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# The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945–1960

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**Until the 1960s, many scholars assert, most Americans' awareness of the Holocaust was based upon vague, trivial, or inaccurate representations. Yet the extermination of the Jews was remembered in significant ways, this article posits, through World War II accounts, the Nuremberg trials, philosophical works, comparisons with Soviet totalitarianism, Christian and Jewish theological reflections, pioneering scholarly publications, and mass-media portrayals. These early postwar attempts to comprehend the Jewish tragedy within prevailing cultural paradigms provided the foundation for subsequent understandings of that event.**

Between the end of the war and the 1960s, as anyone who has lived through those years can testify, the Holocaust made scarcely any appearance in American public discourse, and hardly more in Jewish public discourse—especially discourse directed to gentiles.

Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*<sup>1</sup>

There is some validity to Peter Novick's recent claim that the term "Holocaust" became prominent in American Jewish life only after the Eichmann trial, Israel's 1967 triumph in the Six-Day War, and the surprise attack by Egypt and costly victory by Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, most scholars who have studied the phenomenon share Novick's dating of the rise of American Holocaust awareness to the 1960s. "The prominence of the Holocaust in American Jewish identity is particularly noteworthy," Deborah Lipstadt has contended, "since throughout the 1950s and most of the 1960s it was barely on the Jewish communal or theological agenda."<sup>3</sup> Lucy Dawidowicz lamented "it is plain from even the most cursory review of textbooks and scholarly works by English and American historians that the awesome events of the Holocaust have not been given their historic due."<sup>4</sup> Though Alan Mintz acknowledges the popularity of *The Diary of Anne Frank* among Americans during the 1950s, he characterizes this decade as one of silence about the Jewish catastrophe.<sup>5</sup>

Despite disagreements over what sparked the 1960s and 1970s interest in the Holocaust, scholars seem to agree upon why the memory of the Jewish catastrophe was either forgotten or repressed between the end of World War II and the Eichmann trial.

Following Allied victory, the destruction of European Jewry was widely subsumed under the generic category of war casualties and crimes. The mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeared to many as ominous as the smoke rising from the crematoria of Auschwitz. In the postwar period, American Jewry still sought integration into the melting pot and shied away from drawing attention to the “special treatment” meted out to the Jews by the Third Reich. As the Cold War evolved, the Soviet Union replaced Germany as the archenemy of the United States. Within the context of a bipolar world on the brink of nuclear war, the “Final Solution” was either relativized as just one example of mass murder perpetrated by totalitarian regimes or avoided in order not to discomfit America’s new ally, West Germany. The Holocaust as depicted in popular culture conveyed an ecumenical and optimistic message as epitomized by the popular 1950s book, play, and movie *The Diary of Anne Frank*.<sup>6</sup>

Many authors tend to downplay, overlook, or selectively interpret evidence that contradicts their certainty that the “Holocaust” was, in Novick’s words, a “retrospective construction”<sup>7</sup> that developed in the 1960s and 1970s to heighten American Jewish identity, promote support for Israel, and foster pluralism in the United States. In this article I will trace the topic of the mass murder of European Jews as it entered into American public discourse during the late 1940s and the 1950s through press coverage of the liberation of the German concentration camps and the Nuremberg trials; pioneering research devoted to the fate of the Jews under Nazi rule; philosophical, political, and theological reflections upon the meaning of the Jewish catastrophe; and finally popular books, television programs, and feature films. Though the term “Holocaust” did not become common in American parlance until the 1960s, a sense of what it denoted had become widespread in the fifteen years after World War II.<sup>8</sup>

If Americans did not understand the Holocaust in the ways they do today, it does not mean they lacked awareness of the event or repressed the memory of it, but rather, as Hilene Flanzbaum has observed, “in forty years our understanding of history and culture has changed.”<sup>9</sup> In his award-winning critique *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (1988) Novick argues that the ideal of scholarly neutrality itself “has always been closely tied to changing social, political, cultural, and professional contexts.”<sup>10</sup> While Novick is keenly attuned to how these influences contributed to the use of the Holocaust to overshadow the suffering of current victims of persecution or, conversely, to manufacture strained analogies between the Holocaust and the plight of such groups, he ignores how a similar intellectual process operated in the fifteen years following 1945.

In the aftermath of a cataclysm, people tend to incorporate their experience into familiar conceptual frameworks that reinforce their existing belief systems. What appears in retrospect to have been the repression of memory actually entailed an extensive discourse that played a significant role in the Allied war crimes trials, Cold War anticommunism, historical interest in the Third Reich, postwar philosophical debates, religious reforms intended to improve Jewish-Christian relations, and American Jewry’s efforts

to combat antisemitism and win sympathy for Israel. According to Mintz's "constructivist" model of Holocaust remembrance in the United States, the fate of European Jewry has always been perceived "through an American lens and represented through styles of the imagination and modes of cultural production at work in our society."<sup>11</sup>

### **The "Extermination of the Jews" Becomes an American Memory**

Novick expresses puzzlement at the extent and persistence of American interest in the Holocaust. Unlike the European countries that were implicated in its perpetration or that had contained the Jewish populations that were targeted, the United States was geographically removed from the scene of the crime and admitted only a small fraction of survivors as immigrants.<sup>12</sup> Novick and other scholars note that between 1942 and 1944 the U.S. State Department and the Office of War Information suppressed reports of Germany's genocidal campaign. Both agencies had worried that such stories would be perceived as wartime propaganda or would be focused too narrowly on Jewish victimization and the European fronts.<sup>13</sup> Despite this opposition, the United States joined Britain and the Soviet Union in a December 17, 1942, declaration confirming that Germany was implementing "Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe" and warning that "those responsible for this crime would be prosecuted after Germany was defeated."<sup>14</sup> As Walter Laqueur observed, "There had been a steady flow of information [about the extermination of European Jewry], but it had quite obviously not registered" with most of the populace.<sup>15</sup>

