in charge of the German state, which then turned on the Jews with increasing intensity, reaching a horrific crescendo during the Second World War. Systematic discrimination against Jews started with the Nuremberg Laws in 1934. It was similar in Austria under the Emperor. Jews and Jewish life flourished in spite of the antisemitic political parties. After 1938, things were different. Immediately after the Anschluss the Nazis started a program of discrimination against Jews.

For those who did not leave Germany or Austria in time, a terrible fate followed. The conquest of most of Europe and large parts of Russia by the German army during the Second World War meant that Jews in these places were also subject to discriminatory laws. Then, suddenly and completely unexpectedly, in a very short time between 1941 and 1945, nearly all the Jews of Europe were murdered.

In order to adequately study this almost unimaginable change in the fortunes of the Jews, it is necessary first to trace the historical development of the relations between Jews and Gentiles and the origins of the culture of German antisemitism back at least to the 17th century (section 4.2 below). It is necessary to see how antisemitism fitted into the wider context of the

⁹⁹ Victoria Khiterer 'Babi Yar, the Tragedy of Kiev's Jews' (2004) Brandeis Graduate Journal 2:1-115

growth of nationalistic 'German Volk' ideologies before the 1st World War. The Nazis were not particularly original in their ideas. Many aspects of the Nazi ideology were already in existence before Hitler took them up. There is a large historical literature debating the causes of the Nazi attempt to murder all Jews, whether it was a firm aim in Hitler's mind from the start or whether it developed out of the logic of Nazi conquest ¹⁰⁰.

At the very least, it seems clear that the Nazis were the instigators of the Holocaust, so the process by which Hitler eventually assembled the Nazi movement is of importance for this essay (section 4.3 and 4.4). However, the ideas themselves are not sufficient to explain the Holocaust. There are always small non-mainstream groups with strange frightening ideas. The really important question for us to answer about the Nazis is how this small group of antisemitic fanatics was able to grow and to take control of the German state in 1933 (section 4.5). Further, how was the Nazi party able to mobilise the German people to carry out their program once they were in power (section 4.6)? We then have to decide how this relates to the present day and the Israeli/Palestine conflict (chapters 5 and 6).

4.2. The rise of German antisemitic politics in the 19th century

One reason that the Nazis were able to use racism so effectively as a propaganda tool was the pre-existence of organised racial politics in Germany. Even though the Jews of Germany were emancipated and given full legal and economic rights in 1871, after German unification, there was a continuous current of antisemitism on the right wing of German politics. In the 19th century antisemitism existed in Germany and Austria in two separate manifestations.

In one of these strands, hostility was focussed upon the existence of a rich and influential banking, financial and professional elite of assimilated Jews, in Berlin, Vienna and other metropolitan European cities. Peter Pulzer describes how antisemitic writings, containing racial theories about the threat posed by Jews and their supposedly inherent aptitude for commerce, developed in the late 19th century in Germany and Austria¹⁰¹. The anti-Semites made much of the fact that the relatively small number of Jews in Germany seemed to be disproportionately represented in the middle and upper commercial classes and the professions. They claimed that Jews had some special talent for commerce and the accumulation of money. Jews were accused of unscrupulous business practices and disdain for honest work.

100 Ian Kershaw 'The Nazi Dictatorship' (2000) Arnold.

101 Peter Pulzer 'The rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria' (1964) Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts

An uncompleted essay by Hannah Arendt deals with the origins of German antisemitism as a by-product of a three-cornered conflict between the absolutist state, the Junker landowners and the middle classes¹⁰². She points out the irony that the antisemitic propaganda espoused by the gentile bourgeoisie, threatened by Jewish competition, was couched entirely in terms of feudal language. The 'natural and patriotic' values of the owners of hereditary property were counter-posed to 'false commercial' values of Jews. The non-Jewish bourgeois was supposed to have somehow possessed noble values, and Jewish 'intruders', who were said to have obtained their property by unfair commercial trickery, were blamed for the parasitic exploitation of 'honest True-German peasants and workmen'.

A second aspect of antisemitic propaganda was connected to Jewish immigration. Heinrich von Treitschke, a prominent professor of history, was antisemitic and had a wide influence in the Universities among students and also among professors. He wrote an influential history of Germany, which advocated German Nationalism. Notoriously, he published a tract against the Jews, claiming that Germany was endangered by a 'flood of Jewish petty traders from the East, whose sons and grandsons would end up dominating society'¹⁰³.

As in our own day, Europe had experienced a wave of migration in the late 19th century and this released the same fears and concerns as migration does today. This time it was migrants from the East, many of them Jews, and the anti-Semites used these fears in their propaganda. Some of the Jews were from the Prussian partition of what had been Poland, and they were of course Prussian citizens. Very few of the foreign Jews who came from the Russian Empire or the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were given permanent residence rights and there were periodic roundups of illegals, those who had overstayed their permitted time. They were put on trains to the ports and then on ships to America, Britain and any country that would take them.

These two strands of antisemitism, of course, reinforced each other in the propaganda and in the minds of the anti-Semites.

The growth of specifically antisemitic political parties seems to have been triggered by a stock-market crash in 1873. Adolf Stocker was an assistant preacher in the Kaiser's court who started the antisemitic Christian Social Party that opposed the unregulated excesses of free market capitalism which they associated with Jews. They wanted to reverse the emancipation

102 Hannah Arendt 'Anti-Semitism.' In *The Jewish Writings* Ed: Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman. (2007) Schocken Books N.Y.

103 Jack Wertheimer 'Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany' pp 27-28 (1987) Oxford University Press

legislation and to restore the pre-1871 restrictions on Jews. They aimed to wean the workers from the atheism of the Marxist Social Democratic Party, some of whose leaders were Jews, back to the church. Nationalisation of large enterprises was part of their program (e.g. the railways and mortgage banks). At the peak of their success, the anti-Semites won 16 seats out of a total of 397 in the German Reichstag (or Parliament) of 1907. However, they declined thereafter. Before the Nazis, antisemitism, however widespread, was not sufficiently important to the German voters to provide much of a lever to electoral success. Stockers' party couldn't gain power because it was too narrowly focussed on blaming Jews for the financial crash of 1873. By contrast in Vienna, the anti-Semite Karl Lueger achieved political power by combining his antisemitism with other messages (as did Hitler in Germany later).

The Social Democrats, who were one of the largest parties in the Reichstag, were certainly opposed to antisemitism. Socialism must necessarily be opposed to racism as it divides the working class, who are to be the agents of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Fundamental to their philosophy was the idea that it was the impersonal laws of the capitalist system itself that inevitably led to the crisis of unemployment and industrial depression. The good or bad intentions of the people running the economy made little difference as long as they were operating the economy as a capitalist one. It was the economic system itself that was the problem and it would make no difference if other people were running it. However, in practice this distinction can get blurred. It was tragic that anti-Semites were able to borrow socialist ideas and use them for their own purposes. It didn't take much to distort these arguments against the capitalist mode of production directly into the populist rhetoric of antisemitic parties. Rapid changes in Germany linked to the advance of capitalism had made Germans fear for the stability of their society. Antisemitic propaganda sought to blame the Jewish bankers, and by implication, all Jews. The Social Democrat leader, August Bebel, characterised this as the 'Socialism of Fools'

Later on the Nazi party employed socialist sounding rhetoric against 'International Jewish Finance', and this played a large part in the Nazi party's formation, as did propaganda about 'International Jewish Bolshevism'. A section of Nazi supporters thought there was going to be a proletarian character to the Nazi revolution. After the dispossession of Jewish businesses, they, the German workers, would be in control of industry and the state. In the event, once they achieved power, the Nazis purged that idea from their party and co-opted the big industrial capitalists into their war economy.

The Jewish financial elite and its origins

It is true that a wide spectrum of authors, from Jewish religious authorities to secular critics, Jewish nationalists and modern anti-Semites have attributed a special status to Jews, as either possessing some unique ethical or revolutionary 'spirit' or alternatively as being the bearers of a commercial or modernising 'spirit of capitalism', which they variously cite as the cause of the conflicts with the Gentiles among whom they found themselves. The importance of these ideas lies in the fact that they were, and are, believed by many anti-Semites and by many Jews. The major flaw in these arguments, apart from their vagueness which does not lend itself to any meaningful analysis, is that the Jews were never a homogenous group, either in economic class terms or cultural terms.

Rather than a special Jewish talent for upward social mobility, there is a much simpler explanation for the Jewish presence among the elite, namely, the deliberately selective policy of the German states in the 18th century with regard to Jewish settlement in the cities. This distinguished between richer Jews who could bring capital and skills with them and therefore contribute to the development of trade and industry, who were invited into the cities, and poor Jews who were excluded.

The economic policy of the enlightened despot Frederick II of Prussia (1740-1786) was based upon the idea that trade and industry could be used to further the interests of the Prussian state. He took a direct hand in arrangements to stimulate trade and manufacturing enterprises that would result in a net inflow of gold to the kingdom and discouraged those that would cause an outflow. In accordance with this plan, businessmen with sufficient starting capital were granted concessions to engage in some trades and were forbidden to engage in others. Thus, the Berlin Jewish community started when he invited a few wealthy Jewish families to settle and trade there.

In the 19th century, Rothschild financed the early building of railways and was ennobled for doing so. In fact, the railway network of Europe was largely promoted by Jewish bankers¹⁰⁴. Jews were also admitted to the universities and prospered in the professions and in the creative life of 19th and 20th century Germany and Austria, both in the arts and sciences. At least half of the doctors who cared for the sick in Vienna were Jews. A third of the students at Vienna University were Jews. A large proportion of lawyers, journalists and writers were also Jewish.

104 Kurt Grunwald 'Europe's Railways and Jewish Enterprise: German Jews as pioneers of railway promotion'. Leo Baeck Institute Year Book (1967)

Thus, the state itself, by its very policy, determined that there would be an elite of rich Jews living in cities such as Berlin. Other foreign entrepreneurs were invited in the same way into German cities in order to set up businesses seen to be beneficial to the economy.

The wealthy Jewish elite could trace its origin to 'Court Jews' of the 17th century. Many of the rulers in the German states had employed some Jews as minters of coinage and financiers¹⁰⁵, even though there were discriminatory restrictions on most other Jews. These privileged Jews made loans for financing armies and set up trading networks for obtaining war supplies.

F.L. Carsten¹⁰⁶ discusses the rise to influence of these 'Court Jews' in the period of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Before the outbreak of the wars of religion the German princes did not depend upon Jews for loans. They raised money from taxation and also through loans from Christian banking firms such as the Fuggers and the Welsers. The destructive series of wars caused general financial chaos and bankruptcy, and the gap was filled by contracts with Jewish traders. They provided military supplies and credit to the armies of the Habsburg emperor, who in turn protected the Jews from attack when cities were besieged. How these Jews were in a better position than Christian bankers to continue operating during the wars is not clear. However, the fortunes of the later Court Jews were founded at this time. Eventually, great Jewish banking enterprises such as Rothschilds and Bleichröder were established. Many of them were, according to Carsten, descendants of these same Jewish families. Later, the Jewish banker Samuel Oppenheimer financed the defence of Vienna in 1683 against the Turks, and his successor, another Jew, Samson Wertheimer, financed the Habsburgs in the War of the Spanish Succession.

By relying on Jews, the kings and princes were enabled to assert their independence of the rest of the nobility (the hereditary class of feudal landowners, or Junkers). Thus a few wealthy and privileged Jews had a close relationship to the kings and princes.

Although German states were later able to finance themselves through taxation, Jewish prominence in the financial affairs of the state in Austria and Prussia continued well into the 19th century. Metternich used the banker Saloman Rothschild to provide state finance and Bleichröder was Bismarck's

105 Jonathan I. Israel 'European Jewry in the age of Mercantilism 1550-1750.' (1991) Oxford University Press.

106 F.L. Carsten. 'The Court Jews: Prelude to Emancipation' In 'Essays in German History.' (1985) Hambledon Press, London

personal banker as well as financier to the state^{107,108}. Bleichröder played a crucial role in allowing Bismarck to go to war against Austria and Denmark in 1866. There was a power struggle between Bismarck and the Liberals in the Prussian parliament, over who controlled the army, the elected lower house or the appointed upper house. Bismarck was unable to get the necessary military credits approved and so he circumvented the constitution and obtained the finance independently with the help of Bleichröder. Bleichröder arranged the sale of government railway stock, which financed the wars. Bleichröder also arranged collection of the French indemnity after the Franco-Prussian War.

In 1848 some of the prominent leaders of the various revolutions were Jews who had absorbed the new liberal philosophy. They were some of the educated sons of the Jewish bourgeoisie, who had been allowed into the universities. The revolutionaries wanted to end the absolute power of monarchy and to institute constitutional government, elected assemblies, freedom of speech and the reform of an agricultural system based upon serfdom. Following the restoration of the old regime in 1815 after Napoleon and also after the 1848 revolution, there was always a potential for hostility towards Jews, on the part of the conservative reaction. The liberals tended to favour Jewish emancipation and integration and this caused hostility towards Jews on the part of the conservatives. These conflicts, while contributing to culturally transmitted antisemitism, were not converted into actual violent attacks in Germany until the coming of the Nazis in 1933.

4.3. Hitler's encounter with antisemitic politics in Vienna

The politics of the pre-First World War Habsburg Empire, and in particular that of the city of Vienna, is of crucial importance for the subsequent history of the Jews in the twentieth century. It is important both for the discussion of the origins of Nazi antisemitism and for the generation of Herzl's idea of a Jewish state. Both Hitler and Herzl spent time as young men in Vienna and were exposed to the nastier antisemitic side of the city's political culture¹⁰⁹.

Hitler was a young drifter in the city, where he absorbed many of his more grotesque ideas. In particular, he learnt about the usefulness of antisemitism as a tool for the acquisition of political power. The famous populist politician, Karl Lueger, had managed to get himself elected as mayor of Vienna in 1897,

107 Fritz Stern 'Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the building of the German Empire.' (1977) George Allen and Unwin, London

108 David S. Landes 'Bleichröders and Rothschilds: The problem of continuity in the family firm.' *Family Business Review* (1993) 6:85-101.

