



pattern of behavior became evident. As Arad puts it, "From the early 1930s the twin fears of anti-Semitism and charges of disloyalty constituted a significant factor in informing the response of American Jewish leaders to the crisis that befell their beleaguered fellow Jews in Europe." At the same time, she also points to the gap between Jewish fears and American reality: "Although at no time did anti-Jewish prejudice constitute a serious threat to the Jews' civil and political rights, their behavior in the public sphere was nonetheless framed by its existence." (169)

Arad's finding in this regard is similar to that of her predecessors. Many other historians who have studied American Jewish leaders' responses to Hitler have likewise found that fear of arousing domestic antisemitism played a significant role in determining the Jewish leadership's foreign policy agenda. David Brody (1956) found that "A good deal of anxiety existed among many Jews at this time not to provide justification, or a source for anti-Semitism...This desire to avoid aggravating what was believed to be an already dangerous situation caused silence or passive approval of immigration restriction..."<sup>1</sup> Sheldon Neuringer (1969), author of the first comprehensive study of the history of Jewish attitudes toward U.S. immigration policy, noted that "the fear of antisemitism constituted the most important of the factors accounting for the attitudes of those who opposed the entry of large numbers of refugees for reasons of group self-interest."<sup>2</sup> The most recent work dealing (in part) with this subject, by Marc Dollinger, found that Jewish organizations' protests against Hitler in the 1930s were limited because they "feared an antisemitic backlash" and worried that "any actions deemed contrary to U.S. interests risked alienation and charges of un-Americanism."<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, there were additional factors which played a role in shaping Jewish attitudes, as Arad notes in *America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism*. One was the problem of intraorganizational rivalries, a subject Henry Feingold has addressed in striking terms: Jewish organizations "were consumed with disputes that seem amazingly irrelevant today...the organizations allowed themselves the luxury of fiddling while Jews burned."<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, Arad makes no reference (neither in her text nor even her bibliography) to the research of Judith Tydor Baumel concerning efforts to bring refugee children to the United States. Baumel's book, *Unfulfilled Promise*, is especially

significant because of the practical implications of her findings, namely that more children might have been rescued—despite the Roosevelt administration's restrictionist immigration policy and other obstacles—if not for the Jewish leadership's "constant bickering", "petty squabbles." and "personal rivalries." Zionists clashed with non-Zionists over whether the children should be sent to Palestine, while those who believed the children would receive the best care in the U.S. were at odds with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which contended it would be less expensive if the children remained in Germany and received assistance there.<sup>5</sup>

The unusual relationship between President Roosevelt and American Jewish Congress leader Stephen Wise, the most prominent Jewish leader of that era, also played an important role in shaping American Jewish responses to Nazism. A lifelong social justice activist and loyal Democrat, Wise saw Roosevelt's New Deal as the embodiment of his own dreams for reforming American society. Enraptured by FDR's rhetorical blasts at Hitler—even if they did not translate into policy—and flattered by periodic invitations to the White House, Wise not only refrained from challenging those of Roosevelt's policies which obstructed the rescue of German Jewry, but tried to shield FDR from Jewish criticism by pressing other Jewish leaders to refrain from raising their voices. Wise was so determined to stymie criticism of Roosevelt, Arad points out, that he even opposed Utah Senator William King's 1933 plan to introduce a resolution expressing sympathy with German Jewry, because, in Wise's words, it might "make it appear that, while the Senate sympathized with the Jews, the administration was giving no indication of similar sympathy." (175)

Despite his considerable knowledge of international affairs and his years of experience meeting with government officials around the world, Wise still "labored under the terrible misapprehension...that somewhere in the world, at the White House or the Vatican or Downing Street, existed 'a spirit of civilization whose moral concern could be mobilized to save the Jews,'" in the words of Wise biographer Melvin Urofsky. Such misplaced optimism did not serve American Jewry well in its hour of greatest responsibility.<sup>6</sup> Roosevelt and his aides quickly discovered how to manipulate the Jewish leadership to acquiesce in their policies. Expressions of "courtesy and sympathy, along with promises of accessibility, were all enlisted" to defuse Jewish



*Rabbi Stephen S. Wise*  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)

criticism of the administration's policies, Arad writes. "If they felt flattered by the serious attention extended to them, there was a good chance that Jewish leaders would modify their demands..." (143–44) FDR's invitation to Wise to meet him at the White House in January 1936 was particularly effective in neutralizing potential Jewish protests, Arad contends. "Since for Wise, and most other Jewish leaders, nothing appeared as important as keeping the Oval Office's door open to them, the cost was obvious — to proclaim unequivocal loyalty to the 'Chief.'" Deeply flattered by the invitation, even though nothing concrete resulted from the meeting, "Wise offered continual obeisance to FDR and campaigned tirelessly for his re-election later that year." (189–90)

Yet after detailing the many pitfalls of Wise's one-sided relationship with Roosevelt, and sharply chastising Wise for allowing himself to be "co-opted" by the administration (142), Arad writes: "It is only those who enjoy the dubious benefit of hindsight who can categorically claim that 'American Jews should have refused to be co-opted by the system.' Those, like Rabbi Wise, who paid the price exacted by co-optation were more perceptive about the painful dilemma." (155–56)

It is not at all clear what price Arad believes Wise paid. Surely in view of the far higher price paid by the Jews in Europe, it is not unreasonable to conclude—based on Arad's own evidence—that Wise should have realized he was being co-opted and changed course. This is not an observation made possible only with hindsight, as Arad contends; it was made by Wise's Jewish critics at the time, as well.

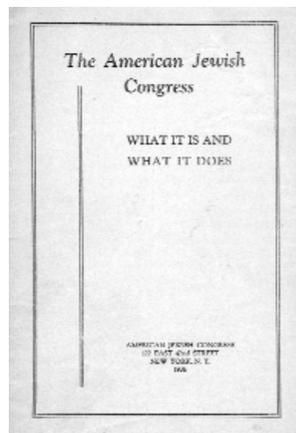
Arad's criticism of the Jewish leadership is sometimes almost scathing. She refers to Julian Mack as "cowardly" (126), Joseph Proskauer as "cringing" (168), Felix Frankfurter as "sycophantic" (163), and Samuel Rosenman as "a senior 'court Jew'" (201), among other choice terms. Challenging the perception that the American Jewish

Congress was significantly more militant than the American Jewish Committee, Arad quotes Stephen Wise's condemnation of those Jewish leaders who sought to maintain a low profile for the community, then comments: "But Wise himself adopted the very same rules of behavior for which he castigated his fellow Jews." Arad proceeds to reveal an incident in which Wise, appointed to a New York City civic reconstruction agency, complained about the agency's large number of Jewish members on the grounds that it might seem to the public as if it were "Jewishly controlled." (119) Arad emphasizes the similarities between Wise and the ostensibly more conservative Jewish leaders whom he often chided, noting that "the quest for unequivocal acceptance [by American society] was pursued fervently by all American Jews." (120) She adds:

The behavior of the AJCongress leaders in response to the German crisis reflected the attempt to maintain the rationale of being 'a man in the street and a Jew at home.' The lead advocate of this behavior was Rabbi Stephen Wise. As a Jew at home we have already heard him preach against surrendering Jewishness. But in the street his organization reacted to Hitler's rise to power in much the same way as did the ostensibly more Americanized American Jewish Committee. (125)

Despite these sharp words, when all is said and done Arad insists that there was nothing American Jewish leaders could have done that might have altered U.S. policy toward Europe's Jewish refugees. Again and again she refers to the Jewish leadership as "powerless."<sup>7</sup> And she castigates those historians who think otherwise as "moralists" (109) who allow "their personal prejudices" and "ideological positions" to get in the way of their historical analysis, leading to "one-sided readings that might encourage misunderstanding, distortion, and even hypocrisy." (104)

In fact, the latest research in the field—by serious historians, not "prejudiced



*Wartime pamphlet  
(courtesy American Jewish  
Archives)*

moralists”— has shed important new light on the possibilities for American Jewish action to aid European Jewry during the Nazi years. Analysis of these possibilities is a legitimate attempt by historians to understand what happened, what did not happen, and why.