By 1944, however, American perceptions of and policy toward European anti-Jewish persecution were changing. In January President Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board (WRB) to help displaced civilians fleeing Axis territory.<sup>16</sup> In August the WRB granted temporary asylum to a group of 982 refugees, the majority of whom were Jews, and interned them in a vacant army post in Oswego, New York.<sup>17</sup> Their arrival there at Fort Ontario provided the cover story for an issue of *Life* magazine.<sup>18</sup> In the same month, the Red Army liberated Majdanek and invited American journalists to view the gas chambers, crematoria, and piles of ashes from incinerated corpses. *Life* devoted a photographic essay to evidence of the liquidation of "several hundred thousand" Jews in the camp.<sup>19</sup> In November 1944, much to the dismay of the State Department and the Office of War Information, the WRB published an account of the systematic gassings at Auschwitz, based upon the testimony of, and photographic evidence smuggled out by, two inmates who had escaped during the previous spring.<sup>20</sup>

What began as a trickle of information in 1942 became a torrent in 1945 when Allied troops liberated the remaining survivors in German concentration and death camps. The WRB had prepared the American public for news of the extent of German atrocities with its official statement in November 1944 that 1,765,000 Jews had been killed at Auschwitz and Birkenau alone. According to Lipstadt, "not since *Kristallnacht* had a story been so widely featured or prompted such extensive comment."<sup>21</sup> A Gallup poll conducted at the time indicated that seventy-six percent of Americans believed

that Germany had murdered many concentration camp inmates.<sup>22</sup> This constituted a sharp increase in public awareness compared to the January 1943 poll in which only forty-seven percent believed claims that two million Jews had been killed by the Germans.<sup>23</sup> The magnitude of the suffering and carnage inflicted on Nazism's chosen political and racial enemies became abundantly evident to the American and British troops who liberated camps in Germany and Austria in April and May 1945 and subsequently to the delegations of journalists and Congress members who traveled there to survey the havoc wrought by the Third Reich. Robert Abzug has observed that the "liberations made horrified believers out of the skeptics and brought a new and hideous sense of reality even to those who never doubted the worst."<sup>24</sup> The photographs of skeletal survivors and stacked corpses, and the wrenching accounts of mass murder became a staple of American publications and newsreels. By May 1945, eighty-four percent of Americans polled believed that Germany had slaughtered millions in its camps and in other operations.<sup>25</sup>

Novick doubts whether contemporaneous media exposure to the grim remains of the camps left any lasting impression that Jews had been targeted for physical elimination. He emphasizes that most survivors in the liberated camps were classified in press reports either as "displaced persons" or as "political prisoners, slave laborers, and civilians of many nationalities." Furthermore, Novick reminds readers that accounts of German atrocities competed with other breaking news stories such as the death of President Roosevelt, the ongoing war with Japan, and the dropping of the atomic bombs.<sup>26</sup> He assumes that few Americans saw a relationship between the refugees who flocked to the Allied occupation zones and Hitler's virulent antisemitism, despite the American government's two confirmations of the genocide of the Jews, and the images and stories that emanated from Europe following the Allied victory.<sup>27</sup>

Novick omits two key events that officially established that the Jews had been marked for extinction by Germany. The first arose in reaction to American and British occupation officials' failure to recognize that Jews confined in DP camps had endured far harsher experiences in German captivity than their gentile counterparts. A commission led by Earl G. Harrison, dean of the law faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, was appointed to investigate whether Allied treatment of Jewish refugees was appropriate given their unique circumstances as survivors of a protracted policy of extirpation. At the end of September 1945, Harrison filed a report to President Truman highlighting the reasons why Jewish refugees merited special care from their new guardians:

The first and plainest need of these people is a recognition of their status and by this I mean their status as Jews. Most of them have spent years in the worst of the concentration camps. In many cases, although the full extent is not yet known, they are the sole survivors of their families, and many have been through the agony of witnessing the destruction of their loved ones. Understandably, therefore, their present condition, physical and mental, is far worse than that of other groups.

Harrison recommended that Jewish DPs be removed from camps as soon as possible, that nonrepatriable Jews be evacuated rapidly from Austria and Germany, that Great Britain permit 100,000 Jews to settle in Palestine, and that “reasonable numbers” of them be allowed to immigrate to the United States.<sup>28</sup>

Novick also fails to discuss the impact of the Nuremberg trials upon Americans’ awareness of the destruction of European Jewry.<sup>29</sup> While the International Military Tribunal’s indictment of German leaders leveled some charges that had nothing to do with anti-Jewish policy, counts 3 (for war crimes) and 4 (for crimes against humanity) specified that Jews were victims of a “deliberate and systematic genocide” in certain occupied territories (e.g., Poland and the USSR) and that “millions of Jews from Germany and the occupied Western countries were sent to the Eastern countries for extermination.”<sup>30</sup> American press coverage of the trials has been described as “intense,” and seventy-five percent of Americans polled approved of the proceedings.<sup>31</sup> Michael Marrus has remarked, “After Nuremberg, the murder of European Jewry could be authoritatively pointed to as an established fact of great historical importance.”<sup>32</sup> *Time* magazine seemed to reflect the average American’s understanding of Nuremberg when, in the middle of an article covering the trials, it placed a photograph carrying the terse caption: “Jew (with Star of David) and Nazi Executioners: 6 million died, one by one, alone.”<sup>33</sup>

Publications spawned by the trials reinforced public awareness. The Jewish Black Book Committee, which consisted of representatives from a variety of Jewish organizations, released a book in 1946 indicting Germany for its crimes against the Jewish people. It traced the escalation of German antisemitic policies from the disenfranchisement and impoverishment of German Jews to the wartime annihilation of Jews throughout countries conquered by or allied with Germany.<sup>34</sup> Douglas Kelley and G. M. Gilbert, who had served as psychiatrists for the Nuremberg defendants, published their observations in 1947. Kelley acknowledged the holocaust (with a small *h*) by concluding: “It is up to us to determine whether to foster racial hatreds and prejudices. It is up to us whether we learn from the holocaust of Europe and apply what we learn to our own lives.”<sup>35</sup> The revelations at Nuremberg bolstered a sense of American justness and decency in dealing with former enemies; after all, the United States had granted the accused fair trials.