109 Carl E. Schorske 'Fin-de-siècle Vienna' (1979) A.A. Knopf NY

against the opposition of the Social Democrats and Liberals, by mounting a campaign which included virulent antisemitism. Lueger and his Christian Social Party repeatedly won elections and he remained mayor until his death in 1910. Although other politicians, notably George von Schönerer, had previously succeeded in being elected to a parliamentary seat on a racial program, this was the first time that antisemitic politics had led to actual political power at the head of an elected assembly. Both introduced a brutal rough style of politics. When Victor Adler, the Social Democrat leader, got up to speak in the Reichstag (the Austrian Parliament), the Christian Socials would chant 'Jew, Jew, Jew'. They deliberately sought to legitimise racial hatred so as to use it as a mobilising force. In this they were helped by the fact that many of the other prominent Social Democratic leaders both in Austria and in Germany were Jews (e.g. Marx, Lassalle, Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg).

Hitler is said to have admired and studied Lueger's political methods and the way in which he was able to achieve power, in contrast with the more single-mindedly racist, antisemitic party, led by George von Schönerer, which remained small and ineffective, even though both used antisemitism.

The difference seems to have been that Lueger, while being a charismatic politician, was, at the same time, a clever enough pragmatist to effectively unite the different social groups in Vienna whose politics were opposed both to the Liberals and to the Social Democrats (aristocrats, Catholic intellectuals, lower clergy, small businessmen, lower officials and clerks, master craftsmen and artisans). Von Schönerer, on the other hand, espoused a version of German nationalism that aimed at a union of Austria with Germany and was anti-Habsburg, anti-Catholic and anti-Slav. Thus, he confined his appeal to a narrower constituency. This lesson Hitler resurrected with awful effect later in his career.

Antisemitism and the nationalities problem in the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Why therefore, were the Jews such a useful target of popular hatred that antisemitism could be used to win elections and both the Liberals and the marxist Social Democratic Party could be defeated by exploiting it?

The Habsburg Empire before the partition of Poland already contained several sizeable Jewish populations in Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary and Italy. In 1772, after the partition, Jews of Poland were added to the Empire.

The Emperor Joseph II was an enlightened despot intent on reform of his kingdom from above. The aim was to integrate Jews into Austrian society as subjects. The Edict of Toleration of 1782 removed many restrictions on Jews, such as the wearing of the yellow badge, the special poll tax and the

exclusion from agriculture, artisan trades and schools and universities. Jews were to be allowed to compete equally in commerce and large scale industry. They were also ordered to educate their children in the German language and young men had to join the army. The separate judicial and fiscal powers of the Jewish community organisations were removed in later decrees. While welcomed by the modernising followers of Moses Mendelssohn, many Jews saw the decrees as oppressive and resisted them, especially in former Poland. The restrictions on settlement in the capital were not, however, abolished until the 1850s.

It seems that *the* intractable problem for the Habsburg Emperors was that, in each of the countries which made up the Empire, there was more than one national movement wishing to establish its own dominance. The consequences for the Jews depended upon their position in relation to these national movements and this was different in each case.¹¹⁰ Dependent upon which side the Jews found themselves, the other side tended to be antisemitic. This is elaborated in what follows.

Before 1867 there were a few 'tolerated' Jews legally resident in Vienna. These were mainly financiers and bankers, the wealthy descendants of the 'Court Jews' of the 18th century. After 1867 there was mass migration into Vienna from all over the Habsburg Empire which increased the total population from six hundred thousand to two million by 1910. The immigrants were not predominantly Jews, though Jews were a significant proportion, about 8%. It is likely that these different peoples brought with them, the national conflicts which existed in each of the disparate territories of the Habsburg Empire. Although I have not found data on the detailed voting behaviours of these different social groups when they arrived in Vienna, an account of some features of the social and political history of Vienna and the wider Habsburg Empire provides an illuminating background to this problem.

Czech Nationalism in Bohemia and Moravia

The Protestant landlords in Bohemia (later Czechoslovakia) had been dispossessed after the defeat of the Hussites in 1620, during the Thirty Years War. Consequently, the noble landlords and town elite were German speaking whereas the mass of the people spoke various dialects of the Czech language. Czech nationalists wished to create an independent Czech nation and were opposed by the German nationalists who wanted to remain under the Habsburgs. It was complicated because many of the landowners sided with the Czech movement and many of the peasants were untouched by

110 William O. McCagg Jr. (1989) 'A History of the Habsburg Jews: 1670-1918.' Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.

any national ideas at all. The Jews of Prague were predominantly German speaking. The industrial revolution in Bohemia started in textiles and was driven by Jewish enterprises. Some Jews had started small workshops, dying imported fabrics, and eventually the 15 largest textile works were owned and run by Jewish firms. The condition of the workers in this Czech industrial revolution was similar to that in the English industrial revolution, namely horrific. The workers were from the countryside, as in the English case, but spoke Czech not the German of the employers. Inevitably there were strikes and industrial disputes and these conflicts were expressed in racial antisemitic language, as if replacing the bosses with Czechs would solve the problems of low wages and long hours. Thus Czech nationalism was antisemitic and anti-German.

Nationalism in Hungary

Hungary was different and the nationality problem was also quite complicated¹¹¹. The Hungarian ruling classes were Magyar speaking and the dominant national movement was led by them. However, the Magyars were a minority in the total Hungarian population (about 45% in 1850). There were other national groups in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire and each generated its own national movement (Slovaks, Rumanians, Serbs and Croats).

Reforming Jews in Budapest changed to speaking Magyar and identified with the Magyar nationalist cause. (The Jews themselves were split, as reformers were opposed by conservative Rabbis.) Aligning themselves with the Magyar cause, the Jews incurred the hostility of the other national movements in Hungary. The ruling class of Hungarian nobles was driven to accept an alliance with the Magyarising Jews in the towns. Jews were associated with the nobles in trading the agricultural products of the noble estates to the west through Vienna and some grew rich. After 1867 Jews were prominent in the industrialisation of Hungary. By the end of the century half of the commercial firms in Buda-Pest were Jewish owned and 90% of the stock exchange brokers were Jewish. Half the doctors in Hungary were Jewish.

The migration of Jews from the countryside into the towns

Before the partition, as in the rest of Poland, a proportion of the Jews had occupied a particular niche in the feudal economy. They had managed estates, mills and distilleries under leases from Polish landowners. They had also been

111 Robert S. Wistrich 'The Jews and Nationality Conflict in the Habsburg Lands'. *Nationality Papers*, (1994) 22(1):119-139

prominent in trade and transport. In a similar way to the Tsarist policy, the reforms of 1781 introduced by the emperor, Joseph II, were intended to solve some of the problems of the serf economy. Jews were forbidden to lease estates and mills etc., and neither were they to live in the country unless directly engaged in agriculture. Many lost their livelihood and were forced to move to towns, which became overcrowded with poor Jews.

The victory of antisemitic politics and the defeat of Liberalism and Social Democracy in Vienna

Austrian Liberals, who took power briefly in the 1848 revolution, were opposed to the Habsburg Emperor. They wanted government by elected assemblies, free speech, free trade, industrial development and a reduction of the power of the Catholic Church. They wanted a republic composed of a union of all the German speaking states. They were defeated militarily in 1849, when imperial rule was restored, but they achieved a measure of success in 1867, when the Emperor granted a constitution. This was based upon a restricted franchise, which enabled the upper class Liberals to dominate. The Liberals represented the interests of the upper bourgeoisie and did not pay much attention to the social problems created by laissez faire capitalism of which they were the chief proponents. As the franchise was successively widened they lost power. The Liberals split.

A Pan-German nationalist split from the Liberals was led by Georg von Schönerer. Von Schönerer combined anti-clerical German Nationalism and a fanatical antisemitism with a peculiar anti-capitalist rhetoric based upon opposition to 'foreign' (i.e. Jewish) capital. He propagated a form of Social Darwinism in which Jews and Slavs were classed as inferior people. He introduced a new violent language style and public brawling into Austrian parliamentary politics. His propaganda was designed to appeal to small master artisans and shopkeepers whose interests had been ignored by the Liberals and who were feeling the pressures of the industrial revolution in late 19th century Austria. He also opposed the power of the Catholic Church and Habsburg monarchy. Von Schönerer was elected to the Austrian Parliament, the Reichsrat, for his home district, where he had an estate. However, he alienated the Catholics and non-Germans in the wider Austrian electorate and his support was mainly limited to German-speaking minor officials, clerks, students, artisans and small farmers.

It is an irony that von Schönerer was the possessor of a title ('von') and an estate, by virtue of inheritance from his father, who was the engineer hired by Rothschild to supervise the building of the first Austrian railway. Both were ennobled by the Habsburg Emperor for their services.

A particular factor which enabled von Schönerer to attract support among artisans was that serfdom and the medieval guild system persisted much longer in Austria than in Western Europe. The protectionist Guild privileges were finally abolished in 1859. This caused economic hardship for many artisans and small masters¹¹². Small scale workshops, manufacturing textiles, clothing, shoes, furniture, machines etc., could not compete with modern factory organisation or the free market in commodities. This was made worse by a stock market crash in 1873. Thus an anti-capitalist appeal, recalling the times before the 1781 reforms of the enlightened Joseph II, secured the votes of this group. This appeal was coupled to an antisemitic message that 'bad foreign' capitalism was a Jewish phenomenon. (After the restrictions on the Jews had been removed, Jewish manufacture and trade operated outside the regulation of the guild structure. Many of the great financiers were Jewish. Rothschild had financed the first steam railway, the Nordbahn between Vienna and Prague.)

Karl Lueger was also initially a member of the Liberal party before he led the Christian Social Party, which like von Schönerer's party was antisemitic. He managed to attract the support of former followers of von Schönerer's party, but unlike von Schönerer, he was pro-Habsburg, pro-Catholic, and inclusive of non-German nationalists, apart from the Magyars. The Christian Socials became the dominant party in the Vienna city government in 1897 with Lueger at its head, as mayor. Once he became mayor, Lueger instituted a program of 'Municipal Socialism' on the model of Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham. He carried out many reforms, such as public transport and sewage schemes and he established the main hospital, independent of the Catholic charities.

A major paradox is that some Jews flourished in fin de siècle Vienna in spite of the radical antisemitic rhetoric of its politics. The third major fragment of the Liberal party, the marxist Social Democrats, were opposed to antisemitism and in fact their leaders, Victor Adler and Bruno Bauer, were secular Jews. Its policy was for a unification of Germany with Austria. As the franchise was widened to include the proletariat, they were more successful and after the First World War they achieved power in Vienna until they were smashed by Dolfuss.

Herzl met antisemitism as a student at Vienna University when the students staged an antisemitic ceremony on the occasion of Wagner's death in 1883. Although at that time he was secular and thought that Jews should forsake their differences and merge with the German nation, Herzl protested

112 John W. Boyer (1981) 'Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: origins of the Christian Social Movement 1848-1897.' University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

as a 'Jew and a freedom lover'. He found himself rejected by his student fraternity. Although he didn't arrive at his Zionist theory until later, in 1896, while he was a journalist in Paris, his youthful experience was significant in this regard. The trigger of his vision of an independent Jewish state was the trial and conviction of Captain Dreyfus on false spying charges. The antisemitic furore surrounding the case shook his faith in Liberal politics.

4.4. Hitler, the Nazi Party and Nazi ideology

A formative experience for Hitler, after his time in pre-war Vienna, was the industrialised killing in the First World War. Although he had personally been exposed to shells and bullets, he glorified the slaughter. He seems to have romanticised Ernst Junger's account of 'the fellowship of the trenches' and the 'self-sacrifice of the front soldier'¹¹³. At the front, the German nation seemed to him to have come together across class boundaries with a common sense of purpose.

After the War, Hitler found himself in Munich, still in the German army. The Kaiser had abdicated and workers' councils had taken over the government of Bavaria, the famous Munich Soviet. The government of the Social Democrats had used loyal regiments of the army and battalions of demobilised officers (the Freikorps) to violently suppress the councils. Hitler was attached to a special unit (led by Captain Röhm who later headed the Brownshirts) whose task was to launch a program of re-education to restore the loyalty of the soldiers and lay the basis for a later resurgence of the German army. He went around addressing meetings of soldiers in army barracks and was also directed to take part in the far-right fringe political groups, which met in the beer halls of Munich. (He later recounted that this was when he discovered that he had a talent for holding the attention of crowds by his oratory.) Hitler joined one of these groups, the German Workers Party (DAP) and soon seized control. The party was small and directed at protecting the interests of German artisans against the competition of 'foreign' (e.g. Eastern European) workers. It was also antisemitic.

Like Lueger previously, Hitler directed the party to identify and address the concerns of the masses and to create alliances across different sections of the German population. What this meant in practice is that different messages were presented to different constituencies at different times during the Nazi Party's rise to power.

There is no point in trying to make sense of Nazi racial philosophy in terms of there being any truth in its content. Nazi ideology was essentially

113 Ernst Junger 'Storm of Steel' (2005) Penguin Modern Classics

an extreme form of Pan-German nationalism, which aimed at converting Germany into an authoritarian militarised society which would become the dominant power in Europe. This was underpinned by a distorted version of history and fallacious biological theories, particularly about race and the relative value of different races. The Nazis aimed to colonise Eastern Europe and Russia and replace the local populations with Germans.

It is not to be doubted that Jews were particularly hated by the founders of the Nazi party. However, the antisemitic rhetoric is not a single isolated aberration in an otherwise rational scheme of ideas. Hitler built his antisemitism into an integral part of his racial theory of historical development. The whole philosophy is assembled from half understood pre-existing theories. The Nazis took ideas that were around at the time and exaggerated them to extremes in a way that took no regard for the human suffering their policies would cause. However, it was a madness of a peculiar kind. They often proceeded by very rational methods to gain their ends but the ends themselves were by and large the product of unbalanced minds. It was partly ideas that were firmly held by the leaders and in a great part propaganda designed for the achievement of power. It is, however, worthwhile to look at the different ideas and to trace the part they played in bringing about the Holocaust^{114, 115, 116}. Unfortunately, the nature of Nazism in its full horror cannot be grasped without having to delve into this. It is directly relevant to a study of the fate of the Jews.

Hitler proposed to reverse the defeat of the First World War and in particular the terms of the Versailles Treaty. He propagated the fantasy, which had been devised by the generals, that the German army had been winning the war until it was betrayed by the Social Democrats, the Bolsheviks and the Jews. In actual fact, it was the generals who decided the war could not be continued and decided to seek an end to it. They then managed to shift the responsibility onto the Social Democrats who were supposed to have 'stabbed the army in the back'.