One might consider, for example, the opportunities for anti-Nazi publicity that major Jewish organizations deliberately spurned. Felicia Herman has documented how, during the 1930s, Jewish organizations which had close ties to the film industry, in particular the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the Los Angeles Jewish Community Committee, pressured Hollywood executives to refrain from making “films which openly protested Nazism or took special notice of Nazi antisemitism,” in part because these Jewish groups “worried such films would lend strength to antisemitic charges that the Jews controlled Hollywood and were using films as a vehicle for Jewish propaganda,” and “in part to reassure themselves that their situation was different than that of their German co-religionists.” Rabbi William Fineshriber, the Reform movement’s representative for film industry affairs, helped lead a successful 1936 campaign to prevent the making of a film version of Sinclair Lewis’s novel *It Can’t Happen Here* on the grounds that “we ought not to thrust the Jew and his problems too much into the limelight.”<sup>8</sup>

Arad herself recounts two little-known episodes which further illustrate the possibilities for anti-Nazi publicity that Jewish leaders avoided. In 1941 the Jewish Publication Society of America turned down two book-length manuscripts, one describing the Nazi concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald, the other concerning the persecution of Jews in Vienna, because editor Solomon Grayzel had decided that reports about the atrocities in Europe were “terrorizing” American Jewry and eroding the community’s self-confidence. (215) The following year, World Jewish Congress rescue activist A. Leon Kubowitzki pleaded with the editors of the American Jewish Congress organ, *Congress Weekly*, to set aside at least six pages per issue for news of the “slaughters and deportations of Jews”; the editors rebuffed the suggestion because “the character of the publication would be changed and, perhaps, it would interest only a narrow section of the readership.” (215)

Was there any possibility of convincing the Roosevelt administration to increase the number of Jewish refugees permitted to

enter the United States during the 1930s? Arad contends it was “more than reasonable” for Jewish leaders to oppose increased immigration, in view of “the strenuous circumstances prevailing in America” at the time. (161) While appreciating the strenuousness of life in America during the Depression years, it is obvious—and it was obvious at the time—that the situation for Jews in Germany was considerably more precarious. Indeed, in the wake of Kristallnacht, remaining in Germany could be seen as life-threatening.

Arad points to the likelihood that Jewish attempts to liberalize the immigration quotas would have provoked restrictionists to tighten the laws even further, perhaps even to stop immigration altogether. This was a legitimate concern at the time and a factor that historians must take into consideration, but it is also germane to note that mainstream Jewish leaders repeatedly said that the reason they opposed permitting more refugees to enter was because they feared such an influx would cause antisemitism. For example, Congressman Donald O’Toole scrapped his 1937 initiative to grant emergency asylum to German Jewish refugees after Stephen Wise protested that “any effort that is made to waive the immigration laws will result in a serious accentuation of what we know to be a rising wave of anti-Semitic feeling in this country.” Wise’s reasoning typified Jewish leaders’ responses to prorefugee proposals in Congress during the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> It suggests that even if there were no danger of restrictionists overreacting to proimmigration initiatives, Jewish leaders would have *still* opposed bringing in more refugees because of the antisemitism it might have provoked.

In any event, there existed a variety of options for securing modest increases in Jewish refugee immigration, even without directly challenging the immigration laws. For example, Bat-Ami Zucker has shown how Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, the only consistently prorefugee voice within Roosevelt’s cabinet, offered in 1933 to utilize a legal but little-known bond guarantee procedure that would have permitted more refugees to enter within the existing quotas; but Jewish organizations were reticent to support the Perkins initiative, fearing that “masses of Jewish immigrants could cause an inflammation of antisemitism.”<sup>10</sup>

Another option would have been to seek the admission of refugees to an American territory, thereby avoiding the cumbersome restrictions that limited entry to the mainland United States. For

example, in November 1939 the Legislative Assembly of the Virgin Islands offered asylum to refugees from Hitler. The State Department vetoed the scheme, claiming “undesirables and spies” might use it as a way of sneaking into the United States, and Roosevelt accepted that argument. Wise refused to endorse the Virgin Islands as a haven on the grounds that “it might be used effectively against [FDR]” in the 1940 presidential campaign. “Cruel as I may seem,” Wise explained, “his election is much more important for everything that is worthwhile and that counts than the admission of a few people, however imminent be their peril.”<sup>11</sup>

A comparable proposal floated at about the same time suggested utilizing Alaska (which was not yet a state) as a refuge. This idea attracted the support of some congressmen, as well as the Department of Labor and the Department of the Interior—but not major American Jewish organizations; Wise worried that the idea of settling refugees in Alaska “makes a wrong and hurtful impression” among non-Jews “that Jews are taking over some part of the country for settlement.”<sup>12</sup>

Could an earlier and stronger anti-German boycott movement by American Jews have helped bring down Hitler before he solidified his rule? “Hitler had promised to end the depression and unemployment, and his base of popular support would diminish unless he could produce some results,” Melvin Urofsky writes. “A foreign boycott of German goods could have serious effects on the economy, a fact the chancellor’s economic advisers well knew.”<sup>13</sup> Nobody can say for certain that the implementation of a serious and broadly based boycott of German goods in the United States in the first weeks after Hitler’s rise to power would have accelerated such an outcome. The handful of grass-roots American Jewish activists who did begin boycotting German goods almost immediately upon Hitler’s ascension optimistically argued that an immediate, serious, and sustained boycott could bring about “ruin and disaster” for the German economy, “the end of German resources and the end of all hope of the rehabilitation of Germany,” and thus achieve their goal of “putting Adolf Hitler out of power.”<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, the American Jewish Committee and B’nai B’rith refused to join, on the grounds that a boycott might arouse antisemitic accusations that American Jews were trying to drag the U.S. into a conflict with Germany. At Stephen Wise’s insistence, the American Jewish Congress declined to join the boycott movement during its first

six months, and even after endorsing the boycott in August 1933 did not establish its own boycott bureau until February 1934. The point here is not to second-guess Wise but to understand his reasoning. Looking back in 1935, here is how he publicly explained his delay in supporting the boycott: "As a pacifist, I was hesitant about the boycott because it is an economic weapon..."<sup>15</sup> In his private correspondence at the time, Wise also cited the need to obtain "the sanction of our government" before endorsing a boycott.<sup>16</sup> Fealty to the principles of pacifism and a desire to conform to the Roosevelt administration's policies were among Wise's chief concerns.

Pacifist ideals and the plight of German Jewry were just two of the numerous and sometimes conflicting interests and issues that cluttered Wise's personal agenda. Henry Feingold has noted that Wise held to "a universalist perception in which Jews were only one of several victimized groups... [Wise's] interest in the Jewish dilemma was often over-shadowed by such pre-occupations as the Sacco and Vanzetti case or the corruption



*Protest against the British White Paper Restricting Jewish Immigration to Palestine.  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)*

of the Jimmy Walker administration of New York City during the New Deal or the progress of the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations." By contrast, factions operating outside the Jewish mainstream were more willing to cast aside their own political views and agendas for the sake of the greater cause. "[G]roups like the Aguda[s Israel] and the Bergson boys," Feingold writes, "were not locked into the prevailing secular universalist perception. They wanted simply to save Jews *qua* Jews."<sup>17</sup>

Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook), although a follower of Revisionist Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky and passionate advocate of Jewish statehood in Palestine, deliberately kept the Palestine issue out of his group's rescue campaigns—and endured stinging criticism from the Zionist leadership for doing so—because he recognized that the broader support to be garnered through a nonsectarian approach

outweighed his own feelings about Palestine. Likewise, the Labor Zionists of America (Poale Zion) was the only American Jewish organization to publicly endorse the idea of opening Alaska to Jewish refugees, a plan which undoubtedly grated on the group's Zionist sensibilities but seemed to offer a chance to save lives.