### **Scholarship on the “Final Solution”**

Novick points to the dearth of pre-1960 scholarly studies about the Holocaust as one indicator of how little Americans knew about the subject. He singles out Gerald Reitlinger’s *The Final Solution* (1953) and Leon Poliakov’s *Harvest of Hate* (1954) as the two exceptions that prove the rule. Both were “imports from abroad” with low sales in the United States. Neither was reviewed by the major historical journals.<sup>36</sup> In her survey of Holocaust historiography, Lucy Dawidowicz fails even to mention the Poliakov and Reitlinger books.<sup>37</sup>

Both works attracted more attention than Novick concedes. Academic journals such as *American Journal of Sociology*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, *International Affairs*, *Journal of Central European Affairs*, and *Sociology and Social Research* reviewed at least one of the works.<sup>38</sup> In 1955 *Commentary* published Solomon Bloom's review essay on the two books, as well as on Whitney R. Harris's *Tyranny on Trial: The Evidence at Nuremberg* (1954) and Lord Russell's *The Scourge of the Swastika: A Short History of Nazi War Crimes* (1954).<sup>39</sup> Though Bloom expressed disappointment over Americans' lack of interest in the topic, he praised Poliakov and Reitlinger "as pioneers who had made a substantial beginning in assembling, arranging, and analyzing much of the material now available." He concluded that they had made "it impossible for any responsible person to remain in ignorance or in doubt about the outlines and structure of the conspiracy against the European Jews and its effective accomplishment." The only flaw Bloom found was the discrepancy between Reitlinger's estimate of 4.2 to 4.6 million Jews slain by Germany and its allies and the figure of 5.7 million dead based upon statistics compiled by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine. This criticism recurred in otherwise positive reviews of the books. One reviewer lauded Reitlinger for his lower figure, while another accused him of underestimating the number of fatalities. Bloom regarded the books by Harris and Russell, both of whom were part of the prosecution team at Nuremberg, as providing raw evidence for what Russell deemed "the greatest crime in world history."<sup>40</sup>

Neither Dawidowicz nor Novick discusses two other pioneering studies: Eva Reichmann's *Hostages of Civilization: The Social Sources of National Socialist Anti-Semitism* (1951) and Joseph Tenenbaum's *Race and Reich: The Story of an Epoch* (1956). After tracing the German intellectual, political, and historical precedents for Nazi antisemitism, Reichmann showed how Hitler used the Jews as scapegoats to exploit the economic and governmental crises of the Weimar Republic. Hitler's racism culminated in what Reichmann simply called "the catastrophe," her term for the Holocaust, to which she devotes one-quarter of her book.<sup>41</sup> Tenenbaum also emphasized the centrality of antisemitism to Hitler's ideology. In his preface, he succinctly presented this thesis: "The Jew was considered race enemy number one and upon him the full Nazi fury was unleashed." He examined how Hitler had tried more moderate options such as mass immigration before deciding to exterminate the Jews in death camps.<sup>42</sup> The reviewer for *Commonweal* summarized *Race and Reich* as "a precise, documented account of Hitler's Final Solution to the Jewish question through the systematic murder of six million human beings."<sup>43</sup>

Though the study of the Jewish catastrophe initially was carried out under Jewish institutional auspices by scholars who had fled or survived Nazi persecution, the field grew gradually in the postwar period. *YIVO-bleter* focused its entire 1947 issue on the topic.<sup>44</sup> In 1949 and in 1951, Philip Friedman published review essays in Europe and the United States, these on the scholarly literature of "the catastrophe."<sup>45</sup> To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, YIVO's 1953

*Annual of Jewish Social Science* was “devoted entirely to studies dealing with the Jewish Catastrophe.”<sup>46</sup> In 1956, the Leo Baeck Institute issued the inaugural volume of its *Yearbook*, the bulk of which consisted of articles about “Jewish Organizations and Spiritual Resistance During the Third Reich.”<sup>47</sup> The following year *Yad Vashem Studies*, the first journal dedicated solely to research on the Jewish ordeal under Nazism, appeared in English despite the fact that it was printed in Israel.<sup>48</sup> During the latter half of the 1950s, Raul Hilberg expanded his award-winning dissertation into the book *The Destruction of the European Jews*. The delay of its publication until 1961 was caused as much by reservations about his usage of exclusively German documents, his criticism of Jewish responses to Nazi persecution, and the need for funding for such a massive work, as it was by the reluctance of publishers to run the financial risk of marketing a book on such an unappealing topic.<sup>49</sup>

Novick contends that the concept of totalitarianism deflected “the abhorrence felt toward Nazism onto the new Soviet enemy.”<sup>50</sup> Likewise, Lipstadt argues that American gentiles and Jews alike were swept up in the anticommunist hysteria of the era and feared that dredging up the Nazi past would tarnish the image of West Germany to the benefit of the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup> While some proponents of the totalitarian model viewed the Final Solution as analogous to the collective violence perpetrated by Stalin,<sup>52</sup> others, such as Hannah Arendt, were preoccupied with Hitler’s campaign to obliterate European Jewry and only subsequently extended their analysis to the Soviet Union.<sup>53</sup> As early as 1945 Arendt wrote, “systematic mass murder . . . strains not only the imagination of human beings, but also the framework and categories of our political thought. . . . There is no political method for dealing with German mass crimes.”<sup>54</sup> Before the release of her groundbreaking study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), she wrote several articles on the German concentration and death camps.<sup>55</sup> A year later she reviewed the French edition of Poliakov’s book for *Commentary*.<sup>56</sup> In the second edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1958, Arendt frequently cited Poliakov when discussing Germany’s assault on European Jewry.<sup>57</sup>

Did the comparative approach taken by the theorists of totalitarianism actually divert attention from scholarship on Nazi Germany? A perusal of some of the relevant works written before 1960 indicates that Lipstadt and Novick overstate their case. In 1946, YIVO published *Hitler’s Professors* by Max Weinreich, who bluntly declared in the monograph’s first sentence: “This study is a report on the part of German scholarship in Germany’s crimes against the Jewish people.” Weinreich carefully documented how German professors legitimated Nazi antisemitic canards and policies, and eventually provided the scientific and technological expertise to convert camps such as Auschwitz into efficient “death factories.”<sup>58</sup> An essay on *Hitler’s Professors* published in *The American Historical Review*, the official journal of the American Historical Association, contradicts Novick’s claim that American outrage over the Jewish genocide was rapidly supplanted by fear of Soviet machinations. “It is hardly necessary today to prove terrorism and the intentional extermination of the Jews,” wrote the reviewer. “Murder camps,



mass murder, and mass executions have already been extensively described.” He applauded Weinreich for refraining “from mere accusation and vituperation” in establishing the complicity of German intellectuals in the “worst crimes” of the Nazi regime.<sup>59</sup>