Germany's destiny was to be fulfilled through the leadership of Hitler and the Nazi party. The old politics created division and discord and a new order of society was required in which all true Germans marched in step to overcome their enemies. Hitler insisted on adding 'Socialist' to the name of the party, which became the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP). National Socialism was counterposed to Marxism as a way to end destructive class conflict. The idea was that all true Germans in different social classes would pull together, as they did in the trenches, and defeat

114 Franz Neuman 'Behemoth' (1942) Victor Gollancz, London

115 Ian Kershaw 'Hitler 1889 – 1936: Hubris' (1999) Allen Lane, Penguin Press.

116 Ian Kershaw 'Hitler 1936 – 1945: Nemesis' (2000) Allen Lane, Penguin Press

Germany's enemies, external and internal. He promised to abolish the class war (and those who advocated it) and substitute it with a race war. Marxist-seeming rhetoric was invented. The 'Proletarian' German nation had to fight and defeat the 'Plutocratic' nations who threatened them – the English, the French and the Americans. The 'Plutocratic' nations possessed colonies, whereas the 'Proletarian' German nation did not. In fact the Germans did possess colonies in Southern Africa before the First World War.

The Nazis would create a European empire whose boundaries would extend far into Eastern Europe and Russia.¹¹⁷ Hitler called this empire the Third Reich. He claimed continuity with the empire of Charlemagne, which he called the First Reich and with the Second Reich of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Bismarck. It is ironic that Jews played an important part in both historical periods. The Holy Roman Emperors of the First Reich needed the Jews and protected them, although Hitler maintained that it was the Court Jews that evilly exploited the Princes. Hitler glorified Bismarck's wars of German unification against Denmark and Austria, which were only made possible with the help of his Jewish banker Bleichröder.

The expansion of Germany to the East, at the expense of the Slavs, had been a long-standing foreign policy objective of the German nationalists and formed an important part of German war aims in the First World War. The Nazi empire in the East was to be obtained by ruthless conquest and then settled with German farmers. The elites would be killed. That part of the subject population that could be useful would be turned into helots. The remainder would be resettled elsewhere. In practice, when the different countries were over-run, the resettlement program was abandoned. There were not enough German farmers prepared to move and the initial mass transfers of subject populations led to chaos and overcrowding in the destination territories. Theoretical talk of resettlement soon turned into a policy of mass killings of civilians, carried out by the SS and the Wehrmacht, with particular emphasis on the complete extermination of whole populations of Jews and Gypsies. They were helped by elements in the subject countries. They killed millions of Jews, Russians, Poles, Ukrainians and other people before the eventual defeat of Germany in 1945.

The racial ideas of the Nazis were pseudo-science. They were based upon a very crude theory which held that, among the nations of the world, there are some that are biologically superior and others that are biologically inferior. Jews, Negroes, Poles, Russians and other Slavs were inferior and Germans superior. Cultural and intellectual differences between nations were attributed

117 Mark Mazower. (2008) 'Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe' Allen Lane, London.

to inheritable biological factors. This idea was used to explain the rise and fall of civilizations. The upward progress of humanity had always depended upon the superior races conquering and dominating the inferior ones. Decline was caused by racial mixing. This extension of Darwinism to account for the differences between nations in terms of culture and ability had no basis in any of the human biological sciences.

Hitler claimed that the Germanic 'Volk' was being compromised by racial mixing, with the result that its culture had become polluted by alien ideas. Pacifism, Liberalism, Democracy and Bolshevism were obstacles to be overcome if the true nature of the Germanic race was to be realised. Behind all of Germany's difficulties were the Jews. They were poisoning 'German blood', whatever that means. Rosenberg, Rohm and Hitler seem to have believed fanatically in the literal truth of 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' and based their politics around it. This document, which was a forgery of the Russian secret police, the Ochrana, was supposed to be the founding document of a Jewish conspiracy to control the world, agreed at an international congress of world Jewry. (The founding congress of the Zionist movement did actually take place in 1897 and the anti-Semites imagined that the stated aim of founding a Jewish state was merely a cover.) Communism and capitalism were the inventions of Jews in a cunning plan to divide the world. The conflict between them would bring about the downfall of civilisation, leaving the Jews to inherit.

There had been racial theories and racial prejudice in Europe before the Nazis and not only in Germany and Eastern Europe. However, there was nothing that could have adequately prepared the world for the reality and consequences of Hitler's extreme hatred of the Jews and other groups. It is particularly ironic that Hitler's dying mother in Linz was cared for by a Jewish doctor, to whom Hitler was, reputedly, very grateful.

Racial hygiene doctrines had been elaborated by eminent professors in medical schools long before the Nazis¹¹⁸. Starting from the end of the 19th century, the supposed dangers of 'racial pollution' were being written about and taught. Public Health advances had shifted medical attention from simply concentrating on curing illness in individual patients to thinking about social measures to reduce the overall burden of disease (sanitation, vaccination, nutritional measures). The 'racial hygiene' theorists thought that public health programs were enabling more people with hereditary defects, the 'unfit', to survive and breed. They thought that the nation's biological inheritance was being degraded. Since the raw pressure of Darwinian natural

118 Robert N Proctor 'Nazi Medical Ethics: Ordinary Doctors?' in: *Military Medical Ethics* Vol 2 Ch 14

selection had been ameliorated by civilisation and medical advances, they proposed therefore that the methods used in selective breeding of domestic animals be applied to human populations ¹¹⁹. This would prevent 'defectives' from breeding.

On the face of it, it might seem reasonable for prospective parents to try to avoid giving birth to some unfortunate child with a tragic disabling hereditary condition. Unfortunately, racial theorists who took up these ideas tended to label people as biologically inferior on the basis of their own preconceived social attitudes and prejudice. This kind of Social Darwinism was quite common in Europe in the 19th century, commonly applied to colonial peoples. Even today, the interaction of heredity and environment in the development of most ordinary human personality traits is poorly understood and was less so then. The idea of deciding on a collection of characteristics, which would be possessed by a people of a 'superior' nation and then selectively breeding a race of such people, seems to be pretty stupid. How would you choose? In the case of farm animals, the objectives can be clear (increased milk production, better weight gain, greater speed and pulling power, etc.). Human societies are very complex and little understood. It clearly requires people of many different abilities and personalities to enable human societies to work and survive as societies and to adapt to historical change.

The Nazi racial theorists found it difficult to define what they meant by the German race. They initially paid considerable attention to skull shape, but unfortunately for their theories, they found large variations in the measured physical characteristics of the Germans that they wished to include in the 'Volk'. Therefore, they resorted to talking about the 'Germanic Races' in the plural and 'German Blood'. They knew who they did not want to include: Slavs, Negroes and Jews.

A real problem for us, and for faith in the scientific method as a defence against error, is that highly educated medical intellectuals did propose to carry out a human breeding program, and not just in Germany. Not only did large numbers of doctors join the Nazi party but they were also deeply implicated in implementing its racial policies. The medical schools in which

119 The main feature of the Darwinian theory of evolution of species by natural selection is that the accumulation of random variations within a population enables the physical characteristics of that population to adapt to changes in the environment over very long times. Darwin postulated that this adaptation took place by a process of natural selection (i.e. those individuals happening to possess characteristics that enable them to live longer will have more offspring and thus those characteristics will be propagated down the generations). Without variations, there is no adaptation. How would you know in advance which variations will bestow increased survivability?

these doctors were trained were not inferior backwaters. On the contrary, German universities were prominent in advancing real medical science, winning many Nobel prizes.

Nazi ideology was also very important in welding together the many disparate parts of the Nazi party. The party was not a single efficient machine. Different leaders followed their own agendas within it. They were all loyal to Hitler but vied for influence against each other. The Party contained within itself glaring class contradictions. The party propaganda had to reconcile the interests of German industrialists with those of small traders, self-employed artisans, factory workers, lumpen proletariat and middle class professionals. Mass psychology techniques were invented to create a powerful force out of this fragmented constituency which was ultimately able to dominate German society. Thus, they staged enormous parades of disciplined uniformed Nazis, with banners and flags, marching past the triumphant figure of the charismatic leader. This made the participants feel that they were part of a unified invincible movement, dedicated to something higher than themselves. Hitler's speeches at these rallies persuaded them that they all faced the same dangerous enemies, Jews, Slavs and non-Aryans, with particular emphasis on the Jews.

Later on, after the Nazis achieved power, the rallies took place in Nuremberg in a series of vast parade grounds surrounded by a gigantic architecture of columns and stages with huge banners and flags and searchlights pointing up into the sky. Nazi martyrs were commemorated in arcane rituals. The flag carried in the failed Nazi putsch in 1924 (the Blood Flag) was paraded around and contact with it was used to sanctify the flags of the different Nazi units present on the parade.

The choice of Nuremberg for the rallies was significant. A medieval edict had stated that the first Diet of any Emperor had to be in Nuremberg (The Imperial Diet was an Assembly of the Princes and Prelates who ruled the many fragments of the Holy Roman Empire). Also, Nuremberg was the place where the sacred coronation regalia of the Holy Roman Emperors (robe, orb, sceptre, crown, holy lance, cross, sword) were stored, in the church of the Holy Spirit near the market, to be displayed once a year after Easter. Possession of the regalia was essential for the legitimation of each Emperor's succession to the throne and the regalia were endowed with miraculous properties. The cross was said to be made from the wood of the crucifixion cross. The holy lance was supposed to be the one mentioned in the New Testament, which was used to pierce the side of Jesus on the cross. The regalia had been removed to Vienna in 1796 to keep them safe from Napoleon but Hitler had them brought back and displayed them in Nuremberg immediately after the Nazis

marched into Vienna in 1938. Nazi mythology appropriated the connection between Nuremberg and the Medieval Empire, suggesting a parallel between Hitler and the Emperors.

4.5. The collapse of the Weimar Republic and the victory of the Nazi party

The particular trigger of the renewal of persecutions of Jews in Europe was the achievement of power by the Nazi party in 1933. The nature of the regime changed when the Nazis suddenly and completely destroyed the Weimar Republic, a tragedy not only for the German Jews, but for Europe and the world as a whole. The *political* and *economic* turmoil which allowed the success of the Nazi party is susceptible to rational historical enquiry, unlike their irrational racial philosophy, which defies understanding. This might throw some light on the theme of this essay.

The victory of the Nazi Party must be seen as a consequence of the global war and defeat of Germany and the Hohenzollern state in 1918, and the upheavals that followed. Of particular importance in this regard are the revolutions of 1919-1921 and the suppression of those revolutions by the German Army and Freikorps; the fragility of the Weimar Republic under the Social Democrats; the failure to cope with the inflation of 1923; the financial crash of 1929; and the depression and mass unemployment which followed¹²⁰. Many supported the Nazis because of a fear of Bolshevism.

It is not possible, however, to argue that the victory of Fascism was an inevitable outcome of the war and its aftermath, since it is also true that, while there were other countries where Fascist parties achieved power during the first half of the 20th century, namely Italy, Spain, Hungary Japan, Portugal and Greece, there were others where they remained small and insignificant. We have to examine German politics as a particular historical phenomenon. The Nazi acquisition of power in Germany was the culmination of a sequence of political developments which, with hindsight, may appear to have been ineluctable. However, at each point the participants made particular decisions, which could have been different.

A major turning point in this history was the series of elections between 1928 and 1932¹²¹. In 1928 the Nazis were a small noisy feature of German electoral politics. They only gained 2.6% of the votes. Their appeal was limited and the prospect of their gaining power non-existent. For comparison,

120 Evans R. J. 'The coming of the Third Reich'. (2004) Penguin Books.

121 Abraham S. Miller and James S. Robbins 'Who did vote for Hitler? A reanalysis of the Lipset/Bendix controversy' (1989) *Polity* 21(4):655-677

the Social Democrats got 29.8%, the Communists 10.6%, the conservative German National Peoples Party 14.2%, and the Catholic Centre 15.1%.

By 1932 the Nazis had broken through to become the largest single party with 37.3%. The Social Democrats got 21.6%, the Communists 14.3%, the conservative German National Peoples Party 5.9%, and the Catholic Centre 15.7%. (It is important to note the corollary, that 62.7% voted against the Nazis in 1932.) Finally, in the last election of the Weimar Republic, the Nazis got 43.9% of the vote. Nobody could have foreseen this. It even took the Nazis by surprise. It had taken a final shock, the stock market crash of 1929, to upset the political balance and eventually totally destroy the Weimar Republic.

The political system had proved unable to cope with the major economic disruption and mass unemployment which followed the crash, and a major reason for this weakness was that there had never been an overall consensus on the form of government that was to replace the pre-war Hohenzollern state. The parties differed in the degree of their real support for a democratic republic. The Nazis and Nationalists wanted to replace it with an authoritarian structure. The Social Democrats wanted to manage the bourgeois republic with a view to reforming it in a socialist direction. The Communists aimed at its immediate replacement by a Soviet government. In the event many Nationalist voters transferred to the Nazis and the unemployed tended to vote Communist. The deep historical fracture between the Social Democratic and Communist parties prevented them from co-operating and so left the Nazis with the largest number of seats. The Communists were hostile to the Social Democrats because of the part the latter had played in suppressing the Workers Councils in 1918.

In 1929 Germany had a coalition government of Social Democrats and the bourgeois Peoples' Party and it could not agree on how to deal with the economic crisis. Unemployment was rising rapidly after the crash of 1929 and there was a rising tide of disaffection in the society at large. The Nazi SA increasingly attacked Communists and Social Democrats, who fought back. Meetings were broken up and there were assassinations and street battles. Parliamentary sessions became rowdy events. It was difficult to maintain orderly democratic government under these circumstances. When Social Democrats in the Coalition refused to cut unemployment benefits, the government fell. In accordance with the Constitution, the President of the Republic, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, appointed Heinrich Brüning as Chancellor, to rule by decree without having to secure a majority in the Reichstag. The new arrangement still meant that the chancellor's ability to govern was dependent upon his attracting sufficiently wide support. The

cabinet was composed of representatives of different parties and institutions such as the civil service, the army, industrialists etc. Von Hindenburg initially excluded Socialists, Communists and Nazis.