Wise, by contrast, tended to dismiss rescue schemes that clashed with his personal worldview. He and other Jewish leaders were cold to Bernard Baruch's 1938 proposal for mass European Jewish immigration to a refugee commonwealth to be known as the United States of Africa, because they feared—in Arad's words—that “the discussions of resettlement, when linked to such ideas as ‘overpopulated lands and unoccupied areas,’ [might] provide a ‘certain sanction’ to the East European countries to force out their ‘surperfluous populations’ of Jews.” (200) But it was not just the East European dictators Wise feared. In a 1936 essay (not mentioned by Arad), Wise warned against mass Jewish emigration from Poland on the grounds that it “might well become the ‘locus classicus’ for groups in all lands seeking to rid themselves of their Jewish populations...France, Czecho-Slovakia, or England might conceivably propose a conference on Jewish emigrants and refugees, without exciting suspicion with respect to their purpose.”<sup>18</sup> Jerzy Tomaszewski's fascinating account of a meeting between Wise and the Polish ambassador in April 1938 finds the ambassador repeatedly asserting Poland's interest in mass Jewish emigration and Wise adamantly rejecting the very concept.<sup>19</sup> As late as December 1942, student activists at the Jewish Theological Seminary who approached Wise about the idea of “mass evacuation” of Jews from Poland were stunned to hear Wise denounce the concept on the grounds that “We don't evacuate human beings, we evacuate cattle.” The students' proposal, Wise angrily asserted, was “Jabotinsky talk!”<sup>20</sup> Even at that late date, after the rumors of mass annihilation had been confirmed by the Allies, Wise had still not fully adjusted to the need for unorthodox measures to aid European Jewry.

Perhaps the least controversial avenue of action for American Jewish leaders in the 1930s concerned Palestine. In response to Palestinian Arab violence, the British Mandate authorities began restricting Jewish immigration in 1936; why did U.S. Jewish leadership refrain from actively lobbying the Roosevelt administration to pressure London to open Palestine's gates? David Ben-Gurion's mission to

America in 1938–39 sheds light on the issue. Convinced that the key to changing British policy lay in Washington, Ben-Gurion traveled to the U.S. in search of American Jewish support for a public campaign against England's Palestine restrictions, only to run into resistance from Jewish leaders. From Allon Gal's chronicle of Ben-Gurion's efforts, we learn that the American Jewish Committee opposed any public protests, fearing that "notoriety and over-conspicuousness" by Jews might provoke antisemitism; meanwhile, Stephen Wise refused to take part in "anti-British propaganda," arguing that Americans should be urged to "march shoulder to shoulder with England in the war against fascism, even if the Zionist cause suffered." A meeting between Wise and the Palestine Zionist leadership, in London in early 1939, dissolved into acrimony, with Ben-Gurion charging, "You are Jews who look out only for your own skins." Gal stressed that Wise's antifascism was only part of the motivation for his stance; his affection for Roosevelt was also a factor: "Wise's loyalty to Roosevelt led him to cleave unswervingly to the president's cloudy assurances to Zionists and to avoid complicating matters for the president through public protest."<sup>21</sup> Wise's reluctance to trouble FDR, in this case by asking him to intervene regarding Palestine, is likewise noted by Arad, who writes that Wise's "dread of antagonizing the 'Chief' overwhelmed all other considerations." (175)

Wise was by no means alone in his accommodationist approach to the British. Many American Zionist activists were torn between their anger at England's Palestine policy and their reluctance to criticize the British while the war against Hitler was raging. Aaron Berman has referred to the "schizophrenic nature" of American Zionist sentiment, noting that the audience at the November 1940 U.S. Labor Zionist convention applauded "enthusiastically" both when Wise called for strong American support of Britain and, moments later, when he criticized the British for deporting eighteen hundred unauthorized migrants from Palestine. "Our desire to help Great Britain in this war is maneuvering us into a policy distinctly harmful to Zionism," a frustrated Abba Hillel Silver complained. "We are asked not only to withhold criticism of outrageous acts...but actually...[to] become apologists for the Palestine Government."<sup>22</sup>

Yet it was precisely in the area of Palestine policy that Wise had some impact, however briefly. Arad describes how, shortly after the eruption of Palestinian Arab violence in mid-1936, the British

government was poised to suspend all Jewish immigration to Palestine. Wise's plea to Roosevelt's Jewish advisers for American intervention was well received in the White House, where it was thought that a gesture regarding Palestine would help ensure Jewish support for the president's forthcoming reelection bid. FDR protested the impending suspension to British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who decided "that he could well afford a small gesture to the American president that would appease his Jewish voters." The day before the suspension was to be implemented, Baldwin announced it would be postponed until after the completion of a forthcoming Royal Commission study of the Palestine problem. As a result of the delay, another fifty thousand Jews reached Palestine. (191) For Arad, the lesson from this episode is that powerless Jewish leaders could obtain only the tiniest gestures from Roosevelt. But it could also be interpreted as evidence that even a private protest, if well timed (in this case, shortly before a presidential election), could secure a gesture that rescued tens of thousands of Jews. Arad dismisses the notion of American Jews "declaring an open war on FDR and his administration" (195), but such a caricature misses the point; there were opportunities far short of "open war"—such as the 1936 Palestine immigration crisis—where even a slightly more assertive approach by Jewish leaders might have yielded results. What was required was not a war, but rather imagination, initiative, and a sense of urgency.

Arad does not adequately consider the evident lack of urgency among Jewish leaders, although it is a point worth noting. Many Jewish leaders "were not moved by this crisis and did not alter their lives in order to respond to it," Deborah Lipstadt writes, "In 1939, the American Jewish Committee could not hold meetings on Sundays—even at times of crisis—because board members were in the country for the weekend."<sup>23</sup> David Ben-Gurion encountered a similar atmosphere when trying to arrange a meeting of American Zionist leaders in New York on a Friday afternoon in the summer of 1942—"Even with Rommel nearing Alexandria, everybody left for the weekend," he complained to a colleague. With good reason did *The Jewish Spectator* in December 1942 declare it "shocking and—why mince words?—revolting" that "at a time like this our organizations, large and small, national and local, continue 'business as usual' and sponsor gala affairs, such as sumptuous banquets, luncheons, fashion teas, and what not...How shall we feast while our brothers and sisters

are perishing?"<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most jarring statement in this vein was made by leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto underground to courier Jan Karski before he left for London and Washington in the spring of 1943: "Jewish leaders abroad won't be interested. At eleven in the morning you will begin telling them about the anguish of the Jews in Poland, but at 1 pm



Wartime rally drawing attention to Nazi atrocities.  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)

they will ask you to halt the narrative so they can have lunch. That is a difference which cannot be bridged. They will go on lunching at the regular hour at their favorite restaurant. So they cannot understand what is happening in Poland." The New York daily newspaper *P.M.* published the full text of this statement, as did the Labor Zionists' *Jewish Frontier*, but other Jewish periodicals which reported on Karski's mission omitted those caustic comments.<sup>25</sup>