*Doctors of Infamy: The Story of the Nazi Medical Crimes* (1949) by Fred Mielke and Alexander Mitscherlich exposed physicians’ participation in the euthanasia program, in medical experiments on unsuspecting concentration-camp inmates, and in the eradication of the perceived Jewish threat to “Aryan” racial purity. The authors drew heavily upon the documents and testimony entered into evidence at Nuremberg (Trial 1, The Medical Case) during 1946 and 1947. One charge explicitly accused the defendants of being accomplices to “the mass extermination of Jews.” Reviewing the book in the journal *Social Forces*, Joseph Hirsch prescribed it as required reading “for those short on memory, for those who out of kindness and Christianity plead we must be gentle with the Germans, for those whose moral sense is dwarfed by their dollar sense.”<sup>60</sup>

A number of key monographs about the German leaders and organizations responsible for the administration and formulation of Nazi anti-Jewish policies appeared in the fifties. Although Dawidowicz faulted Alan Bullock’s 1953 biography of Hitler for not paying more attention to Germany’s crusade against the Jews, she quoted Bullock’s statement that “from first to last” antisemitism was “the most consistent theme in [Hitler’s] career, the master idea which embraces the whole span of his thought.” Dawidowicz’s criticism of Bullock was quantitative, not qualitative: She calculated that the author’s “fifty odd references to Jews and antisemitism (including Hitler’s and his program for their destruction) come to about fifteen pages, less than two percent of the whole book.”<sup>61</sup> Yet anyone reading Bullock’s popular book will find powerful passages such as the following: “Himmler organized the extermination of the Jews, but the man in whose mind so grotesque a plan had been conceived was Hitler. . . . There are few more ghastly pages in history than the attempt to exterminate a whole race.”<sup>62</sup>

Willi Frischauer’s *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich* (1953) detailed the role the SS played in perfecting the “science of killing” and applying it to the annihilation of European Jewry.<sup>63</sup> Edward Crankshaw’s *Gestapo: Instrument of Tyranny* (1956) contained several chapters on Gestapo participation in the Final Solution.<sup>64</sup> In *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922–1945* (1957), Gerald Reitlinger drew upon his previous book to illustrate how the SS assumed direction of anti-Jewish policy.<sup>65</sup> Milton Mayer’s *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933–1945* (1955), the first oral history of the Third Reich, featured various interviewees’ rationalizations as to why they had supported Nazism and had countenanced the persecution of the Jews. Mayer did not shrink from drawing comparisons between how his subjects ignored or justified maltreatment of Jews and most Americans’ indifference to Japanese internment during World II or to the injustices black Americans continued to endure.<sup>66</sup>

The fifties also witnessed the growth of scholarly literature on the methods employed by Germany to dehumanize camp inmates and on the inmates’ responses to this treatment. Four survivors extrapolated their personal experiences into analyses of

the concentration-camp system and of the psychological mechanisms that enabled German guards to kill their captives and that helped prisoners endure the imminent prospect of death. Eugen Kogon's *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System behind Them* (1950), Élie Cohen's *Human Behavior in the Concentration Camp* (1953), Viktor Frankl's *From Death-Camp to Existentialism: A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy* (1959), and Bruno Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (1960) became standard works on how the concentration-camp experience was interpreted until the 1976 publication of Terrence Des Pres's *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, which disputed Bettelheim's unflattering interpretation of how most inmates had survived.<sup>67</sup>

In a 1943 article, Bettelheim articulated the thesis that most concentration-camp inmates were first infantilized and then reduced to a servile mass who identified with their SS taskmasters.<sup>68</sup> Even before his book appeared in print, Bettelheim's analysis achieved fame beyond the community of scholars who studied the Nazi period. Stanley Elkins drew on Bettelheim's ideas to account for the subservience of the majority of American slaves. Elkins cited secondary and primary works about concentration-camp survival to argue that slaves had developed a "Sambo" personality that allowed their owners to rule them without encountering much resistance.<sup>69</sup>

Yet the civil rights agenda pursued by mainstream American Jewish organizations after the war stemmed in part from lessons American Jews learned from the fate of their European brethren—namely, "the best defense of Jewish rights was an aggressive campaign to safeguard the rights of all American minorities."<sup>70</sup> In 1946, the Council on Jewish Relations issued an expanded second edition of its 1942 collection *Essays on Anti-Semitism*, which now included an article by Waldemar Gurian on modern German antisemitism and its evolution into the Final Solution.<sup>71</sup> In 1949 and 1950, the American Jewish Committee and the Institute for Social Research jointly published the five-volume *Studies in Prejudice*. One volume of this series, Paul Massing's *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany*, examined "the historical forerunners of Nazi anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany" to establish their connection with the subsequent "mass murder of Jews as a national policy."<sup>72</sup> Samuel Flowerman and Max Horkheimer explained the rationale for the series in a foreword that appeared in each volume:

At this moment in world history anti-Semitism is not manifesting itself with the full and violent destructiveness of which we know it to be capable. Even a social disease has its period of quiescence during which the social scientist, like the biologist or the physician, can study it in the search for more effective ways to prevent or reduce the virulence of the next outbreak.<sup>73</sup>

Likewise, Carey McWilliams justified his 1948 history of antisemitism in the United States, *Mask for Privilege*, with reference to the Final Solution and the 1947 U.N. vote to partition Palestine:

But our special responsibility now transcends formal considerations: it goes to the question of our integrity as a people. Six million European Jews—one quarter of all the Jews in the world—were liquidated in World War Two. For all practical purposes, therefore, Europe has ceased to be a center of gravity in Jewish affairs.<sup>74</sup>

Gordon Allport's classic study *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) also alluded to the development of Nazi anti-Jewish policies in order to illustrate the escalation of prejudice, from the stereotyping and ostracizing of minority groups to discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. Allport assumed his readers knew exactly to what he referred when he wrote, "The final step in the macabre progression was the ovens at Auschwitz."<sup>75</sup>