Between 1930 and 1933 three different chancellors tried to govern (Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher) and each ended up resigning. A main problem was the budget, which still had to be approved by a majority in the Reichstag and when the Social Democrats still did not sanction the economically deflationary measures required by Brüning, a new Reichstag election had to be called in September 1930. The result was a loss of Social Democrat seats and a startling increase in the Communist and Nazi vote which induced the Social Democrats to switch to supporting Brüning's austerity measures, which were passed. Thereafter the Social Democrat support was seen as compromised by their natural constituency among the workers and they lost votes to the Communists.

The inclusion of Nazis in a coalition meant that the right wing parties would be able to form a majority against the Social Democrats and the Communists. Therefore, Hitler was offered a place in the cabinet but he refused to take part except as Chancellor. Eventually von Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor in 1933, in spite of his previously expressed hostility to the Nazi party. It seems that the conservative nationalists thought they could control Hitler by the expected compromises necessitated by coalition politics. Instead, after he was appointed, he organised a violent coup in which the democratic system was destroyed. He used the opportunity presented to him by the Reichstag fire to set about arresting and physically destroying the leaders of the Social Democrats, the Communists, and the Trade Unions, in preparation for a massive expansion of armament production. Anti-Jewish laws soon followed.

The right wing parties in the Reichstag and their conservative supporters had chosen Hitler. They had thought they could keep control of the Nazi party, but instead it gained control of them, a catastrophic mistake that led to the deaths of around fifty million people.

Nazi electoral tactics and the problem of who supported Hitler

Election tactics in the last election for the Reichstag in the Weimar Republic provide some insight into the degree of support for Hitler among different sections of the German population. It is apparent that antisemitism alone was not sufficient to explain the Nazi victory. This is relevant to the question as to how far the Holocaust can be adequately explained by simply referring to the existence of long standing antisemitism, constant throughout history.

There is a large literature on the question of who voted for the Nazis and how important antisemitism was for the Nazi achievement of power. It seems that Nazi racial ideology and antisemitic propaganda were not enough to get the Nazis control of the government of Germany, even though it played a core role, *internally*, in building Nazi party membership and keeping it mobilised. Oded Heilbrunner has made a useful survey of the many regional studies that have been carried out on the role of antisemitic propaganda in ensuring the sudden surge of electoral support for the Nazis between 1929 and 1933. The conclusion seems to be that it was probably a contributing factor in some places but not in all places¹²².

The Nazis had been preparing their organisation for a long time before the 1930s. Their initial attempt to gain power by an armed coup, copying Mussolini, had failed in 1923. After that, they built a political organisation aimed at winning elections. A major part of their strategy consisted of Hitler's speeches at theatrically staged mass meetings. During the victorious election campaigns of 1930-1933, Hitler's speeches were directed at attracting the votes of the German Nationalist parties and defeating the Social Democrats and the Communists.

Hitler presented the Nazi party as being above sectional politics, unlike the old parties of the Weimar Republic. The Nazis would unite the German nation in its moment of crisis. Germany was threatened from without by hostile powers and from within by a corrupt political system. Behind it all were the Jews. Storm trooper violence on the streets was used to discredit the Republic, which could not maintain public order. Somehow, Hitler managed to pass the blame for the violence onto the Communists and he presented himself as the one man who could bring about stability and economic recovery. The choice was between Hitler and red revolution.

Goebbels' propagandists worked to persuade different constituencies that *their* particular situation would be remedied if they voted Nazi. In Goebbels, the Nazis had a master of the art of organised propaganda. He constructed an extensive nationwide organisation, with groups of Nazi Party propagandists in each locality and in different cultural and professional groups. These reported back to the centre on attitudes and this enabled Goebbels to tailor the message appropriately for each place.

Because of this local emphasis it is difficult to explain the Nazi victory by general statements about who voted for the Nazis and why. It has been necessary for scholars to perform micro-studies of Nazi politics in particular small geographical areas and in different occupational groups. Therefore,

122 Oded Heilbrunner 'The role of Nazi anti-Semitism in the Nazi Party's activity and propaganda: a regional historiographical study'. (1990) Leo Baeck Institute Year Book.

the picture becomes very complex. A number of these studies of electoral behaviour are collected in a volume edited by Thomas Childers¹²³. For the present purpose a few examples provide some illustration. It is clear from these that antisemitism was not the sole cause of the Nazis coming to power.

The middle classes

A study of the university town of Marburg illustrates the way in which the Nazi Party message resonated with the middle and lower middle class population, people whose social being was defined by status and local social networks rather than membership of political parties such as the Social Democrats or the Catholic Centre Party. Local middle class hegemony was exercised through involvement in professional and voluntary associations in the town.

The Nazis managed to gain supporters among the influential members of these organisations. Their message was that the traditional national parties were divisive. If you were a member of the German race, then you should seek security by supporting the party that fought for the interests of the race as a whole. They would look after you. This was the effective political meaning of Hitler's race theory in Marburg.

Farmers in Bavaria

Detailed examination of the rural population in one predominantly Catholic area of Bavaria (Gunzburg) shows how small farmers, who were originally organised in the Bavarian Peasants League, were induced to switch votes to the Nazi Party in 1932. The farmers suffered in the depression. They were desperate to maintain the prices of their produce and to limit the costs of their inputs. They also supported protective high import tariffs on agricultural goods.

The Social Democrats found it difficult to recruit farmers in the region as they represented non-agricultural workers in workshops and factories, whose need was for low food prices. Also, during the revolution of 1918-1919, the farmers bitterly resented the controls on agricultural prices imposed by the workers' councils and this hostility persisted as an obstacle for the Social Democrats. Furthermore, the violently hostile Nazi propaganda against the Social Democrats and Communists helped to propel the farmers towards the Nazis. Nazi propaganda emphasised that the Peasants League was too small and lacked power by itself to influence policy. The answer was to join together with the Nazis.

Antisemitism was not emphasised in Nazi election tactics in the region. There were many Jewish cattle dealers and the farmers found them useful. They were an integral part of the local agricultural economy. It is indicative

123 Thomas Childers (Ed) 'The formation of the Nazi constituency' (1986) Croom Helm.

that when trade with Jews was forbidden in 1935, the farmers tended to defy the regulation and continue secretly in their dealings with Jews. This included Nazi party members and officials.

Doctors

The German medical profession presents a different and troubling picture. We place our lives in the hands of our doctors and trust them to act in our interests as individuals, yet Nazi doctors participated in the sterilisation and euthanasia programs as well as in the final solution. The Nazi Doctors League (NSAB) had over 3000 members by 1933.

It is true that not all doctors sided with the Nazis. The profession was economically stratified and politically polarized. The Social Democrat government had instituted a system of state supported medical insurance and clinics, and the doctors associated with the SPD worked for the expansion of this system. This meant that the opportunities for private practice were diminished. There was a major problem of unemployment and status insecurity for young, newly qualified doctors. There were too many doctors compared to the number of paying patients or paid posts in clinics and medical institutions. The Nazi party was able to capitalise on these troubles in its propaganda against the Social Democrats. In addition, anti-Jewish propaganda fell on fertile ground, previously prepared by pseudo 'racial science', which had actually originated in the medical schools. There were large numbers of Jewish medical students, including many from Poland and Russia, who were not admitted to Russian Universities. A high proportion of professors in medical schools were Jewish and Jewish doctors constituted about 15% of the national total. In Berlin about half of the doctors were Jewish. After 1933 it did not take long before Jews were expelled en-masse from the medical profession. The members of the Nazi Doctors League benefited. Many of the Jews emigrated.

The German conservatives

German conservative nationalists, after the First World War, wanted a return to life as it was before the war, with a new regimented Prussian state. They wanted the safety of strong ordered government over a unified German race with an imperial mission. Hitler gained their support because the Nazis seemed to have the mobilising strength to achieve this.

The industrialists and financiers

The loss of external investments and colonies due to the allied victory, together with the inflation of 1923 and the crash of 1929, left the German industrial

economy with no way to survive within the constraints of the existing balance of political forces in the country and the Reichstag. Part of Hitler's appeal to the conservatives in general and the financiers and industrialists in particular, was that he offered a way to solve the problem of Germany's economy by setting the 6 million unemployed to work on the re-armament program and simultaneously forcibly controlling wages and prices¹²⁴, ¹²⁵.

It is also clear that many benefited from the take-over of Jewish capital and businesses in the program of 'Aryanisation' instituted by the Nazis and many were happy to take advantage of opportunities to profit from the re-armament program. Hitler's plans for colonies in the East offered freedom from international markets in food and raw materials and also ruthless exploitation of the labour of the enslaved people.

The role of the army

Control of the army was essential for Hitler if he was to put his ideas into practice. His expansionist drive could only succeed using the professional German army. The Nazi SA would only ever be useful for internal repression of political enemies. In the event, the victories of the German army were what made SS atrocities in the conquered countries possible and in fact the army was directly implicated in carrying out massacres of civilians in many cases.

The relation between the Army officer corps and politics is complicated and changed over time.¹²⁶ They had been formed in the Kaiser's service and were the main support of the power of the German Empire and its influence in European politics. Their loyalty was to the German state as represented by the person of the Kaiser. They held aloof from the political parties and in this sense they saw themselves as apolitical. After 1918 all this was thrown into disarray. The Versailles Treaty was intended to severely limit military influence in Germany and it limited the army to 100,000 men, as well as imposing a limit on its armaments. Aircraft, tanks and submarines were totally banned. The Treaty also involved the loss of territory, both in the creation of the Polish state in the East and the ceding of Alsace Lorraine to the French in the West.

The officer corps as a whole were divided both in their loyalty to the Republic and later in their attitude to the Nazis. Some officers were in favour of the Republic and others saw it as illegitimate and looked forward to a

124 Ian Kershaw 'The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and perspectives' (2000) Arnold London

125 Alfred Sohn-Rethel 'The economy and class structure of German fascism.' (1987) Free Association Books, London

126 F.L. Carsten 'The Reichswehr and politics. 1918 to 1933'. (1966) Oxford, Clarendon Press.

future return of a regime based upon a powerful army and to the frontiers of 1914. These divisions in the officer corps manifested themselves in a number of rebellions and attempts to seize power during the Weimar Republic. The Kapp Putsch was an attempted coup by disaffected army officers in 1920. General Ludendorff took part in the Nazi coup attempt to seize power in 1924. Ludendorff had risen to be the second in command of the German armies in the First World War under the supreme commander, von Hindenburg. Hindenburg later became the president of the Weimar Republic.

In the event the top commanders of the army served those who occupied the post of President, first the Social Democrat Ebert, then Field Marshal von Hindenburg and finally Hitler. In fact, the army played a crucial role in the initial establishment of the Republic. With the end of the war, the collapse of the Empire and the start of a German Revolution in 1918, the Social Democratic president, Ebert, called on the commander of the Field Army in France, General Groener, to bring the troops home in an orderly fashion and to put an end to the revolutionary takeover by soldiers' and workers' councils. The Social Democratic government feared Bolshevism and civil war. Groener later became a minister in the government and was followed in turn as army commander by Generals Reinhardt, von Seeckt, and Schleicher, who adopted Groener's policy in support of order. Schleicher also became a minister and then Chancellor, to be replaced by Hitler.

The wish to see the army restored to its former pre-eminence was common in both groups. Independently of the politicians, right from the start, the army authorities started a secret program aimed at re-armament and reversing the frontier provisions of the Versailles Treaty. After the Russo-Polish War of 1921 saw the defeat of the Red Army's attempt to invade the new Polish Republic, the Bolsheviks negotiated with the German Army with the aim of forming a common policy towards Poland. They established secret schools in Russia to train German officers in tank warfare and flying. Tragically, less than two decades later, in 1939, Poland was again partitioned by Germany and Russia and then German tanks rolled into Russia in 1941.

The Brownshirts were a major obstacle in Hitler's relations with the German Army High Command. The Brownshirt paramilitary formations had been a key part of Hitler's strategy for building his party. They broke up meetings of the Communists and Social Democrats and their rowdy street brawls served to mobilise support for the Nazis among the most alienated and marginalised. Their xenophobic anti-capitalist revolutionary rhetoric provided an alternative to communist and socialist internationalism. Their program included replacement of the army command by Brownshirt leaders, something the generals could not tolerate. This was not a contradiction

that could be obscured by propaganda. Hitler solved it by having the main Brownshirt leaders assassinated during a single night in 1934. Schleicher was also assassinated.

Some senior generals, including Keitel, Blomberg and Reichenau, supported Hitler.

War aims in the First World War had included German domination of Europe, acquisition of colonies and expansion of Germany's borders towards the East. Having failed in 1918, only 21 years later in 1939, the army repeated the attempt to carry out this program. This time, with their internal enemies (Social Democrats, and Communists) destroyed, they hoped the victory would be complete and final.

The army did not act to prevent the destruction of the constitution after Hitler came to power. Internal opposition to Hitler did emerge in the army but, in fact, they were mainly critical of Hitler only when they thought his policies were reckless and might lead to the defeat of Germany. Even when defeat seemed certain, they were unable to mount an effective opposition. The 1944 bomb plot was nearly successful but when von Stauffenberg's bomb failed to kill Hitler, General Fromm, the chief at Army Headquarters, who was implicated in the plot, was quick to dissociate himself from it, cancelled the planned coup, and had the plotters hastily executed. In fact, the German army kept fighting until the Russians had penetrated to the centre of Berlin and Hitler killed himself in his bunker.

4.6. The Nazi genocide

After the occupation of Poland, Russia and the smaller states of Eastern Europe, the Nazi SS aided by the German army and some of the local populations set about mass murder. Almost the entire Jewish community in occupied Europe was systematically wiped out, along with millions of Poles, Russians, and others. Some in the local populations took part in the killing of Jews, even though the Nazi armies were carrying out massacres of Poles, Ukrainians etc. at the same time. It is also true that many Jews were helped by their neighbours and some German generals expressed shock at the murder of civilians.

It is hard to grasp the scale of the killings. A total of 12 million of the defenceless civilian population were deliberately and systematically killed, of whom 6 million were Jews. Millions more were deliberately allowed to starve, including prisoners of war. What made killing on this scale possible? Large numbers of people had to be involved in carrying it out. Who were they and how was it possible for human beings to do this to other human beings?