Oddly enough, although Arad began her account in 1840, nearly a century before the rise of Nazism, she chose to end *America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism* just as the Holocaust was getting underway, instead of continuing to its logical conclusion (that is, 1945). Arad explains, "My decision to end this study in the fall of 1942, when the Nazis' systematic extermination of the European Jews was confirmed by the State Department, was informed by my understanding that subsequently not much could have been expected of my principal subjects, the American Jewish leaders, in terms of rescue or influencing the policy makers." This extraordinary statement ignores the fact that just two months after that State Department confirmation, Jewish activists launched a year-long campaign for American rescue action that did influence the policymakers—it convinced them to establish the War Refugee Board, which saved an estimated two hundred thousand Jews and twenty-thousand non-

Jews from Hitler. That contrasts sharply with Arad's statement that by 1943, three million Jews were dead and "as for the rest, there was little American Jews could do but hope that some would survive to see V-E day...The reports about extermination made one thing clear: the time for rescue had passed." (221–22)

Arad's omission of the successful 1943–44 rescue campaign is all the more alarming in view of her sharp criticism of those historians who have written about that period. She charges them with "ahistorical biases" (4) and "deeply flawed moral-emotional arguments." (5) Arad pronounces herself mystified as to "why America's failure to bomb Auschwitz and the Jewish leadership's consent to withhold information about the extermination" have "become the ultimate symbols of American and Jewish indifference." She contends the reason must be that "these non-events are much more 'emotion-laden' and therefore more alluring" than other historical issues. (6)

There is, in fact, a more obvious explanation. The failure to bomb Auschwitz symbolizes American indifference, because the United States had the technical ability to bomb it (as demonstrated by the Allied bombing raids on the synthetic oil factories a few miles from the gas chambers), yet Roosevelt's War Department refused to do so and deceived rescue advocates as to the real reason for its refusal (an earlier internal policy decision to refrain from aiding refugees). The decision by Stephen Wise to suppress extermination information for three months in the autumn of 1942, at the request of the Roosevelt administration, has drawn attention because it illustrates the lengths to which Wise would go to avoid displeasing the administration. Citing these two episodes is not evidence that a historian is "biased" or "emotional"; it is entirely appropriate to examine the significance and ramifications of such notable historical developments.

Contemporary historians did not invent the idea that the Jewish leadership's response to the Holocaust was inadequate. Rather, that point was made repeatedly in the Jewish press at the time, by critics from a variety of political and religious perspectives. On the political spectrum, the criticism ranged from the Labor Zionist journal *Jewish Frontier*, in whose pages Ben Halpern wrote that "the history of our times will one day make bitter reading, when it records that some Jews were so morally uncertain that they denied they were obligated to risk their own safety in order to save other Jews who were being done to

death abroad"; to the Revisionist Zionist periodical *Zionews*, edited by Ben Zion Netanyahu, which charged that American Jewish leaders "have been too cautious, too appeasing, and too ready to swallow the meaningless statements of sympathy that were issued from high places"; to the Independent Jewish Press Service, which urged Jewish leaders to "scrap our hush-hush mufflers and get ourselves a loud-speaker."<sup>26</sup> On the religious spectrum, the critics came from as widely differing sources as the Orthodox Mizrahi monthly *HaMigdal*, which decried the Jewish establishment's "'sha-sha' policy," and the *Reconstructionist*, which criticized the Jewish leadership as "ineffective."<sup>27</sup> These are not the words of second-guessers chastising American Jews from the convenient vantage point of sixty years after the fact; they were written by observers at the time. In some ways, theirs are the most compelling and relevant testimonies of all about how America, and its Jews, responded to the rise of Nazism.

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#### NOTES:

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2. Sheldon M. Neuringer, "American Jewry and United States Immigration Policy, 1881-1953" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1969), 237.
3. Marc Dollinger, *The Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 45, 62.
4. Henry L. Feingold, *Bearing Witness: How America and Its Jews Responded to the Holocaust* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 82.
5. Judith Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise: Rescue and Resettlement of Jewish Refugee Children in the United States 1934-1945* (Juneau, Alaska: Denali Press, 1990).
6. Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1982), 275.
7. See for example Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 141, 167, 195, 196, 205.
8. Felicia Herman, "Hollywood, Nazism and the Jews, 1933-41," *American Jewish History* 89 (2001).
9. Rafael Medoff, *The Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Shapolsky, 1987), 34.
10. Bat-Ami Zucker, "Frances Perkins and the German-Jewish Refugees, 1933-1940," *American Jewish History* 89 (2001).
11. Wise to Nathan, September 17, 1940, cited in Carl Hermann Voss, *Stephen S. Wise, Servant of the People: Selected Letters* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society,

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12. Medoff, *The Deafening Silence*, 68; Gerald S. Berman, "Reaction to the Resettlement of World War II Refugees in Alaska," *Jewish Social Studies* (Summer/Fall 1982): 271–82.

13. Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 266.

14. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin* [hereafter, *JTA*], March 14, 1933; *New York Times* [hereafter, *NYT*], May 15, 1933.

15. Moshe Gottlieb, "The Anti-Nazi Boycott Movement in the American Jewish Community, 1933-1941" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1968), 442.

16. Wise to Gottheil, April 17, 1933, Box 947, Stephen S. Wise Papers, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

17. Henry L. Feingold, "Rescue and the Secular Perception: American Jewry and the Holocaust," in Selwyn Ilan Troen and Benjamin Pinkus, eds., *Organizing Rescue: Jewish National Solidarity in the Modern Period* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 156.

18. Medoff, *The Deafening Silence*, 53.

19. Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Stephen S. Wise's Meeting with the Polish Ambassador in Washington, April 1, 1938," 103–15.

20. Rafael Medoff, "'Retribution Is Not Enough': The 1943 Campaign by Jewish Students to Raise American Public Awareness of the Nazi Genocide," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11 (Fall 1997): 171–89.

21. Allon Gal, *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 40, 50–53.

22. Aaron Berman, *Nazism, the Jews and American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 79.

23. Deborah E. Lipstadt, "America and the Holocaust," *Modern Judaism* 10 (1990), 290. While she did not indicate her source, Lipstadt's statement apparently derived from page 304 of Frederick A. Lazin's "The Response of the American Jewish Committee to the Crisis of German Jewry, 1933-1939," *American Jewish History* 68, (March 1979): 283–304, although Lazin referred specifically to "the spring of 1939," not year-round as Lipstadt's wording implied.

24. "A People in Mourning" (editorial), *Jewish Spectator* 8 (January 1943): 4–5.

25. "Grieving Polish Leader Suicide," *PM* (May 19, 1943), 9; "The Last Stand" (editorial), *Jewish Frontier* (June 1943), 6. Versions that referred to other portions of the Warsaw message but omitted the "favorite restaurants" remark included "Pole's Suicide Note Pleads for Jews," *NYT*, June 4, 1943, 7; "Chronicle of the Week," *Congress Weekly* [hereafter, *CW*] 10 (May 21), 1943, 2; "Rollcall of Martyrs" (editorial), *CW* 10 (June 4, 1943), 4; "Jewish Comment," *CW* 10 (June 18, 1943), 23; "Poland-in-Exile," *Contemporary Jewish Record* 6 (August 1943), 410–11; "Compassion" (editorial), *National Jewish Monthly*, July-August 1943, 352; "The Martyrdom of Szamul Zygielbojm" (editorial), *The Reconstructionist* 9 (June 25, 1943), 3–4; "Zygielbojm Inquest Adjourned for Three Weeks," *JTA*, May 19, 1943, 3–4 (which reported that "The message expressed doubt that Jewish leaders abroad would do anything to help the Jews in Poland" but added no further details); "Jewish Council in Poland Sends Appeal to Jews of America; Describes Warsaw Fight," *JTA*, June 1, 1943, 3; "Brave Enough?" (editorial), *New Palestine* 35 (November 17, 1944), 28; Theodore N. Lewis, "Do American Jews Really Care?" *Opinion* 13 (July 1943), 15.