Scholarship on Jewish reactions to Nazi persecution lagged behind the output of works about the perpetrators of the Final Solution. Nevertheless, important studies were published in English before 1960. These works focused disproportionately on Jewish immigration, resistance, and rescue by sympathetic gentiles.<sup>76</sup> Borrowing the title of her 1947 book *Blessed Is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance* from the inspirational poem by Hannah Senesh, Marie Syrkin linked Jewish resistance against Nazism to the Zionist rejection of Jewish life in the Diaspora.<sup>77</sup> Howard Fast's and Isaac Schwarzbart's accounts of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising appeared in 1946 and 1953, respectively.<sup>78</sup> Schwarzbart advised readers to regard the uprising "from the viewpoint of the destruction of six million Jews" and considered the revolt "the supreme expression of our people's eternal belief in justice and humanity."<sup>79</sup> Thus, he extracted both particular and universal meanings from the revolt. Many of Philip Friedman's pioneering essays on Nazi anti-Jewish policy were carried in the pages of English-language Jewish journals.<sup>80</sup> His two books from the 1950s emphasized the themes of Jewish martyrdom, resistance, and rescue.<sup>81</sup> A number of books from the immediate postwar period memorialized the Eastern European Jewish communities and their rich cultural and religious heritage.<sup>82</sup>

### **Philosophical, Political, and Religious Reactions**

The decision of a modernized Western state to employ scientific and technological means to murder millions of human beings simply because of their grandparents' religious affiliation constituted a historical watershed that demanded philosophical, political, and religious responses. Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus grappled with the ramifications for existentialist philosophy. The Nazi occupation and genocide prompted both thinkers to temper their amoral individualism with a commitment to social responsibility.<sup>83</sup>

An American edition of Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* appeared in 1948. He perceived hatred of Jews as a delusion that allowed the antisemite to project distorted generalizations about Jews onto an individual and to treat him or her as if these stereotypes were true. Without "Jews," according to Sartre, the antisemite is incapable of authentic self-consciousness. This form of bigotry also provided the state with the justification

“to suppress [Jews’] rights or to exterminate them.”<sup>84</sup> Irving Howe recalled that *Anti-Semite and Jew* enabled his cohort of Jewish socialist internationalists to grasp the uniqueness of the Jewish situation, even though Sartre argued that Jewish identity was primarily a reaction to persecution.<sup>85</sup>

In his book *The Rebel*, which appeared in the United States in 1956, Albert Camus advanced the idea that revolutionary ideologies—and the states based upon them—sacrifice individual freedom and lives upon the altar of the utopias they aspire to erect. Soviet communism purged its political foes and starved millions of people on the grounds that they impeded the historically inevitable collectivization of agriculture and industry. Nazism sanctioned mass murder in its quest to strengthen Germany’s body politic by purifying it of racial enemies. Camus condemned the hubris of Hitler’s regime “because history gives no other example of a doctrine of such total destruction being able to seize the levers of command of a civilized nation.”<sup>86</sup>

Karl Jaspers’s reflections upon the guilt shared by Germans for supporting or condoning the Nazis were published in an American edition in 1947. Jaspers recoiled from the brutal war and mass murder that had been in part an outgrowth of the concept of the Nietzschean “superman,” whose will to power could not be fettered by traditional standards of good and evil. Freedom, Jaspers concluded, could be attained only within a community of equals.<sup>87</sup> He distinguished between the criminal guilt of direct participation in Nazi atrocities, political guilt for putting Hitler in power, moral guilt for continuing to back the Third Reich despite qualms about its means and ends, and metaphysical guilt for not protesting the persecution and liquidation of the Jews. He inveighed against his fellow Germans for not going “into the streets when our Jewish friends were led away,” and for preferring “to stay alive on the feeble, if logical, ground that our deaths could not have helped anyone.”<sup>88</sup>

The political ramifications of the destruction of European Jewry were twofold. As noted, the Final Solution was interpreted as a logical consequence of the absolute power wielded by totalitarian regimes. Arendt contended that when a totalitarian party gained a monopoly over the institutional and intellectual life of a state, it could legally disenfranchise, incarcerate, and liquidate any group it defined as an enemy. Legislation placed the alleged foe beyond the pale of humanity, and bureaucratic organization facilitated the “absolutely cold and systematic destruction of human bodies.”<sup>89</sup> Arendt drew parallels between the personality cults, one-party monopolies, secret police, utopian ideologies, and obliteration of enemies that characterized Hitler’s and Stalin’s regimes.<sup>90</sup>

The most obvious political repercussion of the Final Solution was the creation of a Jewish state in 1948. Novick acknowledges that “sympathy for the survivors” motivated many Americans to back calls for letting Jewish DPs immigrate to Palestine after the war and to support the partition plan. Yet he doubts whether pity for survivors played a key role in the strategic considerations behind the U.S. and USSR decisions in favor of partition. He also detects the seeming contradiction between public pronouncements by the *Yishuv* that Palestine provided the natural refuge for Jewish DPs

and the Zionist leadership's concern that absorption of survivors would be too costly in terms of their physical and psychological rehabilitation and their indoctrination into Zionist ideology.<sup>91</sup>

Israeli historian Anita Shapira has observed that although Zionist leaders in Palestine were more interested in nation building than in providing a haven for the displaced, they frequently referred to the casualties sustained by European Jewry on a "rhetorical-ritual level" to strengthen their case for statehood.<sup>92</sup> This public rhetoric forged the connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel in American public consciousness. In 1942 American Zionists met at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City and issued a declaration denouncing the British White Paper of 1939 as "cruel and indefensible in its denial of sanctuary to Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution."<sup>93</sup> In 1945 Milton Steinberg blamed Jewish anti-Zionists for dooming "millions who perished in Europe" by barring them from Palestine.<sup>94</sup> Bartley Crum, a Truman appointee to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, recalled what swayed him in 1946 to endorse Zionist demands for permitting more Jewish DPs to immigrate to Palestine: "It is one thing to read in the newspaper the story of the deliberate murder of six million people. It is another to meet the survivors."<sup>95</sup>

Another assumption by most Holocaust scholars is that the theological debates over the "death of God" at Auschwitz and Christian introspection about anti-Judaic tenets inherent in scripture did not materialize until the 1960s, with the publication of Richard Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (1966) and the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate*).<sup>96</sup> Yet in his 1951 address "The Dialogue between Heaven and Earth," Martin Buber articulated the quandary facing Jews:

How is a life with God still possible in a time in which there is an Oswiecim? The estrangement has become too cruel, the hiddenness too deep. One can still 'believe in the God who allowed these things to happen,' but can one still speak to him? Can one still hear his word? . . . Dare we recommend to . . . the Job of the gas chambers: 'Call to Him; for He is Kind, for His mercy endureth forever'?<sup>97</sup>