Racial theories in general and antisemitism in particular existed in Europe before the Nazis. The Nazi attempts to exterminate Jews, Gypsies, Slavic peoples, the disabled, socialists, homosexuals etc., would not have been possible without the European capacity to believe that whole groups of people were lesser human beings.

There were precedents in colonial history. Ideas of racial superiority provided a convenient ideological cover for European imperial expansion and Europeans showed no mercy to non-European peoples. (Think of the stories of the American Indians, Bushmen and Hottentots, Tasmanian Aborigines, Africans in the Congo, slaves taken from Africa, the suppression of the Herero people in German South West Africa). Hitler intended to replace the 'Slavic' populations of the conquered territories in Eastern Europe and Russia with 'Aryan' farmers from Germany and Western Europe. Martin Borman recorded a conversation in Hitler's headquarters, in which Hitler actually mentioned the genocide of the indigenous Americans as a precedent. 'When we eat wheat from Canada, we don't think about the despoiled Indians'.¹²⁷

The application of science and technology and advanced methods of organisation are a common feature of modern war. The contrast between the advanced culture of modern society and the barbarism of its wars is striking. The Nazi extension of this to racial restructuring of *European* society by methodical extermination of whole groups is, however, unique and could not have been foreseen.

From the start they set about their racial policy in a systematic way. In order to plan resources and manpower for war and also, not least, to implement their breeding program, the Nazis set up a large bureaucracy to compile a register, including racial types, for the entire German population. In the event, defining the racial characteristics necessary for inclusion in the German Volk proved to be difficult, given that the concept itself was vague. Apart from recording facts for each individual, such as parents and grandparents, decisions were made on arbitrary physical characteristics and also on social factors including criminality, prostitution, homosexuality and other behaviours deemed to be antisocial. In spite of the nonsensical nature of these racial classifications, once recorded they became 'objective facts'. They made use of the most advanced statistical data recording and analysis methods. By 1938, they were using punched card sorting and tabulating machines (rented to the Nazis and maintained by American IBM or its German subsidiary Dehomag), to achieve this mammoth task in record time¹²⁸.

127 In: Martin Borman, 'Hitlers Table Talk'. 17th October 1941 evening.. Pub 1988, OUP

128 G. Aly and K.H. Roth (2004) 'The Nazi Census: Identification and control in the 3rd Reich'. Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

The register was used in issuing 'fitness to marry certificates' to couples who wished to marry. Without such a certificate, marriage was forbidden. Apart from its use in excluding people with undesirable racial characteristics from participating in social life, this register was of prime importance in carrying out the murderous policies of the Nazis and the registration bureaucracy became incorporated into this.

They started with the exclusion of 'racial inferiors' from social life, in particular Jews who were prevented by the Nuremberg Laws from owning businesses and following professions. They proceeded with a program of sterilisation of the 'unfit'. There were 400,000 of these procedures carried out. Next came the euthanasia program which involved the murder of the inmates of German asylums, nursing homes and hospitals. Seventy thousands of these patients were killed before the program was stopped by the opposition of churches and the families of wounded soldiers who feared for their relatives. Nazi doctors experimented with efficient ways of killing and ended up building gas chambers into which they injected carbon monoxide.

After the start of war in 1939 they proceeded in stages to the mass murder of ever greater numbers and more industrialised forms¹²⁹. Immediately on invading Poland the Germans adopted a harsh and brutal policy towards the population. They wished to extinguish any possibility of a resurgence of Polish society. Thousands were shot either for no reason or for some minor act of defiance. Hundreds of villages were burnt.

Jews were picked out for special attention, as were Gypsies. After the invasion of Russia, the attacks on Jews were transformed into a systematic program to eliminate all the Jews of Europe, the so called 'Final Solution'. To start with, special battalions of carefully screened soldiers and police, the Einsatzgruppen, were recruited by the SS to carry out mass executions by shooting. When they occupied Kiev one of these battalions rounded up 30,000 Jews and shot them in a single day in a valley called Babi Yar outside the city. These massacres continued as the German army advanced until 1.3 million Jews had been shot to death. The SS brought in the experts in gassing people from the euthanasia program. Motorised gas chambers were built and a total of 700,000 were packed into them and killed.

In the large cities and towns, Jews were confined to walled ghettos. The Warsaw Ghetto contained 445,000 Jews and the Lodz Ghetto held 160,000. Jews from all over Europe were transported to the city ghettos and also to specially built concentration camps. Food supplies were deliberately cut down and overcrowding was severe. Disease spread and many died. Harsh conditions of forced labour contributed to the death rate. Finally, the Nazis

129 Richard J. Evans (2008) 'The Third Reich at War' Allen Lane, England

built gas chambers in some of the camps and transported the populations of the ghettos to the camps. Most of the people were immediately gassed on arrival in these camps. Altogether three to four million died in the camps and ghettos and the total numbers of Jews killed was between 5 and 6 million.

As to how this was possible, it is clear that Himmler's SS was the essential core instrument and the main perpetrator of the genocide program. In 1933 they were responsible for setting up the first concentration camps in Germany, for interning and murdering enemies of the regime and soon after the invasion of Russia they organised and ran the Final Solution.

Himmler fashioned the SS into a fanatical and merciless military body, modelled as he thought on the medieval order of the Teutonic Knights who had conquered East Prussia¹³⁰. He devised 'traditions' and rituals designed to bind them together and inculcate absolute obedience to himself and the Führer. Racial theories became incorporated into the ethos of the SS. Himmler set up a research organisation, the *Deutsches Ahnenerbe* (German Ancestral Heritage) to support the indoctrination of the SS with published material. They set up research institutes, in archaeology, racial anthropology, mythology, etc. These were staffed by a mixture of prominent academics and amateurs and their purpose was to search for evidence of a supposed pre-Christian Aryan race, stemming from the Germanic tribes who had defeated the Roman Legions. He even sent an expedition to Tibet to see if they originated from there.

Since this essay is concerned particularly with trying to understand the different circumstances of each of the Jewish persecutions in European history, an important question is how far the particularly murderous version of antisemitism adopted by the Nazis was a reflection of a pre-existing general desire and intention among the wider German population as a whole to eliminate the Jews. There was certainly an intense and unceasing Nazi propaganda campaign, helped by the elimination of any opposing voices, between 1933 and 1945.

A fierce debate was stimulated by a book written by Goldhagen¹³¹. This book maintains that a policy of elimination of Jews had been widely supported by the German people as a whole, as far back as the medieval period, long before the Nazis, and that this is a sufficient explanation for what happened. He echoes Pinsker's view of antisemitism as an ahistorical psychopathology, independent of actual developments in European History.

130 Peter Longerich (2012) 'Heinrich Himmler' Translated by Jeremy Noakes and Lesley Sharpe. Oxford University Press.

131 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen 'Hitler's Willing Executioners: ordinary Germans and the Holocaust' (1997) Abacus, London.

He states that the genocide was generally known about, was popular, and was actively supported not only in the Nazi party itself but by the mass of the German population. In evidence for this view he cites the case of a police battalion who were assigned to carry out mass executions of Jews in Poland. He recounts how they were actually given a choice of whether to take part in mass murder and how a few declined without any steps being taken against them. Most willingly volunteered.

Other scholars have quarrelled with his interpretation of this story. An alternative, more historically based, account is provided in a review by Ian Kershaw¹³², based upon studies which include secret internal documents, diaries and reports from the SS and Gestapo, and other non-Nazi evidence. A significant episode is the attempt of the Nazi leaders to provoke a wave of popular pogroms against the Jews on Kristallnacht, 9-10 November 1938. Significantly, the tactic was seen as a failure by the top Nazis and they never again tried it. The reports tell us that the outrages were carried out by uniformed Nazis with the general public standing and watching, and with some people showing signs of sympathy with the Jews and continuing to use Jewish shops. The evidence seems to show that the extermination policy originated in the Nazi Party and was carried out mainly by the SS, the army and the police, with the help of a hierarchy of paid functionaries under the control of the state, all the way down to railway staff, and hired contractors such as the builders of the gas chambers. Each actor in the terrible drama carried out his part of the overall horror like a cog in a machine.

Goldhagen asks why there were so many 'willing helpers'? It is not really a mystery. That is what functionaries do. You only have to ask the captain of a Trident submarine whether he would launch the missiles when the order comes, or Lieutenant Calley at Mai Lai, or a bomber pilot who drops his bomb load over inhabited towns and villages. The essence of military training, perfected over centuries, consists in putting men in uniform and conditioning them to kill other men, dressed in different uniforms, without compunction. The individual's responsibility is displaced to the group. The extension of this to killing civilians, including women and children, is easier than we like to think, especially if they have been labelled as sub-human by years of propaganda. In the general barbarism which the Nazis brought to their treatment of the population of Eastern Europe, it is not surprising that they found it possible to get people to carry out massacres of Jews. The actual killers would have included people who would previously have been considered decent human beings. In addition, it is also true, of course, that a

132 Ian Kershaw 'The Nazi Dictatorship: problems and perspectives of interpretation' 4th edition, Ch. 5 'Hitler and the Holocaust' (2000) Arnold, London.

proportion of men, given absolute power over other people, will discover in themselves sadistic enjoyment in committing barbarous acts. This version, if true, is somehow even more depressing than Goldhagen's portrayal.

4.7. Jewish nationalism, antisemitism and the Holocaust

To sum up, the causes of antisemitic sentiment in Germany and Austria-Hungary were related to the political and social history of the various territories and should not simply be labelled as an un-analysable psychological phenomenon naturally associated with the presence of the Jewish minorities in those countries. Also, before the Nazis, antisemitism was a small force in Germany, as measured by election results, and cannot in itself explain the later mass murder. It was specifically the Nazi Party and the SS that were responsible, and explanation lies in the circumstances of their sudden rise to power. Finally, study of the history leads us to question the idea that Jewish nationalism is the way to prevent such things happening in the future. No state in continental Europe was able to resist the initial onslaught of the German armies and a Jewish state, had it existed in Europe, would also have been overrun.

Jewish communities in Palestine were saved by the defeat of the German armies at Stalingrad by the Russians and at el-Alamein by the armies of the British Empire. A pincer movement of the German armies through the Caucasus and North Africa had threatened Palestine and also the Middle East as a whole.

5. The continuing modern conflict between Israeli Jews and Arabs

5.1. Lessons of history?

It is evident that the Palestinian/Israeli dispute is not due to some long standing un-analysable, naturally inherent, mutual enmity between Arab and Jew going back into the dim and distant past. In this case the dispute is clearly about the possession of the land.

The parallels with the recurring theme of the previous sections are striking, the difference that here, the confrontation is of very recent origin and is not between Jews and European Christianity but between Jews and Palestinians. What remains the same is that long term hatreds between two communities are being created. Also, Israel is still dependent for its continuing security upon the support of a protecting military power, in this case, the Americans. This enables the Israeli government to impose its will regardless of the wishes of the Palestinians, for instance, by carrying out continual piecemeal expansion of Jewish settlements.

The thesis of this chapter and the next is that the scene has been set for a possible new disaster for the Jews in the Middle East, at some point in the future. This is the real 'lesson of history'.

As has emerged from previous chapters, the past existence of long term antagonism was not in itself a sufficient cause of the disasters suffered by Jews in Europe. It took in addition a shift in the balance of forces. In this present case, this change could result from a change in the support provided to Israel by the United States and also perhaps, the achievement of unity among the Arabs. There are also other major powers with interests in the region. These are factors outside the control of the Israeli government.

A genuine negotiated peace agreement between the Israeli state and the Palestinians is essential, sooner rather than later. A change in perceptions both in the Middle East and elsewhere (e.g. in America) would be an important factor in gaining public support for such an agreement.

The first requirement for this is agreement about the nature of the present situation and its historical antecedents and it is a great mistake to try to prevent such an enquiry by labelling it as 'antisemitic'. Obscuring the truth might help, in the short term, in maintaining Jewish nationalism within Israel and support from the Jewish diaspora and the American government. However, in the long term it is likely to fail as a political tactic.

The conflicts in the Middle East may be looked on as unsettled business left over from the dissolution of the Turkish Empire. Although both Arab and

Jewish consciousness is based upon long histories, the present confrontation did not exist before the early years of the 20th century and the First World War. Tragically the territorial arrangements imposed by the victors in that war left the national questions in Palestine unresolved, as they did in Eastern Europe. As the empires fragmented, nationalist movements struggled over possession of the different fragments, and destructive civil wars left a legacy of mutual fear and suspicion. The consequent chaos in Eastern Europe was the subject of previous chapters.

In order to understand the complexities of the present conflict it is necessary to review the origin and growth of the Zionist movement and the Palestinian opposition to it. This chapter reviews the development of the conflict in its historical context, starting with the foundation of the Zionist movement in 1897. The next and final chapter draws conclusions about the 'lessons of history'.

5.2. The history of the struggle for dominance in Palestine

The Israeli state finds itself locked in conflict with several different factions of the Palestinian national movement who themselves are opposed to each other. In relation to the theme of this essay, the aspects of the Zionist state that concern us are those related to this continuing conflict. The conflict about possession of the land has given rise, on both sides, to various conflicting nationalist movements, ranging from those with a strictly secular nationalist ideology to those who root themselves in religious fundamentalism of various sorts. In developing religiously based wings within what originally started as opposing secular nationalist movements, the two sides have born a distinct mirror image resemblance to each other. Those on both sides who profess commitment to a two-state solution have unfortunately put forward peace plans which are unacceptable to the other side. The main points of disagreement concern territory. There are also maximalists on both sides who aim to control the whole territory of Mandate Palestine between the Jordan river and the sea. Each side has considerable electoral support among its respective population. In either case an attempt to actually implement the maximum program would entail a catastrophe for the people of both populations, most of whom were not even born at the time of the original separation in 1948. The struggle between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews, which would not exist without Zionism, is not over and the outcome is unpredictable.

The Zionist programme

The modern Zionist movement, founded by Theodore Herzl in 1897, combines European colonial ideas and 19th century ideas of the nation with much older concepts of the Jews as a 'people'. Nation building was a popular liberal idea at the time and the creation of national consciousness through the writing down of local languages and revival of folk histories and cultures was happening in many places. This was thought to be the way to emancipate subject peoples. One consequence of these new nationalisms was that they tended to exacerbate localised inter-ethnic conflicts and we are still living with the tragic consequences today.