26. Ben Halpern, "We and the European Jews," *Jewish Frontier* (August 1943), 15–18; "Their Blood on Our Hands" (editorial), *Zionews* 5 (July 1944), 4; "Mass Action"

*Reassessing American Jewry's Response to Hitler*

(editorial), Independent Jewish Press Service, March 12, 1943, 4-c.

27. "Rumor Behind the News," *Hamigdal* 3 (April 1943) 4: 14; "The American Jewish Conference and the Emergency Committee" (editorial), *The Reconstructionist* 9 (January 21, 1944), 3.



# America and Israel: Decline of the Special Relationship?

Allon Gal and Alfred Gottschalk, eds., *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel*, Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001.

Steven T. Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*, Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2001.

Yaakov Ariel

The relation of American Jewry to Israel has undergone enormous changes in the past two decades. Between the Six-Day War of June 1967 and the Israeli war in Lebanon of 1982-83, the American Jewish community was united in its support of Israel and its political and economic agenda. American Jews saw it as their aim to help Israel by offering the country as much political backing in America as they could with American Jewish organizations effectively serving as pro-Israel lobbyists. This reality was known only too well to American politicians who courted Jewish voters by expressing support for Israel. That Jews supported Israel was such a known fact of life that it became part of American folklore. In *All in the Family*, a popular television comedy of the mid-1970s, Archie Bunker, the major character in the show, donates a dollar for Israel in order to gain the trust of a Jewish secretary in his workplace. Very few American Jews raised serious doubts over Israel's policy during those golden years of the American Jewish-Israeli relationship. Outspoken American Jewish critics of Israel were rare and considered to be something of an aberration—a strange mutation.

The relationship between American Jews and Israel, however, was anything but one sided. In fact, American Jewish-Israeli relations during the late 1960s, the 1970s, and the early 1980s could be described as symbiotic. American Jews derived enormous benefits from their Israeli connection. Israel's victory in the Six-Day War filled Jews in America with pride. By association, they were heroes, too. Moreover, support for Israel served to unite American Jews and offered a common agenda and cohesion to an otherwise fragmented

community. Israeli culture, including Israeli songs and dancing, often became American Jewish expressions, increasingly associated with “Jewishness” in America. With the exception of ultra-Orthodoxy, the different branches of Judaism in America embraced Israel and its culture, often turning it into a central component of their spiritual, cultural, and political being. For the Reform movement, for example, its connection to Israel served to redefine its position *vis á vis* its Jewish roots. Embracing Israel and its culture often served for Reform Jews (as for others) to signify their dedication and loyalty to the Jewish people and to Jewish national aspirations.

This reality began changing in the 1980s. The Israeli war in Lebanon (1982–83) was a turning point. While Jewish organizations supported Israel during the crisis, some American Jewish leaders began to openly voice criticism of Israel’s policy. During the 1980s–90s, new Jewish groups came about that offered alternatives to organizations that have traditionally represented American Jews and continued to see their calling in offering the Israeli government as much backing as possible. Such groups as the New Israel Fund have begun collecting money on their own and distributing it in Israel among organizations that focus their activities on civil liberties, the peace movement, and the Jewish-Arab relationship. Contributions to the United Jewish Appeal, which for decades had been the major fund-raiser in America for Jewish and Israeli causes, decreased considerably.

The *Intifada*, the Palestinian uprising (1987–93), further raised doubts among American Jews over Israeli policies and agendas. Israel had ceased providing American Jews with pride. Instead, it has often become a source of worry and, for some, of embarrassment. The demographics of American Jewry have also contributed to the disenchantment. The generation of American Jews that backed Israel in 1967 consisted of people who had witnessed the perils of Jewish existence in the 1930s–40s and saw the Israeli-Arab conflict in terms of Jewish survival. The generation of American Jews of the 1980s–90s, on the other hand, has come of age in an era in which Israel was a self-understood reality and was often conceived of as a powerful nation. While many politicians and organizations have continued to act as if nothing has changed in the American Jewish-Israeli relationship, the new developments have not gone unnoticed.

The realities of the American Jewish-Israeli relationship are the

subject of two recent books, *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel and Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*, both published in 2001. *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy* is a collection of essays based on a conference that took place in Israel in 1996. The conference and the volume are themselves an American Jewish-Israeli coproduction. The editors include Allon Gal, a distinguished scholar at Ben Gurion University, who has published books on American Zionism and American Jewish-Israeli relations. The second editor, Alfred Gottschalk, president emeritus of the Hebrew Union College, wrote a book on Ahad Ha-Am, whose ideas strongly influenced American Zionist ideology. In their biographies, location, and scholarly interest, the two editors represent the academic elite in each community that takes interest in the other community and is committed to preserving the ties between Israel and American Jewry. The same can also be said about the other Israeli and American Jewish scholars, as well as a number of political and community leaders on both sides of the Atlantic who have participated in the volume. Being themselves committed to a strong interaction between American Jews and Israel, the writers, while acknowledging changes, see a strong relationship between American Jews and Israel as an almost given reality. In the preface, the editors compare the situation in the 1990s to that of half a century earlier. “[T]he problems of assimilation, acculturation, intermarriage, and feelings of alienation, are...of significance and no less important today than they were in the 1940s,” they assert, yet they claim “what was unique in that period, however, was a pervasive aura of Jewish solidarity, which is to be envied when one looks at the Jewish world today, where divisions are much more apparent and appear to be much more serious and irreconcilable.”

Steven M. Cohen and Charles S. Liebman wrote the first and perhaps the most central essay in the collection. Their article serves as the starting point for the discussion. Both scholars are American Jews who have settled in Israel. Their personal decision to build their homes in Israel notwithstanding, they state their opinion that “the Jewish people is best served by the existence of a strong and vibrant American Jewish community” (3). Cohen and Liebman argue that the issue is not whether American Jews support Israeli policies, but rather “the level of interest the American Jews express about Israeli affairs.” They lament that Jews in both Israel and the United States care about

each other less than they did in the past, and they see erosion in the American Jewish willingness to mobilize in favor of Israel. The reason for this, they state, is that "Israel no longer requires the financial and political assistance it once did." On the financial level, they are certainly right. Ironically, the philanthropic relationship that North American Jewry developed toward Israel eroded considerably as Israel became more economically secure in the 1980s–90s.

The book consists of articles and responses by a number of authors centering around various issues. At times, the responses are more relevant to the theme of the book than the articles. Such is the case with Jonathan D. Sarna's very fine response to Yoseph Gorny's article on *Shililat Hagolah*, the negation of the Diaspora in Zionist thinking. (59–63) Sarna examines the idea of *Shililat Hagolah* in American Zionist thinking. Americans, he claims, have never taken this idea seriously. For Jews since the nineteenth century, America has been "the promised land," holding a great hope for an ideal Jewish future. Both Israel and America are not utopias, Sarna contends, and "the reality in both communities has turned out to be more sobering than starry-eyed advocates of 'promised lands' expected." (62) Sarna not only rejects the idea of *Shililat Hagolah* but sees competition between different Jewish centers as desirable for the survival of the Jewish people.