Abraham Joshua Heschel sounded a similar cry of despair in his 1943 essay "The Meaning of This Hour," which was republished in 1954: "Where is God? Why didst Thou not halt the trains loaded with Jews being led to slaughter? It is so hard to rear a child, to nourish, and to educate. Why dost Thou make it so easy to kill? Like Moses, we hide our face; for we are afraid to look upon *Elohim*, upon His power of judgment."<sup>98</sup> Will Herberg opened his *Judaism and Modern Man* (1951) with these pessimistic comments: "Never in all recorded history has the collapse of the hopes of civilization taken place so suddenly, almost in the sight of one generation. . . . Before our very eyes, within the past fifteen years, six million Jews were exterminated by the government of the culturally most advanced country of Europe."<sup>99</sup> In 1953 *Commentary* published Chaim Grade's short story about a debate between an ultra-Orthodox sur-

vivor and a secular humanist over whether it was still possible to believe in God after the Holocaust.<sup>100</sup> The above-mentioned works displayed the same disillusionment that would be voiced so eloquently in 1960 in Elie Wiesel's *Night*.<sup>101</sup>

Richard Rubenstein, considered to be the founder of the Jewish death-of-God movement, had been gravitating towards that position since 1945. At first he embraced traditional Judaism as an act of defiance against the moral void that had allowed the Nazis to kill Jews without any remorse: "It seemed far better to commit the ultimate act of bad faith, of submitting to a non-existent God than to add even a particle of reality to the possibility of a future Auschwitz."<sup>102</sup> In his 1955 Middlebury College lecture he foreshadowed his future repudiation of traditional Jewish faith by declaring, "After Auschwitz many Jews did not need Nietzsche to tell them that the old God of Jewish patriarchal monotheism was dead beyond all hope of resurrection."<sup>103</sup>

Christian complicity in, or indifference towards, the Final Solution prompted concerned Christian scholars and theologians to identify and revise anti-Judaic passages in the New Testament and to renounce centuries of church policies that had provided precedents for Nazi antisemitic measures. The movement to examine Christian culpability is usually linked to the controversy sparked by Rolf Hochhuth's 1964 play about the silence of Pope Pius XII, *Der Stellvertreter* (The Deputy); the Second Vatican Council;<sup>104</sup> and the radical revisionism of theologians such as Roy Eckardt, Franklin Littell, Harry Cargas, and Rosemary Ruether.<sup>105</sup> The first International Scholars' Conference devoted to this subject met at Wayne State University in 1970.<sup>106</sup>

The intellectual seeds for this development, however, had been planted earlier. Before and immediately after the war, the Anglican theologian James W. Parkes had written extensively about the shameful record of Christian vilification of Jews and Judaism, and the need to remove the antisemitic bias that permeated the Christian canon.<sup>107</sup> Malcolm Hay's *The Foot of Pride* (1950) was summed up by Thomas Sugrue: "Nothing can be done about antisemitism until something is done about Christianity. It is as illogical for a follower of Jesus to persecute a Jew as it is for him to commit any other sin of hate."<sup>108</sup> Hay traced the roots of the "German crime of genocide" to the "medieval theory that the Jews were outcasts, condemned by God to a life of perpetual servitude."<sup>109</sup> In 1956 the National Council of Christian Churches urged its affiliates to teach that "the Jews did not kill Christ; all men were responsible by their sins."<sup>110</sup> Paul Tillich, whose many anti-Nazi messages had been broadcast to Germany on Voice of America during World War II, warned his Christian contemporaries against succumbing to the kind of national and theological provincialism that had disgraced his homeland: "If Hitler is the outcome of what we believed to be the true philosophy and only theology, both must be false."<sup>111</sup>

French Jewish historian Jules Isaac's writings and entreaties drew attention to the issue of excising "the teaching of contempt" from Catholic theology. From 1943 until the Liberation, he hid in the home of a Catholic woman to evade arrest and deportation by the German and French authorities. During this time, Isaac began research for

a treatise on the Christian origins of antisemitism, subsequently published under the title *Jesus and Israel*.<sup>112</sup> Following German surrender, he tirelessly lobbied the French Catholic hierarchy to confront the doctrinal anti-Judaism fostered by the New Testament and canon law. In 1947 Isaac attended a meeting of the International Conference of Christians and Jews, in which participants agreed on ten resolutions to “promote fraternal love” towards the Jews. They recommended, among other things, that member churches avoid “debas[ing] Biblical or Post-Biblical Judaism in order to elevate Christianity” and combat “the opinion that the Jewish people are reprobate, cursed, or destined to suffer.”<sup>113</sup> In a 1949 audience with Pius XII, Isaac requested the deletion of derogatory references in the Good Friday prayer for the Jews. His efforts bore fruit in 1958 when Pope John XXIII eliminated the term “perfidious” from both the Latin and the vernacular versions of this prayer. In 1960 Isaac met privately with John XXIII and urged him to form a subcommittee to revise Catholic attitudes and policies towards Jews and Judaism as part of any Vatican Council he might convene in the future.<sup>114</sup>

Isaac’s efforts soon bore fruit in the Catholic Church and among progressive Protestant churches. In 1961 the National Conference of Christians and Jews published Isaac’s booklet *Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?*, which Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston welcomed for engendering the “beginning of dialogue.”<sup>115</sup> Bernhard Olson, who directed Christian education at the Union Theological Seminary, acknowledged that Isaac had established “that Hitler’s program was but the crown and pinnacle of a long history of hatred, participated in (if not initiated) by those whose duty it was to teach their children the truths of Christianity.”<sup>116</sup> Olson subsequently spearheaded the campaign for Jewish-Christian reconciliation that was a priority of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Isaac’s scholarship on Christian enmity towards Jews and his audience with Pope John XXIII influenced the drafting and passage of *Nostra Aetate*, which significantly improved Catholic attitudes towards Jews.<sup>117</sup>

### **Memorialists and Popularizers**

Novick maintains that “nobody besides survivors seemed much interested in the Holocaust” in the immediate postwar period.<sup>118</sup> And while conceding that “a significant number of movies, plays, television productions, and books on the subject appeared well before the end of the 1960s,” Lipstadt asks why the Holocaust had “such limited overt impact on the American Jewish community.”<sup>119</sup> Her formulation of the conundrum reveals the contradiction between the popularization of the Jewish catastrophe at a time when public memory of the event was supposedly minimal. A steady stream of wartime diaries and memoirs, many of which remain key texts for the study of the Final Solution, were published between 1945 and 1960. They included Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys* (1947); Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1952); Gerda Weissmann Klein, *All But My Life* (1957); Viktor Frankl, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism* (1959); Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man* (1959); Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1960).