It is an unfortunate fact that the idea of a Jewish homeland surfaced at the time when European penetration of the Near East and Africa was in full progress and immensely popular in Europe. The plan was that establishment of the Jewish state would be based upon the purchase of land in Palestine from absentee landlords living in Damascus and other cities in the Middle East. A Jewish majority would be created by large-scale immigration and a Jewish state would be established. The last people to be asked would be the actual inhabitants. It was assumed that they would be happy to receive the benefits of economic development and civilisation brought by the incoming settlers or at least would not put up any serious resistance; if they did, it could be easily crushed. This was not a specifically Jewish illusion but was, after all, consistent with general European attitudes at the time (even on the left). It was indicative of this Eurocentric attitude that Herzl started by approaching different Imperial powers to ask them for a concession in territory controlled by them in their empires. The Russians, the Germans and the Turks were not interested in helping to set up an independent Jewish state. The British were sympathetic and initially offered part of Uganda. The Zionists soon fixed their sights on Palestine.

Political divisions within the Zionist movement

During the modern period of the Jewish settlement there have been a number of distinct trends within the Zionist movement. Many of the original leaders of the parties representing these trends were born in Eastern Europe before the First World War and their politics were formed in the maelstrom of national conflicts accompanying the decline and dissolution of the Tsarist, Austro-Hungarian and Prussian Empires. We have shown how the catastrophes which befell the Jews were triggered by these conflicts, especially after that War ended. It is tragic that the Zionists thought that the solution to Jewish suffering in Eastern Europe lay in a mass transfer of Jews to the very place which was to be riven by

national conflicts triggered by the concurrent decline and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Although there were many different concepts of the Zionist enterprise in the movement, three main tendencies became important in terms of relations with the Arab and other inhabitants of Palestine.

The main group of Zionist parties sought to create a Jewish state by buying land upon which to settle Jews, who would develop the country's resources. The land would be bought legally, giving the new owners legitimate rights to settle on it. A World Zionist Organisation was set up to co-ordinate activities aimed at the creation of the Jewish state. Its policies were decided at biennial international congresses where the different tendencies were represented. The Jewish Agency was created to implement its decisions and the Jewish National Fund was established to raise money from world-wide donations both large and small. The money so raised was used to finance immigration into Palestine and to develop the Jewish sector of the economy.

Land was purchased and immigrants settled on it. A mixture of private enterprises and communal organisations set about creating the necessary agriculture and industry to support the planned large increase in the Jewish population. This also necessitated increasing investment in the infrastructure of transport networks, power stations, waterworks etc. Schools, technical institutes and a university were created. All this was overseen by a Jewish National Council (the Vaad Leumi) with its own civil service. Much of the development was undertaken by the trade union organization, the Histadrut, which notably had its own health care system.

The most prominent tendency was made up of various Zionist Socialist parties and they insisted that Jews themselves should do all their own work and not become a typical settler population, exploiting the indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, this became a source of conflict with the local tenant farmers who had the land sold from under their feet and could not find employment in Jewish enterprises. The Zionist workers insisted that the Jewish enterprises boycott non-Jewish labour. It is not surprising that there was a rising against the settlers in the 1920s. The revolt was put down by the British Army. The Socialists were the dominant group in the 20th century until the 1970s (A smaller group within Labour Zionism wanted to include all sections of the population in the State, but they were not ultimately influential).

Another main trend, the Revisionists, followed the policies of Z'ev Jabotinsky, who advocated simply seizing control of Palestine by political and military means. Jabotinsky's ideas about Zionism were influenced by the Italian Risorgimento and the experience of Ukrainians who had attempted to set up a Ukrainian national state after the First World War. The idealistic

multicultural constitution of the first independent Ukrainian government failed to work and devastating pogroms had followed. Jabotinsky believed that there was no peaceful path to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He argued that the existing inhabitants had to be militarily defeated, as they would never acquiesce to the take-over of Palestine by Jewish immigrants. Insignificant in terms of political power until the 1970s, the Revisionist Zionists were the forerunners of parties which control the present Israeli government coalitions and was completely opposed to cooperation with the Palestinians.

As it happened, as far as the fate of the Palestinians was concerned, the distinctions between Labour Zionists and the Revisionists were not ultimately very significant. During the war of 1948 hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven out by the soldiers of both the Haganah, which was the military organization of the majority Socialists and by the Irgun and the Stern Gang who followed Jabotinsky. Notably, the Stern gang carried out a massacre in the village of Deir Yassin. This atrocity lives on in the memories of the Palestinians today.

The religious Zionists comprise another main tendency represented in the Israeli parliament. The main part of the early Zionist movement was primarily secular, although much of their rhetoric was about rebuilding the ancient Land of Israel and leaned heavily on biblical tradition. The secular Zionist movement was initially shunned by religious Jewish authorities, as being contrary to Jewish Messianic teaching. The future Jewish Kingdom of David was to be created only on the coming of the Messiah. However, Rabbi Kook, who was appointed as the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine by the British Mandate authorities in 1921, decided that the secular Zionists were nevertheless doing God's work and should be supported. Religious Zionism was born and the national movement obtained divine sanction.

The ideology of the xenophobic right wing religious parties in Israel has its roots in ancient Jewish religious literature. Many Jewish religious festivals commemorate 'national' victories over states that have the same names as modern existing states in the Middle East (unlike Christian festivals, which relate to events in the life of Jesus). The Passover ritual is generally taken to contain a universal message in its tale of the liberation of slaves, brought about by God's will, three millennia ago. This was all very well when Jews were not in possession of state power in a modern Israel. However, translated by religious Zionists into a symbol of God's present intentions, it takes on a different, more nationalistic meaning and becomes the founding myth of the modern Jewish state, which happens to have a common border with modern Egypt.

Many religious Zionists believe the Israeli state is the manifest fulfilment of God's promise, which gave them the land of Israel. Interpreted in this way, Passover looks like a particularly nasty celebration of a time when God intervened in a war on one side and arranged the destruction of the Egyptians and the conquest of Canaan, with the massacre of all the Canaanites. The implication is that he will intervene again, on the Israeli side. Needless to say, interpretation of the biblical text in this way would not appeal to modern Egyptians or the inhabitants of the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria as right-wing Zionists refer to it). Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jews in the Persian Empire from a threatened persecution as described in the book of Esther. Hanukah commemorates the victory of the Maccabees, which gave Jews independence from Syria in the 2nd century B.C.

Quotations from present day Rabbis which refer to interpretations of the Talmud, Mishna, Maimonides etc., can be found in a book by Israel Shahak¹³³. There are statements about Gentiles which are quite shocking to the liberal mind. (viz. 'Unarmed enemy civilians can legitimately be killed. Enemy wounded should not be treated. Action should not be taken to save the life of a Gentile on the Sabbath. Gentiles should not be allowed to live amongst us'.) Of course, he is choosing his quotations very selectively and I believe there are other more universal ethical themes in the Jewish sacred books. However, Shahak's main point is that the more fanatical rabbis in Israel use holy writ to justify their terrible politics. This does not leave much room for compromise.

The amalgamation of Jewish religious tradition with modern secular Zionism creates a further problem for the ambition to set up a normal modern state in Israel. The religious Zionists believe that they have a special relationship with God, who promised the land to them millennia ago. How to combine this Jewish sense of exceptionalism with a modern industrial state which accords equal treatment to all citizens regardless of creed or colour is a problem. Inequality, especially before the law, does not seem to completely prevent market capitalism from working, but it certainly poses a threat to social stability in the long run.

In the 1970s the socialists lost their decisive position in Israeli politics. The right-wing coalition governments of Israel, under Begin, Shamir, Sharon and now Netanyahu have all applied Jabotinsky's uncompromising approach in their relations with the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, which they include, in the ancient territory of Israel. On the other hand, they have also followed pragmatic policies when it suits their long term aims. Begin restored Sinai to Egypt as part of a peace agreement and Sharon evacuated

133 Israel Shahak 'Jewish History, Jewish Religion' (1997) Pluto Press, London

the Gaza Strip. They have combined three main strands of Zionism into a politically effective mix, namely military confrontation, settlement and messianic religion.

The current right-wing coalitions include the specifically religious Zionist parties, of which the settler movements in the West Bank are a part, as well as secular followers of Jabotinsky's ideas. The Jews who fled from Arab countries after the creation of the State of Israel have provided a significant part of the electoral support for these governments.

Opposition to Zionism by the indigenous people during the First World War and during the British Mandate

Arab opposition to Israel has had a complicated history. From the defeat of Turkey in 1918 until 1948 there was a three-cornered struggle for control of Palestine, between the Palestinian national movement, the Zionists and the British authorities. Terrorist attacks perpetrated by both Palestinians and Jews were a feature of this struggle, as was repression by the British.

The Zionists had thought that they could negotiate arrangements with the British to set up a new Jewish state in Palestine, in place of the Turkish one. The problem for the Zionist plan was that removal of the Turkish government in Palestine, after its defeat in the First World War, did not simply leave the field open for the installation of a new state structure. Power had not previously been simply concentrated in the hands of Turkish Government officials. There had existed a social organisation of society on which the Turkish administration rested. In Palestine the population was divided on the basis of religious affiliation. Each minority religious community arranged its own internal religious and communal affairs and related to the government through its own local leaders. These leaders were also responsible for the collection of taxes and general maintenance of order. Muslims were the vast majority. In 1918 there were 512,000 Muslims, 61,000 Christians and 66,000 Jews.

The British followed the Turks in using local notables. During the First World War they chose Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca, to head the Arab revolt against the Turks. He was the guardian of the holy places in Mecca and claimed a direct descent from the Prophet. The Mufti of Jerusalem was the religious head of the Muslims in that city and was in charge of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, from where Muslims all over the world believe that Mohamed had ascended to heaven. After the defeat of Turkey, the British appointed a member of a prominent family, the Al-Hussainis, to this post. The family claimed descent from Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. In 1914 Turkish Jerusalem already had a locally elected municipal council. After the War, the British chose the mayor of this council from another notable

Muslim family, the Nashashibis. They were members of a well-established and powerful local land-owning elite, with great influence in the Muslim community. Apart from their religious motivations, they might naturally have been expected to defend their own interests.

Control of Jerusalem with its holy places was bound to be contentious and is still so today. The Muslim holy places are built on top of a platform which once supported Herod's palace and the Western wall of this platform still exists and is a Jewish religious site, the Wailing Wall. More generally the power of the Arab elite depended upon control of land and commerce. The inflow of Jewish capital from Europe put them at a disadvantage. Zionist funds were devoted to creating a rival Jewish economy with advanced capital-intensive agricultural and manufacturing techniques and preferentially employing Jewish labour. Many landlords sold their land to the Jews. Others developed their land into commercial farms. What this meant was that numbers of peasant farmers became hired labourers in the countryside and increasing numbers migrated to the towns.

During and after the First World War the Arab elite became aware of the possibility that their hopes of an independent Arabian Kingdom in the whole of the Arab Middle East, after the defeat of Turkey, might be disappointed, and that the British might support the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine. From the Arab point of view, the Zionist program for a Jewish state in Palestine was simply replacing one colonial enterprise with another. They were strongly opposed from the beginning.

Vague promises, open to different interpretations, had been made to both groups by the British government during the First World War, as part of the war strategy. In order to stir up the Arab revolt against the Turks, they promoted expectations of Arab independence. To enlist the support of world Jewry on the allied side in the war, the British government, supported by some leading politicians who had genuine sympathy for the Jews, promised to encourage the creation of a 'homeland for the Jews in Palestine'. A letter from Lord Balfour to this effect was sent to Lord Rothschild. Arab leaders reacted with hostility to its contents. They had thought the British had made a promise to them that territory in the Arab lands conquered from the Turks would be given to them to rule. The truth was that the French and the British had already drawn up a secret agreement during the war, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, about how they would carve up the Middle East between them after the war. This document was subsequently revealed publicly by the Bolshevik government, in 1917.

The leaders of the Arab revolt against the Turks made it quite clear that they would not tolerate the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Faisal, a son

of the Sherif of Mecca, and T.E. Lawrence attended the League of Nations conference in 1919 in order to prevent that happening. In Palestine itself, the first anti-Jewish riots took place in 1919 and were centred around the rights of access to the Wailing Wall. They were instigated by Haj al amin-Hussaini, the future Mufti of Jerusalem.

In 1923 the League of Nations ratified the British Mandate in Palestine. Its stated intention was that the British would rule while preparing the country for eventual independence. The French took Lebanon and Syria. Elsewhere, independent Arab states were eventually set up. Hussein became king of what is now modern Saudi-Arabia but was later displaced by Ibn Saud. The sons of Hussein were also installed in their own kingdoms, Abdullah in Trans-Jordan and Faisal in Iraq. The small sheikdoms and emirates round the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula became independent states.

The pogroms in Eastern Europe after the First World War led to a renewed wave of immigration of Jews into Palestine and this reinforced the fears of Zionist intentions on the part of the Arab elite

In 1929 there was a major uprising throughout Palestine, again triggered by disputes over Jewish access to the Wailing Wall, including armed guerrilla attacks on Jewish settlements, and this led to repression by the British Army and also to the organisation of Jewish self-defence. Thus, the Zionist project was willy-nilly transformed into an armed struggle. The settlements were surrounded by fences and the iconic watch towers were built.

The coming of the Nazi conquest of power in Germany and then in Europe led to further bitter struggle as many European Jews tried to get to safety in Palestine and the Arabs tried to resist this new wave of immigration. The British authorities tried to compromise between these two, by limiting the number of Jewish refugees allowed to enter.

In 1936 there was an Arab general strike against a partition plan put forward by the British government. This was also the start of a major armed uprising, which included sabotage of British facilities, attacks on Jewish settlements, kidnapping and killing of officials and Arab collaborators. The British army resorted to brutal counter-insurgency techniques. Captain Orde Wingate formed specialist units (the Special Night Squads) which carried out ambush attacks on suspected insurgents and on the villages which supported them. The squads included both hand-picked British soldiers and members of the Haganah (the Jewish self-defence force) who received valuable military training, which was useful to them later.

During the Second World War the Zionists generally supported the British war effort. They knew what was going on in the Nazi death camps.

They also realized that the security of their project in Palestine depended upon the defeat of the Germans by the allied armies.