Another important article in the book is that of Leonard Fein, who discusses the effect of Jewish cultural wars on the relationship of American Jews to Israel. Written in the aftermath of Rabin's assassination, Fein calls upon organized American Jewry to disassociate themselves from the official government of Israel and from partisan Israeli politics in general. (85) Fein's article is followed by that of Aviezer Ravitzky, who discusses the cultural wars that take place within Israeli society. Ravitzky offers an excellent analysis but his article has little relevance to the general theme of the book: the changing relationship between American Jewry and Israel.

Other articles offering relevant information and insights are those of Samuel Norich and Shoshana S. Cardin, who examine the reaction of Jewish organizations to the recent changes. Jewish federations have been allocating a smaller percentage of their income to the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and its overseas beneficiaries, including the Jewish Agency and the Joint Distribution Committee. (190) The numbers have declined from 52.3 percent in 1985 to 41.8 percent in

1994, signifying a rift in the focus and agenda of the current Jewish leadership in America. "The federations and UJA recognize that the challenges of assimilation, alienation, and non-affiliation are serious enough... and are now focusing on what can be done at home to strengthen the American Jewish community," Cardin concludes.

Recognizing major changes in the interaction between American Jewry and Israel, *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy's* basic assumption is that American Jewish organizations and Israeli leaders must do their best to keep a close relationship between the two communities alive. A more pessimistic outlook on this subject is offered by Steven T. Rosenthal. His book, *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*, aims at exploring what brought about the dramatic changes in American Jewry's relation to Israel. Rosenthal begins by contrasting the situation during the 1960s and 1970s with what came afterwards. As Rosenthal points out, during the 1980s–90s sharp criticism of Israel came to characterize even members of the American Jewish establishment who were in principle supportive of the Jewish state. (Introduction, xiii-xiv) Rosenthal believes that there is a historical logic to the drastic changes that have taken place in American Jewish attitudes toward Israel. "From the 1890s to the present, American Jews' response to Zionism and Israel has been circumscribed by American priorities and needs," Rosenthal claims. "From their early indifference to Zionism, through a quarter century of unequivocal support for Israel, to the breakdown of consensus in the 1970s and 1980s and the present fragmentation, American Jews have related to Israel primarily through their identity as Americans." Rosenthal sees the first break of the era of consensus in American Jewish support for Israel in the defeat of the Labour Party, which had ruled Israel since its inception, and the rise to power of the Likud Party in 1977. Paradoxically, the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1978 brought about a breakdown in unity both inside Jewish-Israeli society and ultimately in America. Israel was no longer conceived of as a besieged hapless nation; its diplomatic options grew, and so inner criticism of its decisions grew accordingly.

The war in Lebanon in 1982–83 and the massacres committed by Lebanese forces while Israeli troops were situated in the area brought about organized American Jewish protests against the Israeli policy. One might argue with Rosenthal, who claims that "the criticism unleashed by the war in Lebanon paled in comparison to the Pollard

spy case.” (76) In light of the historical fear that support for Israel might bring about accusations of disloyalty to America, it is amazing how little trauma the Pollard case has initiated. Rosenthal quotes a poll in which 57 percent of American Jews said they had no opinion on Pollard’s life sentence. (84) Be that as it may, one cannot argue with Rosenthal when he raises more issues for American Jewish disillusionment with Israel and the waning of the “love affair.” The first *Intifada* (1987–93) is one example; the preferred status of the Orthodox in Israel is another.

Rosenthal sees the diminishing love affair as harmful to both communities, but especially for American Jews. “If they continue to distance themselves from Israel, they will then have lost one of their last supports of communal identity,” he warns. “It would render all the more plausible the jeremiads of those who predict the ultimate demise of the non-Orthodox Jewish community in America.” (194) Rosenthal’s analysis touches on a most important question facing American Jewry today—how the relationship with Israel might contribute to the survival of a vibrant Jewish community. In this it does not differ much from Gal and Gottschalk’s collection of essays, but its conclusions are sharper, more pessimistic. Both books are highly recommended to all American Jews and Israelis who are concerned with the relationship between the two communities. The issues the books raise touch on some of the most sensitive cords facing Jewish existence in the twenty-first century, and they cannot be ignored.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

Barry M. Levenson, *Habeas Codfish: Reflections on Food and the Law* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 263 pp. Illus.

Nathan Abrams

My first reaction was “ouch!” This is probably the worst title of any book I’ve ever read, or even heard of. If you think the title is bad, the chapter headings do not get any better, viz. “Assault with a Breadly Weapon,” “Bones of Contention,” and “Just Desserts.” The author, Barry M. Levenson, is a former assistant attorney general for the State of Wisconsin. He is also the curator and CMO (Chief Mustard Officer) of the Mt. Horeb Mustard Museum in Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin, where he claims to have amassed the world’s largest collection of mustards. As the subtitle suggests, this is a book about food and law, those times when food and the legal system have intersected. Levenson traces the intimate connections between the U.S. legal system and the foods Americans eat. As he writes: “Food was money, big money, and when millions of dollars were at stake, litigation reared its ugly head.” (xiv)

At the outset, I have to confess a certain sympathy for the author’s tastes and, as he does, admit to a strong bias. “When it comes to butter versus margarine, it’s no contest. I adore the taste of sweet butter on a hard-crusting baguette or a slice of toasted rye. There is no way I would tolerate margarine on my bread.” (168) Like Levenson, to paraphrase an episode of *Seinfeld*, I am an anti-margarinite. Hence, I should go and live in Wisconsin where, I learned from Levenson, it is a crime to serve margarine at a public eatery as a substitute for butter, unless so ordered by the customer. Furthermore, it is prohibited to serve margarine to students, patients, and inmates at state institutions unless directed to do so by a doctor.

The book covers an array of occasions when food and the law have overlapped. Levenson recounts the times when food has made people ill, when foreign objects (glass, nails, worms, toenails with toes attached) have been discovered in food, when misleading nutritional information has been printed, and so on. Of chief interest here, though, is the chapter about *kashrut* and the law, titled “Not So Strictly Kosher.” After a brief introduction to the laws of *kashrut* (“Kosher

101”), Levenson discusses the worldwide kosher food industry, which is certainly big business, estimated at approximately \$135 billion in early 2001. For example, there are some three hundred and sixty-six separate global *kashrut* symbols alone, each one a protected trademark. Since the kosher food industry is so large and profitable, inevitably there have been attempts to defraud consumers in the unauthorized uses of certification marks. For example, one company put an “O-U” (symbol of the Orthodox Union, the most prominent certifying agency in the United States) on a package of dried shrimp, and thought it could get away with it. The temptation and opportunity to defraud increases in the kosher meat sector because of the higher prices it fetches in the marketplace. The earliest attempt at such unscrupulousness occurred in 1796, when there was only a single Jewish *shochet* in all of what was then New York City. A non-Jewish butcher, ironically called Smart, put the distinctive *hechsher* on his unkosher meat. Smart was hauled before the New York Council, which suspended his butcher’s license as punishment for his fraudulent behavior. Repetitions of this fraud over the years prompted the State of New York to pass the nation’s (and probably the world’s) first statewide kosher fraud law in 1922, prohibiting the selling, with intent to defraud, of any food or meat which is falsely represented to be kosher. Unsurprisingly, this very law has been the subject of multiple litigations ever since, some of which Levenson outlines in the remainder of the chapter.