The persecution of European Jewry figured prominently in four books that be-

came “bestsellers” during the 1950s. John Hersey’s *The Wall* (1950) was a fictionalized diary based upon documentary sources about Jewish confinement and revolt in the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>120</sup> The American Jewish Committee sponsored a radio play adapted from Hersey’s novel and broadcast it in 1950. The book sold well and was later adapted by Millard Lampell into a Broadway play, which ran for 167 performances in the winter of 1960–61. Novick minimizes this “exception” to the early silence about the Holocaust by attributing the popularity of the book to Hersey’s reputation as a writer and by noting that the Broadway play was not as successful as the book had been.<sup>121</sup> Literary critic Ernst Pawel dismisses the popularity of *The Wall* as a form of “denial” since the book ultimately redeemed the Jews’ suffering with a traditional heroic ending in which they rebelled to attain, against all odds, a “spiritual victory.”<sup>122</sup> Yet I contend that the book’s appeal can be attributed to American sympathy, a scant five years after Germany had been defeated, with the downtrodden Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and their courageous, albeit futile, rebellion.

The success of *The Diary of Anne Frank* provides another gauge of Americans’ fascination with the fate of the Jews under Nazism. The first printing of the American edition quickly sold out in 1952; by the end of that year 100,000 copies had been bought. The Broadway play, which premiered in 1955, was performed more than 700 times to packed houses, and the touring company staged it in most large American cities. The 1959 motion picture impressed both audiences and critics.<sup>123</sup> Subsequent commentators such as Bruno Bettelheim, Cynthia Ozick, and Alvin Rosenfeld castigated *The Diary* for minimizing Anne’s Jewish identity, accentuating her buoyant optimism, or whitewashing the harsh realities of the Holocaust by restricting the action to the secret annex.<sup>124</sup> Yet the Jewish Film Advisory Committee, which counseled movie directors on the images of Jews in their productions, praised the screenplay for giving Anne’s story more “universal meaning and appeal” and for preventing it from turning into “an outdated Jewish tragedy.”<sup>125</sup> Even Novick recognizes that *The Diary* was essentially a hopeful and liberal document before it was adapted for the stage and screen.<sup>126</sup> Mintz attributes the power of the diary to its ability “to create a bridge of empathic connection, even identification, between the fate of European Jewry and ordinary American readers.”<sup>127</sup> In one of earliest surveys of Holocaust literature, Pawel observed that *The Diary* derived its “shattering impact” from the “ever present tension between ebullient life and our simultaneous awareness of what came after.”<sup>128</sup>

When it hit the market in 1958, Leon Uris’s sprawling novel *Exodus* was described by one reviewer as “nothing less than the history of European Jewry from the end of the last century to the establishment of Israel.”<sup>129</sup> Although the struggle for a Jewish state was at the heart of its plot, the Holocaust shaped the consciousness of its main Jewish characters. *Exodus* became the best selling novel since *Gone with the Wind*. The epic movie based upon it was widely screened after its 1960 premiere. Though Novick dismisses the novel and film as “schlock fiction,” *Exodus* exposed mil-



lions of Americans to the ways in which the Holocaust influenced Jewish politics. Instead of merely presenting Israel's War of Independence as justified retribution for the Jewish catastrophe, the movie's lead character compared Israel's struggle for independence from Britain with the American Revolution.<sup>130</sup>

Lipstadt and Novick agree that the selling of more than a million copies of William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* in 1959 and the book's serialization in *Reader's Digest* were harbingers of the future popularization of the Holocaust. Shirer's journalistic history interpreted the Final Solution as the culmination of a long tradition of virulent German antisemitism. Shirer devoted twenty pages of his book to Germany's "extermination program" and cited Reitlinger as a source.<sup>131</sup> Lipstadt speculates that the book's surprising success may have reflected American disillusionment with West Germany over then recent incidents of antisemitic vandalism and West Germany's opposition to American-Soviet negotiations recognizing the post-war German borders.<sup>132</sup> Novick wonders whether interest in Shirer's book would have continued without "the sustained increase in talk of the Holocaust" generated by the Eichmann trial.<sup>133</sup> Neither Lipstadt nor Novick offers a more obvious explanation for the book's sales—Americans, Jews and gentiles alike, detested Hitler and his attempt to murder Europe's Jews, and they took pride in the fact that the United States had helped defeat such a regime.

Jeffrey Shandler's book *While America Watches* (1999) provides ample evidence that between 1945 and 1960 television familiarized the American public with the Final Solution. Footage from the graphic film *Nazi Concentration Camps*, produced by the U.S. prosecution team at the Nuremberg trials, appeared in theatrically released newsreels as well as in documentaries and dramas broadcast on television in this period. Stories of the Jewish ordeal under Nazism served as themes for Sunday-morning religious shows, "reality" programs such as *This Is Your Life*, and drama showcases such as *Philco Television Playhouse* and *Playhouse 90*. Shandler concludes: "By the late 1950s, American television had already fashioned a variety of presentations of this subject . . . and it had begun to establish a relationship with viewers as a distinctive venue for encounters with the Holocaust."<sup>134</sup>

Holocaust commemorations, memorials, and survivors' groups also originated during the period 1945–1960. As early as 1946, A. R. Lerner proposed that the National Organization of Polish Jews erect an eternal flame in New York to honor the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and all of Hitler's Jewish victims. On October 19, 1947, tens of thousands of people assembled in the Riverside Park mall as Mayor William O'Dwyer laid the cornerstone for a planned monument in tribute to "The Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Battle" and to "the six million Jews of Europe martyred in the cause of human liberty."<sup>135</sup> Although this monument was never completed, others were. For example, in 1949 a Holocaust survivors' group in Indianapolis funded a black marble "Memorial to the Six Million" at the city's Jewish cemetery. Similar

memorials were located in Jewish cemeteries and synagogues by 1960.<sup>136</sup> In 1952, Jewish survivors in Los Angeles founded the 1939 Club.<sup>137</sup> The following year another survivors' group, the New Life Club, began meeting regularly in San Diego.<sup>138</sup>