In the late 1930s and also during the Second World War, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj-al Amin Husseini, aligned himself with Germany, who he saw as a potential ally being the main enemy of the British Empire. He visited Germany to obtain Nazi support. Unfortunately for his policy but very fortunately for the Jews and in fact, also fortunately for the Arabs, the Nazis never reached the Middle East.

Wars between the Israeli state and the independent Arab countries after 1948

Fighting broke out again between 1947 and 1949, when the UN announced a plan to partition the country between Arabs and Jews, and the British forces left Palestine. Five Arab armies invaded Palestine. The Zionist forces managed to repel them and created the State of Israel. The new state within the cease-fire lines covered a somewhat larger area than had been envisioned in the 1947 UN partition plan (see Map 8). The war saw the exodus of a large section of the Palestinian population from their homes. Many were forcibly expelled at gunpoint and others fled through fear. Many of them were housed in large refugee camps around Israel's borders, and they remain an enduring source of bitter hostility to the Jewish state. There was a corresponding emigration of Jews from the Arab world, caused by the recurring wars between Israel and neighbouring Arab states. Many fled to Israel and their descendants form at least twenty per cent of the Israeli population. They are mainly hostile to the Arabs and vote accordingly.

Subsequent wars between the Arab states and Israel in 1956, 1967 and 1973 left the Israelis undefeated and with enlarged borders (see Maps 8 and 9) and led to internal political upheavals in the participant countries. Between 1949 and 1967 the West Bank was administered by Jordan and the Gaza Strip by Egypt. After the 1967 war, Israel occupied the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Syria lost the Golan Heights and insists on its return as a condition of peace. Israel also conquered Sinai in 1967 but withdrew in 1977 when it signed a peace agreement with Egypt. After this, Arab governments effectively gave up the attempt to destroy the Jewish state. While opposed in principle to the Zionist state, these other states had their own priorities and were not prepared to go to war on behalf of the Palestinians. These were disparate countries with a variety of political regimes. Egypt eventually signed a peace treaty with Israel. The Kings and Emirs of Saudi Arabia and the oil Sheikdoms rely on American military protection and are therefore not currently active opponents of Israel. The recent upheavals in the Arab world



Map 8: Israel/Palestine.

have little to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict at the present time but no one can predict what will happen in the immediate or distant future.

Opposition to Zionism by the Palestinians after 1948

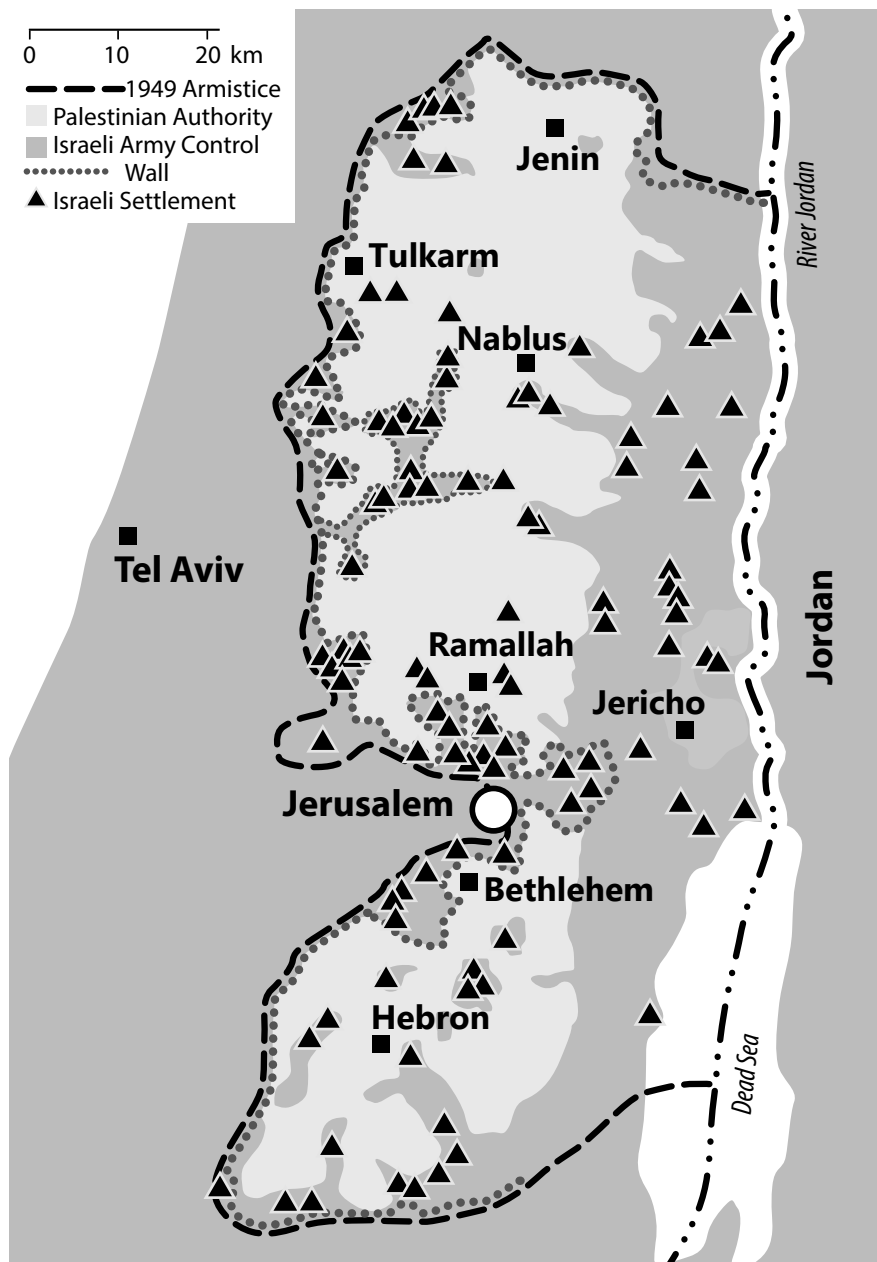
The Palestinian movement on the West Bank also went through changes after 1948.

The modern Fatah party had its beginnings when a group centred on Yasser Arafat, the Palestine National Liberation Movement, emerged in about 1959. It was dedicated to reversing the defeat of 1948 by an armed struggle to be carried out by the Palestinians themselves. It maintained its independence from the Arab states. There were other Palestinian nationalist groups that were each allied with one or another of the Arab states and, in 1964, these were organised into the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), under the aegis of the Arab League. It was essentially a grouping of secular nationalist movements containing both Muslims and Christians.

The Fatah organisation joined the PLO after the 1967 war and eventually dominated all the other groups. Its independent policy became a problem for Arab states as it insisted on launching attacks on Israel from their territories. Thus, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation lost the support of King Hussein, who did not want to risk another war. There was an attempt to assassinate King Hussein who retaliated by turning his tanks on the PLO. It was expelled from Jordan and moved its headquarters to Beirut in 1970, to Tunis in 1982 and then back to the West Bank.

Following the 1967 war the West Bank and the Gaza strip were occupied by the Israeli army. Life under military occupation was harsh and oppressive for the Palestinians. Israeli counter-insurgency operations involved massive surveillance, restrictions on movement, arbitrary arrest and torture. Subsequently, many Jewish settlements have been established on land beyond the 'Green Line' (the armistice line agreed in 1949 after the 1948 war) separating Israel from the proposed Palestinian state and this continues up to the present (see Map 9).

Nevertheless, the Palestinian relationship with Israel has also involved a degree of co-operation. The Palestinian economy became intertwined with that of Israel. Economic survival depended upon the large number of Palestinians who commuted to Israel to fill low paid jobs, which were in fact better paid than those available in the occupied territories. Conversely, economic exploitation of cheap Palestinian labour contributed to Israel's economic growth. This two-sided relationship was unstable and broke down in popular uprisings in 1987 and 2000, the First and Second Intifadas, which



Map 9: Palestine.

drew the rural population in much greater numbers than before into active opposition to the occupation.

As with the religious wing of the Zionist movement, parts of the Palestinian movement have taken on a religious character. Secular Pan-Arabism seemed to have failed to help the Palestinian cause and some Muslim clerics decided to widen the scope of their appeal so as to co-opt all Muslims, world-wide. Instead of only being a struggle between Arabs and Jews they redefined the attempt to retake all of Palestine as part of a Muslim anti-Imperialist war against America and Britain.

Hezbollah (The People of God) is a Shiite party which grew up in Palestinian slums in South Lebanon. It has links to Iran. In 1982 Israel invaded Southern Lebanon in an attempt to eliminate the Hezbollah presence there. They failed in this aim and Hezbollah maintained that it had won a victory when Israel withdrew.

Hamas (The Islamic Resistance Movement) is a Sunni Muslim party launched by the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip in 1987 at the time of the first Intifada. It has been elected as the government of Gaza. Both organisations have carried out attacks on civilians inside Israel. Neither Hezbollah nor Hamas accepts the idea of two states as the ultimate settlement of the dispute with Israel. They are both classified as terrorist organisations by the Israelis and the major Western Powers.

In 1988 during a meeting of the Palestinian National Council, which included representatives of all factions of the Palestinian movement, the PLO decided to recognise the existence of the State of Israel within the boundaries of the 1949 cease fire line, if an autonomous Palestinian state could be set up in the rest of the country. The decision was not acceptable to other parties, in particular Hezbollah and Hamas, but the PLO won a majority. However the ceasefire lines at the end of each of the wars had resulted in de facto enlargement of the territory controlled by Israel and accordingly, over the years, a variety of different ways of setting the boundaries of a two state solution have been put forward by people on both sides, but no agreement has been arrived at.

In all subsequent negotiations, the Israelis have prioritised their strategic security needs and insisted on retaining military control of a wide area along the Jordan as well as the overall right to intervene militarily. They have constructed a series of military roads barred to the Palestinians, instituted many check points and installed an eight-metre high concrete wall between the West Bank and Israel. This wall also encloses some land beyond the ceasefire line and which is internationally recognised as Palestinian.

After the Oslo agreements, in 1995, the Israeli army handed some degree of control in much of the Palestinian inhabited locations to an elected Palestinian Authority but retained the overall security role. Since then the 'Peace Process' has staggered on with no conclusion in sight. Subsequently the Palestinian Authority has been put in the position of policing the decision to cease armed attacks on Israelis and has been opposed by the rejectionists who have continued with armed attacks. Hostility between Fatah and Hamas over this has led to violent clashes between the two organisations.

Israel has adopted a policy of assassinating the leaders of the armed Palestinian groups and responding to any Palestinian attacks on Israel with overwhelming force including bombing from the air and incursions by the army on the ground. In these clashes, the Palestinians have suffered by far the greatest amount of destruction and death owing to the superiority of the Israeli army. Civilians die in these attacks which take place in inhabited areas. Homes, hospitals and refugee centres are hit. This harsh policy has in fact brought quiet to the borders with Lebanon and the West Bank but not to Gaza. There is no way to predict in detail what will happen in the future but one can say that the basis for enduring hatred is being created. People do not forget the deaths of their children, parents or siblings. Cultural prejudice and hostility between Arabs and Jews will last a long time. Meanwhile settlement expansion continues inexorably.

6. Conclusion

6.1. The value of a detailed historical account

At the beginning of this essay it was proposed that a detailed historical study of Jewish history in the context of social, economic and political conflict in Europe can provide a helpful conceptual framework for studying Jewish persecutions. This seems to be supported by this brief survey. Knowledge of history can help us in thinking of ways to foresee how persecution could occur in the future. The account of history given here confirms the idea that Jews were not simply victims of dark forces which cannot be subject to historical analysis. There were religious differences and social forces which tended to create prejudice and there were specific historical triggers for actual persecutions. These were different at different times.

Jews never were entirely disconnected from the societies in which they lived. European history, with which we have been concerned here, is full of violent and bloody conflict and Jews were never effectively isolated from these conflicts. They were necessarily a functioning part of the larger society. It was their very separation that made them useful. Because they were a separate isolated minority, they had to depend upon unreliable alliances with powerful rulers. Although some Jews possessed enormous financial resources, they could not directly exert independent military power. At a time when Christianity was a main bulwark of the states in which they found themselves (up to the 18th century), they were allowed to openly deny the main tenets of that religion. Because of this, they were often subject to religious prejudice but they were nevertheless, for the most part, tolerated by the Catholic church (the only non-Christian religion that was so tolerated within Christian Europe). This was partly because Catholic doctrine had the voluntary conversion of the Jews as one of its objects.

Jews were able to exist in equilibrium with the wider societies for hundreds of years at a time. However, whenever there was major social upheaval, Jews were in the line of fire and disasters fell on them. The patron could become powerless to exert protection or alternatively the patron could turn on the client for reasons of expediency. Both these situations have been seen during the present survey.

6.2. The current Middle Eastern situation:parallels with Jewish history

The historical narrative outlined in this essay puts into perspective the Zionist view that Jews have now broken the cycle of periodic persecutions by setting up a Jewish state. It is a tragic irony that at a time when it seems unlikely that there will be more wars between the main European powers, France, Germany and England, the Middle East is exploding. Paradoxically the Middle East is an area in which religious differences still have political importance. This, together with the seemingly insoluble territorial dispute with the Palestinians and incessant cross border violence, forms the basis of a long-term hostility between the Arabs and the Israeli Jews.

Thus there is a parallel with previous Jewish history in Europe when the long-term friction between Jews and gentiles had both cultural/religious causes and material roots. A further parallel is the way in which the situation of Israel vis-a-vis the Arabs is stabilised by the competing geopolitical interests of the great powers. The State of Israel depends for its existence upon the military weakness of the Palestinians and the Arab states and upon the support of the Americans.

However, this military superiority is not guaranteed to continue forever. History is full of examples of the sudden reversal of military balance between hostile states. For instance, the Poles defeated the Red Army in the Polish-Soviet War of 1921 and the German army was reduced to insignificance in 1918. In spite of this, the balance had so changed by 1939 that the Germans and the Russians were able to partition Poland once again with no difficulty. They had re-armed in the meantime. The Jews of Poland died at the hands of an external force, the German SS, who arrived on the heels of the invading German army which happened at that particular time to be better armed and prepared than any other European army. In other words, the message of history, if it has one, is that continuing unresolved hostility between neighbouring populations can have disastrous unforeseen consequences.