Although the ingredients are all assembled for a potentially tasty meal, the chef’s style leaves much to desire. The book is marred by its conversational tone, which attempts at humor that does not always work. There are far too many exclamation marks for my taste as well. The title is also somewhat misleading, as Levenson does not really “reflect” on food and the law at all. Indeed, that is the overriding problem of this book. It is a string of cases about food and the law, grouped into chapters, but without any overarching thesis or larger argument. This is summed up by one line in the book: “All these cases, interesting as they are, have little to do with real food. But they are fun to read, aren’t they?” (141) This is the extent of much of the commentary and Levenson is wrong: in the way they are presented here, they are not “fun to read” at all. Some chapters are better than others and by far the most interesting were those about reviewing

("Ladle and Slander") and prison food ("Cruel and Unusual Condiments") but, overall, I found this book rather irritating. I was looking forward to reading it, as it is a potentially appealing subject, but, unfortunately, Levenson does not do it justice (no pun intended). Although he treads some of the same ground as Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), unlike Schlosser, Levenson is merely content to present the evidence, often in the form of large swathes of undigested legal ruling. He does not delve into any in-depth analysis at all (he swallows without chewing perhaps?) and leaves the reader to judge. Although he does provide a summary/final verdict at the end, this was not adequate to pull together the interesting items laid out in his book.

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**Shlomo Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations: the American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 508 pp.**

**Rona Sheramy**

The centrality of the Holocaust in postwar American Jewish life has spurred an array of scholarly inquiries in recent years. From studies of American Jewish leaders' shifting perceptions of the destruction of European Jewry to more focused analyses of Jewish representations of the Holocaust in film, art, and literature, these works explore the imprint left by the Holocaust on generations of American Jews and the manner in which the destruction of European Jewry has become more "present" the further it recedes into history.

Intertwined in many of these scholarly explorations is the complex and often anguished history of postwar German-Jewish relations. In discussing the broader issue of American Jewish responses to the Holocaust, these works highlight seminal moments in American Jews' efforts to come to terms with the German past and present. They point, for instance, to the Nuremberg trials, the Eichmann affair, and the Bitburg controversy as critical moments in which American Jews articulated their views about post-Nazi Germany. But the subject of German-Jewish relations in these works is but one part of a broader story. Similarly, while several controversies have inspired studies of their own (for instance, there are two books in English on the Bitburg affair), the scope of such works is narrow, addressing only one moment in the history of American Jews and Germany.

For these reasons, Shlomo Shafir's *Ambiguous Relations: the American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945* makes a unique contribution to the literature. Through exhaustive research, Shafir presents a detailed political history of postwar German-Jewish relations, focusing on diplomacy between representatives of American Jewry and the governments of the United States and Germany. Shafir's data, culled from archival collections, periodicals, newspapers, and interviews in Germany and the United States, covers the period from 1945 to the end of the 1990s (although it is weighted far more heavily toward the period up through 1970 due to restrictions in German archives on later materials). The book addresses myriad incidents and events in postwar German-Jewish relations, such as treatment of Jewish displaced persons, denazification, the Nuremberg

trials, the Claims Conference, the Eichmann trial, the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars, and the Bitburg affair.

Shafir's study begins with World War II's end and division among American Jewish leaders over the proper way to punish Germany. From the start, Shafir demonstrates, American Jews did not speak with one voice, but rather produced a range of responses reflecting diverse political, religious, and intellectual agendas. Representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, and the major Jewish movements figure prominently in Shafir's discussion, although he also addresses several other Jewish perspectives, from those of newspaper editors to Jewish leftist leaders.

Shafir establishes the tension between American Jews, eager to see Germany punished for its wartime crimes, and the United States government, eager to quickly rehabilitate Germany and welcome at least its western portion (the Federal Republic) into the community of non-Communist nations. "Most American Jews... saw Germany as the enemy much longer, and as a nation that needed more corrective treatment" (71), Shafir writes, illuminating a view that would characterize American Jewry through much of the postwar period. Indeed, American Jews were not able to "move on" past the Holocaust as quickly as non-Jews around them; this differential led to decades of division between Jewish leaders and United States government officials. A major question dividing Jewish organizations among themselves was how Jews should negotiate seeking justice for the destruction of European Jewry while at the same time supporting American geopolitical interests. This question was especially important during the Cold War era, Shafir points out, when Jews were under particular pressure to demonstrate their "Americanness," but it would also be relevant in subsequent decades when Jews had to work through the U.S. government in order to affect German policy. Even by the 1980s, when American Jewry was far more self-confident and willing to assert its voice loudly on foreign affairs, it continued to encounter the "limits of ethnic pressures." (300) The Bitburg affair was a case in point; despite vocal and relatively unified Jewish opposition to President Ronald Reagan's 1985 visit to a German military cemetery in which Waffen SS soldiers were buried, "in the last stages of the Cold War, Washington rightly or wrongly regarded this visit as a matter of crucial national interest" (300) and disregarded Jewish pleas to cancel the event. Shafir ends his study in the 1990s on a relatively sober note,

pointing on the one hand to great strides made in promoting reconciliation and understanding between Germans and Jews (symbolically represented, for instance, by several well-established exchange programs and dialogues between the two communities) but on the other hand, by continued ambivalence if not downright “negative attitudes” by American Jews toward Germany. (359)

While Shafir has certainly done a service through his detailed study, this book is most suited for the dedicated and patient reader. Indeed, one of the most admirable features of Shafir’s work—its comprehensiveness and attention to detail—is also one of its weaknesses. The reader is often overwhelmed by the minutiae of interactions between powerbrokers and incidents small and large, left unsure as to the relative significance of these various events. Shafir provides a wealth of data regarding fifty years of diplomatic maneuvering and negotiations, but does not offer the reader enough of an interpretive framework nor periodization through which to make sense of this history. Embedded within the data are certainly important findings about American Jewish politics, and the place of the Holocaust in postwar American Jewish life, but Shafir does not sufficiently tease these conclusions out of his wealth of materials.

Furthermore, while Shafir is clearly an expert on the political dynamics between Germany and American Jewry, his discussion of the American Jewish context begs expansion. Shafir points out, for instance, that the Cold War climate of the 1950s and 1960s discouraged American Jews from harping on Germany’s wartime wrongdoings, but the reader does not get a sense of what it really meant to see the world—and the former Nazi Germany—through American Jewish eyes. Nor does the reader Shafir’s needs to delve deeper into what exactly informed the mindset of American Jewish leaders over the second half of the twentieth century and how this group’s priorities, concerns, and worldview affected their relations to Germany. Such information would complete the important story that Shafir sets out to tell.

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Eli Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 275 pp. Illus.

David Stradling

Although the title of Eli Lederhendler's fine new book suggests a fairly narrow topic, the decline of Jewish ethnic identity in New York City, the book itself explores much wider themes. In postwar America Jews struggled with historic concerns, attempting to deal with the many consequences of the Holocaust, the creation and travails of the modern Israeli State, and growing Zionism. In addition, in postwar New York Jews struggled with local, urban concerns: a changing demography due to the influx of African Americans and Puerto Ricans, the rapid deindustrialization that began in the city in the 1950s, and the violence and crime that signaled New York's rapidly approaching cultural nadir. Postwar Jews lived in an era of centripetal forces, of grief and determination, the desire to see Israel succeed, but they were tugged by centrifugal forces as well, of suburbanization and the desire to defuse antisemitism through integration. All of these major threads pass through Lederhendler's work as he attempts to describe the changing nature of Jewishness in New York. In all, Lederhendler endeavors to describe the "nexus between Jews and the city" and "how the changes in the life of the city had changed the Jews." (xiii) Though his evidence comes almost exclusively from New York, Lederhendler is able to describe significant trends that raced across the postwar Jewish world.