No one can predict the outcome of the present turmoil in the Middle East. There is great variety in the forms of government in the different nation states. There are monarchies, theocracies, secular republics, democracies and military dictatorships and various mixtures of these. In the background are the outside powers and their geopolitical manipulations, mainly concerning oil. Cutting across all this are religious divisions between Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Christians and Jews. The Israel/Palestine conflict pits Israeli Jews against Palestinians inside Israel and in the occupied territories. Palestinian Arab loyalties are split between the secular PLO and the Sunni

Hamas movement in Gaza and the Shia Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. In the worst case, there is an increasing danger of general war involving all the states in the region, if not now, at some time in the future. The Syrian and Iraqi civil wars indicate how all this could go out of control. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have already been killed by artillery fire and air strikes. Israel could well get sucked into such a war, which might bring immense destruction to both Palestinians and Israelis

Thus, to summarise, the Zionist solution to the problem of Jewish persecution, as advocated by Herzl and Pinsker, namely the establishment of a Jewish state, looks as though it has led to a repetition of an age-old pattern in a different modern form. The Jews in Israel have engineered themselves into a situation of seemingly irreconcilable conflict with the Arabs, recreating the traditional bind in which they were trapped for a thousand years in Europe. The continuance of Israel as a specifically Jewish state depends on massive military and economic support from outside. Paradoxically, rather than Israel guaranteeing the safety of Jews in the diaspora, the Jews of America and Europe serve as the ultimate guarantee of Israel's existence. The lesson of the history recounted in this essay is surely that such conflict situations end badly. The formation of the state in 1948 has been a catastrophe for the original inhabitants of Palestine and may result in another catastrophe for the Jews.

6.3. Breaking out of the cycle

Looking back on this history it seems to have had a horrible inevitability. Could the Jews have followed a different path? Probably not. During the feudal period, society was highly structured and Jews, being of an alien religion, had no choice about their status as the king's servants. Similarly, later on they had to seek protection from whoever was in power. Their choices were limited and subject to the vicissitudes of violent events and catastrophes in the wider society. Can the Jews of the world follow a different path in the future? I think the answer is yes. In modern industrial states, religion is not an essential pillar of state power. The state need have no policy on religion.

Peace would seem to require a change in the state ideology. A reasonable solution would be to aim for a world in which all the races and ethnic groups mix freely with each other and stop trying artificially to maintain separate racial and cultural identities. How that can be brought about is uncertain. At the present time, the idea of according equal rights to the Palestinians within a single state would be vehemently opposed by the majority of Israelis.

Politics in Israel is driven by two different imperatives. One is to maintain a modern stable industrial economy, so as to attract foreign investment and

trade. Peace with the Palestinians and the Arab states would seem to be necessary for this. The other force is Jewish exceptionalism. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Jewish population of Israel is itself made up of a number of distinct groups, who originated from different parts of the world at different times and with each tending to have a different self-identity.

The original Ashkenazi settlers came from Western and Eastern Europe and their relationship with the Palestinian tenant farmers was conditioned by the fact that they brought their previous attitudes towards European peasants with them. A large section also brought their socialist ideals with them as well and, as with the socialists in Russia, considered traditional peasant society as an obstacle to their idealistic schemes. They ended up not including the Palestinians in the socialist institutions that they created and were quite happy to expel them from the land. Nevertheless, the Palestinian Israelis left in Israel after 1948 and who actually were citizens and had the vote, tended to vote for the various Jewish socialist parties (Labour and Communist). This voting pattern lasted until the start of the second Intifada when Palestinian demonstrators were shot dead by the police and thereafter Labour lost their support. Ashkenazi Jews tend to be prominent in the technocratic and business elite and many have favoured the various peace agreements that have been put forward, for reasons of stability and international investment.

Russian Jews who came to Israel in the 1990s tend to look towards Europe for their cultural identity. They are descended from Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe, like the original settlers. The fact that they had to leave Russia so recently would tend to make them anxious about security and thus suspicious of Palestinian aspirations.

Mizrachi Jews who came from the Middle East and North Africa, mostly after 1948, were, like Palestinians, subject to economic and cultural discrimination by the Ashkenazi Jews. They have constituted a subordinate Jewish working class with a status between the Ashkenazis and the Palestinians. Apart from having had to leave their homes in Muslim countries after the Jewish state was set up, they are in direct competition with Palestinians. Since the 1970s, when Labour lost power, they have been an important factor in the election of right-wing politicians to the Knesset who are opposed to peace with the Palestinians. They vote for them even though right-wing governments have kept wages low and reduced much of the welfare net they depend on. This is not primarily for religious reasons although the politics may be couched in those terms.

Cutting across these rather different constituencies are divisions concerning the attitude to the 'Jewish' nature of the state. Religion plays a part in this. Those who see the state in theocratic terms as a fulfilment

of God's promise to Moses, certainly wouldn't want Arabs to have equality. Those who see it as the state in which the future existence of the Jewish religion can be assured, could tolerate other religions as long they were in a minority. The religious roots of modern Jewish nationalism go back a very long way. Since the fall of the Jewish Kingdom, an important part of Jewish religious practice has been designed to keep the Jewish people in existence as a culturally exclusive social group, essentially a people without a country, existing within the territories of other peoples. The secular Zionist concept of the 'Jewish State' stems from this religious tradition.

The idea of a Jewish state, which is not merely a state of its inhabitants but assigns automatic rights of residence to the entire Jewry of the diaspora, is, to say the least, peculiar. What is more, the right to settle on that considerable part of the land which is owned by the state, extends to them but not to the Palestinians who are actually citizens of Israel, not to mention the Palestinian refugees and their descendants. Zionist ideology is a major obstacle to peace. In particular, it prevents the Israelis from seeing themselves as a part of the Middle East and perpetuates the view of Israel as an alien European implant. This goes back to the beginning of the Jewish settlement by European Jews at the end of the 19th century.

A further group are the exclusive sects of religious Jews who had never supported the idea of setting up a state before the arrival of the Messiah. They were always content to constitute a minority in a Muslim state both before 1948 and now. They are hostile to other Jews.

Although the territorial arrangements which were to be imposed on the Palestinians as part of the various peace agreements were woefully inadequate, it did seem that further progress would follow. However, these hopes did not last. The events of the First and Second Intifada (risings of the West Bank Palestinians) have created a general insecurity. The Second Intifada was triggered by a deliberately confrontational demonstration by Sharon on the Temple Mount and it was accompanied by a wave of suicide bombings in Israel itself. The fears aroused by these bombings have served to unite the different constituencies behind increasingly right-wing government coalitions opposed to peace agreements. The risings were suppressed brutally by the Israeli army which intensified distrust of Israel among the Palestinians.

How do you change the attitudes of people who feel under siege? I don't have a simple answer to this. Perhaps if the siege mentality could be lifted by some sort of peace agreement attitudes may change. There is some hope of this. In South Africa, which seemed like an equally insoluble problem before the fall of apartheid, a single state survives, with equal legal rights, albeit that severe economic inequality persists. It may require two independent states

to be set up or a federation of interdependent states or a single state, which would require major territorial concessions on the part of the Israelis. If the pressure of a continual state of war with their neighbours could be removed, there is every possibility that a modern state could emerge, in which all these diverse populations, including Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian) could merge.

The present conflict, which is usually expressed in nationalist or fundamentalist religious terms, has a very real economic foundation, Palestinian poverty. At the very least, it might be wise to make sure that the Palestinians gain economic benefits from the connection with Israel, instead of poverty and despair. The Israeli government could afford to build subsidised houses and infrastructure in the West Bank for the benefit of Palestinians instead of for Jewish settlers. They could fund Palestinian industries, schools and hospitals, instead of checkpoints and military roads.

The historical account in this essay tends to suggest that the desire of Jews for their religion to be at the same time about God and transcendence and *also* serve as an ideology for preserving a separate 'national' identity, *might itself be* a part of the 'Jewish Problem'. This then raises the question of Israel's role in preserving the Jewish tradition. It is not clear how a secular state can fulfil a specifically Jewish religious mission, whose fulfilment will benefit humanity in general. The ethical parts of the Bible are universally available and anyway the record of the Jewish state is not good. It was established using the same sort of ethnic cleansing and massacre as other states. The biblical Prophets' messages concerning the poor and weak have not gone out from Jerusalem.

As the Jews of Israel come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds from all over the world, to lump them all together as a single exclusive Jewish entity is rather artificial and serves to reinforce a reactionary nationalism. Some have argued that the diaspora Jews were in fact cultural communities rather than 'racially pure' communities.

Poliakov¹³⁴ shows how blood-group analysis of European Ashkenazi Jews reveals greater similarity between Jews and the corresponding host populations in the various territories of the countries of pre-war Europe than between Jews from the different countries. There was considerable intermarriage and conversion despite strong Jewish and Christian prohibitions.

More recently, Shlomo Sands¹³⁵ has published a study in which he further elaborates the idea that it is a myth that the Jews of today are the biological descendants of Jews who were exiled from Palestine by the Romans and who have now returned to the land that was promised to them. He argues that the

134 Leon Poliakov. 'A History of Antisemitism Vol 1' University of Pennsylvania Press (2003).

135 Shlomo Sands 'The Myth of the Jewish People' (2009) Verso London.

sizes of the various populations of Jews living outside Palestine both before and after the Roman conquest mean that most of them were produced by conversion and intermarriage. Anyway, the Jewish peasants of Palestine were probably not taken to Rome after the fall of Jerusalem. It was the elite and the soldiers who would have been exiled.

Looked at in an optimistic light, a main feature of the state building experiment in Israel is that, like the United States, it is a 'melting pot' where all the different immigrant groups are absorbing parts of each other's cultures. But like the United States this inclusion is selective. The indigenous Palestinians do not have equal rights. Perhaps the solution would be to include them properly.

It might not be wise to rely so completely on the American right. Jews have traditionally looked towards liberals for alliances. Liberals have usually supported Jewish emancipation, and this has contributed to the hostility of the right who have traditionally been antisemitic. It is ironic that the American religious right, with their expectations of the apocalypse and the final conversion of the Jews, are now among the staunchest supporters of the right-wing policies of the present Israeli government towards the Arabs. Things could change. Luther cherished similar hopes of converting the Jews and when these were disappointed, he turned into an anti-Semite.

American foreign policy is changeable. They first supported and then dumped Ho Chi Minh against the Japanese in Vietnam, Fidel Castro against Batista in Cuba and Saddam Hussein against Iran. American governments may not always be committed to Israel and the Arabs may not always be weak and disorganised. Israel has no alternative in the long run to achieving peace with its neighbours. As it is, the Israelis are increasing the enmity of the Arabs by throwing their military weight around and taking more and more land and more of the water resources of the region.

6.4. The wider international perspective

Globalisation carries extra dangers in this respect. Possession of a nation state does not necessarily bring security. The period leading up to the First World War might be considered as the first modern globalisation. That war was of global extent precisely because of the preceding economic control of different parts of the world by the different European empires. The consequences following the end of the war were also global in extent, in particular, the rise of the Nazi party in Germany with its global ambitions. Jews had been protected by the internal social order imposed by the Habsburg and Hohenzollern Emperors but did not long survive their collapse after the First World War, and the

subsequent rise of the Nazis and the advent of the Second World War. Both wars were catastrophes, which engulfed large parts of Europe, irrespective of the boundaries between states. Thus, as has been pointed out above, the Jews of the rest of Europe perished at the hands of an army from outside the borders of the states where they lived. It would not have helped them if they had possessed a Jewish state in Europe. The Jews of Palestine survived because the German armies were defeated before they reached Palestine. They could not have defended themselves! This is relevant to relations between present day Israel and its neighbours. The ability of modern Israeli Jews to defend themselves might be seen as an advance on the former defencelessness of the Jews but cannot be seen as a satisfactory solution to the 'Jewish Problem', in the sense envisaged in the Zionist programme outlined by Herzl. Things could change.

It is clear that we are already in the period of upheavals attending the second era of global free trade and its even greater degree of economic integration. Nation states are no longer able to act independently. The time when the nation state can protect its citizens by itself is rapidly passing. The Jewish state was created in an area that has always been of great strategic and economic importance, and the competing states of the region have always been at the mercy of the geopolitical calculations of the Imperial powers. The heavily armed states of the Middle East are implicated in the complicated 'balance of power' struggles between America, Russia and China, reminiscent of European rivalries before the First World War. The breakdown of this balance could lead to catastrophe for all the people of the Middle East. For Israel in particular, this prospect spells extra dangers. Israel may not always possess overwhelming military superiority and American support. The memory of the way the Jewish state has treated the Palestinians could rebound on the Jews in Israel.

Apart from the inherent instabilities of capitalism, the continuing exhaustion of the earth's resources, climate change and the spread of nuclear weapons have meant that we survive or perish together. The main economic and ecological problems of the world require concerted action by all the countries. At the very least, regional cooperation is necessary.

The historical record demonstrates that periods when there is political breakdown and 'normal' rules are suspended have been especially dangerous for Jews or any other identifiable group which insists on its separate identity with respect to the people among whom they find themselves living. The nationalist solution as advocated by the Zionists seems, in the event, to be potentially fragile.

The original Zionist idea was that the Jewish state should be a state like other states. However, the concept of the state has changed in the meantime.

Modern technologically advanced states tend to be secular and multi-ethnic, with equal rights for all. However, the present Zionist desire seems to be for a predominantly Jewish state with the Palestinians as a permanent second-class group. What good is that? As for religions, the history recounted here suggests that the sooner they cease to be a political force the better. We should learn from history and try not to repeat ourselves.

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How can we explain the persecution of Jews throughout European history, culminating in the horror of the Nazi holocaust?

The founders of the Zionist movement argued that the cause of the persecutions was an inherent and incurable anti-Jewish prejudice on the part of the people amongst whom Jews lived. The only remedy was the creation of a Jewish State.

Mike Levine questions this thesis. He argues that antisemitic prejudice, although long-standing and widespread, doesn't fully explain when and where past massacres and expulsions happened. His detailed historical account shows that each wave of persecution has to be understood within the context of wider conflicts in European history.

Levine concludes that the existence of Israel will not in itself safeguard the future for Jews. Nevertheless, a start would be the achievement of a just peace agreement between Israeli Jews and Palestinians.

Bristol Radical History Group