Marking the diminishment of ethnicity is not an easy task, but statistics on the decline of Yiddish as a first language and increasing intermarriage give some sense of the change. For Lederhendler, however, simply the diminishment of the Jewish population in the city most starkly describes the decline of ethnicity. He concludes, "insofar as Jews created community life in New York, their common attachment to their city is what gave them common focus and identity as 'New York Jews.'" (203)

Lederhendler opens with a nice summary of the long relationship between Jews and urbanity and provides ample understanding of New York's special role as The Promised City. New York served as the Jewish Camelot (13), Lederhendler concludes, holding out both the promise of social inclusion and continued ethnic uniqueness. After a

lengthy, disembodied discussion of the Holocaust and the postwar intellectual scene, including too much on Hannah Arendt's work on Adolf Eichmann, Lederhendler describes evolving "Jewishness" as a culture of retrieval. As Jews looked backwards, however, the city continued to change. Later chapters describe the divided Jewish reaction to the influx of African Americans and the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s. Another chapter describes in some detail the public schools crisis of 1968. Through all of this turmoil, Lederhendler's narrative suggests more persistence than diminishment for Jewish ethnic identity. Still, through it all the Jewish population of the city declined.

Like so many authors who have written on New York City, Eli Lederhendler is a native, raised in the Bronx in a Jewish and Catholic neighborhood. His study of the decline of Jewish ethnicity in the city is no doubt driven in part by the changes he witnessed, particularly in neighborhoods like his own. But Lederhendler's work is hardly a personal journey. Indeed, he pointedly contrasts his work with that of Deborah Dash Moore, whose *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), offers a social history of interwar Jewish neighborhoods. Lederhendler is less interested in the neighborhoods themselves, or the daily lives of Jews in the city, and more interested in the ideas of the intellectual elite. Indeed, even the list of illustrations, largely photographs of leading Jewish thinkers who pass through the narrative, gives a good sense of his method here. Lederhendler's partiality to the words of New York's intellectuals leaves him reliant on very atypical voices, indeed some voices that seem much more reflective of global Jewish concerns than with local ones. (Hannah Arendt and Eli Wiesel are fine examples here.) At the same time, Lederhendler uses very few common New York voices—the broad Jewish working class is represented in statistics rather than its own words. Lederhendler admits his own restrictions here, writing a book about New York while largely residing in Jerusalem. He was simply unable to conduct the interviews that could have made this story more personal.

Lederhendler faces significant challenges with this work, including explaining his decision to focus only on New York Jews, rather than American Jews generally. The concentration on New York City is easy enough to defend; after all, it was the great Jewish metropolis during the years of his study. Still, Lederhendler can less

successfully defend his decision to not follow his subjects out to New York's own suburbs. By simply taking the move out of the city as evidence enough of decreasing ethnic attachment, Lederhendler can actually tell us very little about the decline of Jewish ethnicity, other than to say that it appears less important to the city itself. Thus, according to Lederhendler, we must take the diminishment of Jews in traditional Jewish neighborhoods as a decline of Jewishness in the region.

Lederhendler's work has much to recommend it: wonderful statistics, the opinions of dozens of interesting New Yorkers, and sound conclusions about the nature of the Jewish community in the city. Still, Lederhendler explores ethnicity as a rather abstract notion, not as the collection of thoughts and actions that make up a life. As Hasia Diner so beautifully describes in her recent work on the Lower East Side, urban, New York Jewishness persists in a culture of memory. But, this need not prevent us from finding new ethnic identities, forged in new circumstances. "This, however," as Lederhendler ends his own study, "is the subject of another book." (206)

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**Arieh J. Kovachi, *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States, & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 377 pp.**

**Henry R. Winkler**

This thoroughly researched and thoughtful monograph is basically a study of British policy toward the attempts of Jewish refugees to escape the shackles of postwar Europe and ultimately to reach the shores of Palestine. Seeing that effort as part of a Zionist attempt to create a Jewish state, the British Labour government struggled to prevent the migration, organized or otherwise, of European Jews to the British Mandate in the Middle East. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was convinced that for Britain to maintain its strategic position in the Middle East, it required the cooperation of the Arab regimes in the area, all of which were implacably opposed to Jewish immigration. For a brief period Prime Minister Clement Attlee had doubts about British military control in the area, but in fairly short order he deferred to Bevin and the strategy of continuing to limit immigration until there could be a solution to the Palestine question.

Part of the Zionist response was the *Ha 'apala* movement—the movement of thousands of illegal immigrants from European ports to Palestine. Another part was the *Bricha* movement in which Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe were aided in reaching Displaced Persons' (DPs) camps in Austria and Germany and finally helped to migrate to Palestine. Neither undertaking, Kovachi demonstrates, would have been nearly so substantial without the assistance the DPs received from American and European officials. It was difficult for the British to deal with that assistance. After the war the DPs became more and more economically and politically dependent upon Washington; relations with the U.S.S.R. and its satellites were soon tense and confrontational; and there were major differences as well with Italy and France.

The British insisted on keeping the issue of Jewish displaced persons separate from the Palestine question. Despite the overwhelming evidence of the special treatment of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust, the British opposed giving Jewish survivors any special consideration. They insisted on dealing with the problem as part of the general refugee issue. That meant, among other things, returning

Jews wherever possible to their countries of origin, whatever had been their experience there. The Holocaust, in the author's words, played only a marginal role when officials began formulating their policy toward the Jews who remained in Europe. Though Kovachi does not emphasize it, the insensitivity of both Bevin and Attlee to the plight of the remnants of the millions deliberately and efficiently murdered leaps out at the reader.

The main obstacle to the British program, Kovachi argues, was the attitude of America. After President Truman urged that one hundred thousand Jewish DPs be allowed to enter Palestine, the British hoped to be able to involve the Americans in finding an answer to the Palestine riddle. In the end, their policy was a failure. Both in Europe, where Americans were involved in reacting to the movement of people from east to west and toward the various ports of embarkation, and in Washington, where Truman often overrode the views of some of his advisers, American policy often simply ignored the case of the British.

Kovachi is less sure-footed in treading through the minefields of American policy than in dealing with the British. It is an oversimplification to place as much emphasis as he does on the Jewish vote, especially in New York, in determining Truman to take the stance that he did. Like British policy, that of the United States was complicated. It included geopolitical interests in the Middle East, suspicion of British imperialism, and genuine concern for the fate of a decimated people. Kovachi alludes to all of this, but tends to overemphasize American domestic politics.

The motivations of the various governments and occupying administrations were varied and made the British project more difficult to achieve. The Soviet Union and its satellites often facilitated the movement of Jews westward to Austria and Germany. Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were not loath to see some of their Jews depart. British efforts to combat this movement or the sailing of vessels from Romania by threatening to withhold recognition or slow down peace negotiations with the new regimes were limited by the fear of aggravating relations to Britain's own disadvantage. They came too late, in any case, to prevent the flight of thousands of illegal immigrants to Palestine—or to deportation to Cyprus.

Equally unsuccessful were British attempts to slow or stop the

illegal movement of Jews into France and Italy. The Italians were less concerned with keeping Jewish refugees from entering the country; since the cost of supporting them did not fall upon the Italian economy, they were not particularly vigilant in the task of prevention. In addition, most of the refugees were expected to leave, since they planned to use Italy as a transient point for transport to Palestine. As for France, from which about one-quarter of the illegal sailing took place after the war, Kovachi notes that the French could live with the paradox of fostering rapprochement with Britain on the one hand and helping the Jewish refugees on the other, because the DP issue was a marginal one in Anglo-French relations.

*Post-Holocaust Politics* is a rich and generally carefully shaded examination of the interplay of Great Power politics and the efforts of a wounded people to make new lives for themselves away from the killing fields of Europe. It is a major contribution which makes quite clear that, although there was sympathy for survivors of the Holocaust among officials of different countries, it was political considerations that were decisive in the interactions of those Great Powers and that enabled Zionists to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

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