### **Towards a Holocaust-Aware Majority**

Two pieces of evidence are often cited to prove that Americans and American Jews felt only minimal emotional or intellectual attachment to the Holocaust in the early 1960s. The first consists of the responses of thirty-one Jewish scholars who participated in a symposium, "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals," sponsored by *Commentary* in April 1961. Only two participants mentioned the annihilation of European Jewry as an influence upon their Jewish identities.<sup>139</sup> The strident secularism of most of the symposium's contributors and the absence of questions mentioning the Holocaust make this a rather poor source for assessing the impact of the event upon American Jewish consciousness. Readers of the magazine sent a flurry of letters condemning the participants as unrepresentative of American Jewry.<sup>140</sup>

Despite these limitations, more symposium respondents referred to World War II atrocities than have been credited. The following provides a sampling of their comments: "I am led to conjecture that it was the very persecution of Jews that made Jewishness seem an inescapable essence" (Raziel Abelson); "One's first thoughts, thinking of the Jews, are of course of the concentration camps which taught us something new about the human condition" (Jason Epstein); "I feel strongly about remembering the Nazis. I do not see how to do this without institutionalizing personal and communal rituals of remembrance" (Elihu Katz); "Because so much of Israel's background and justification lie in the Nazi era, its success represents a triumph over malignancy that gives confidence and strength" (Joseph Kraft); "Of the particular Jewish circumstances creating a mood of caution, the first was the trauma of the Nazi era, which reawakened the thought in the Jewish unconscious that no matter how much he seemed at home, the Jew was potentially an alien in any stranger's house" (Michael Maccoby); "It would be hard to say how much of this self-assertion [of the postwar generation of American Jews] is an expression of hostility against the gentile, for it is the mass murder of European Jewry, regardless of the degree of assimilation we may have achieved, that determines our attitudes towards the problem of Jewish identity as much here as of surviving Jews anywhere" (Hugh Nissenson).<sup>141</sup>

The second most frequently cited evidence of the lack of Holocaust consciousness among Americans in the early 1960s are the published findings of a public-opinion survey about the Eichmann trial, entitled *The Apathetic Majority*. Only thirty-three percent of those who followed the trial could answer that six million was the number of Jews killed by Germany during the war. Reanalyzing the poll results suggests a different assessment of American awareness of the plight of Jews under Hitler. Although the pollsters had warned that it was typical for "details of even the most publicized and international events to elude the majority of the public," eighty-four percent of the respondents said

they had heard about the Eichmann trial.<sup>142</sup> A sizeable majority of those polled thought it was a “good thing” that Eichmann had been brought before a court of law.<sup>143</sup>

A major flaw hindered the tabulation of correct responses regarding the number of Jews killed during the Holocaust: only the Israeli prosecution team’s figure of six million was accepted as the correct answer. Reitlinger had estimated Jewish fatalities as between 4.2 and 4.6 million; Shirer and Hilberg had placed the number at approximately five million.<sup>144</sup> In the wake of the Eichmann trial, fifty-six percent of those who had followed the trial in the news, and forty-seven percent of the entire interview pool, identified the figure as four million or higher.<sup>145</sup> In comparison, only thirty-five percent of adults polled by the American Jewish Committee in 1993 answered that approximately six million Jews had died in the Holocaust.<sup>146</sup>

Despite their conflicting interpretations about why the Holocaust became more pervasive in American culture after 1961, the authors I have discussed perceive awareness levels to have been low until the State of Israel and American Jewish organizations made the Holocaust central to their agendas, or until liberals and leftists invoked its memory to advance civil or human rights. By making the Eichmann trial, concern over Israel’s security, or the heightening of American Jewish identity responsible for the popularization of the Holocaust as a unique or paradigmatic event, Novick and others minimize the less ethnocentric role the Jewish tragedy played in American and American Jewish consciousness between 1945 and 1960.

The Holocaust emerged as an American memory because the United States liberated some of the concentration camps on the Western Front and conducted war crimes trials that documented the Final Solution. The accusation that American immigration policy made the United States an accessory to the crime developed only in the 1960s.<sup>147</sup> Most early Jewish interpretations saw the Holocaust as a result of unchecked bigotry and invoked it to promote civil rights in general. Postwar representations also reflected the pride Americans felt over defeating Germany and the continuing duty to fight communism. The extremity of the Holocaust lent itself to riveting depictions in books, plays, movies, and television programs. Before the tragedy was studied extensively by scholars, incorporated into public education, and commemorated in a national museum, popular culture probably played an even greater role in informing the public than it does today.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, some initial postwar perceptions of the event posed a challenge to a complacent faith in progress and required revisions of contemporary philosophical and religious views about God, human nature, and the “other.” By the 1960s, the foundations had been laid for a keener understanding and a bleaker portrayal of what the genocide entailed and portended for Jews and gentiles alike.

## Notes

This article is dedicated to those who have interviewed Holocaust survivors.

1. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 103.

2. Ibid., pp.127–69.
3. Deborah E. Lipstadt, “America and the Memory of the Holocaust,” *Modern Judaism* 16:3 (1996), p. 195.
4. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 22–23.
5. Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 3–20.
6. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 63–123; Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust, From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 23–40; Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, pp. 4–19; Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 11–30; Lipstadt, “America and the Memory of the Holocaust,” pp. 198–208.
7. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 20.
8. Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, “Why Do We Call the Holocaust ‘The Holocaust?’ An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels,” *Modern Judaism* 9:2 (1989), pp.197–211; Dalia Ofer, “Linguistic Conceptualization of the Holocaust in Palestine and Israel, 1942–1953,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31:3 (1996), pp. 567–89.
9. Hilene Flanzbaum, “The Americanization of the Holocaust,” in *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 2.
10. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 628.
11. Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, pp. 81–84.
12. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 2–3.
13. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 22–29; Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler’s “Final Solution”* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 65–100; Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp.180–92; David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 19–103, 311–27.
14. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, pp. 72–76; Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler’s “Final Solution,”* pp. 223–28.
15. Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*, pp. 2–4.
16. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, pp. 178–215.
17. Sharon R. Lowenstein, *Token Refuge: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944–1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
18. “Refugees Arrive in America,” *Life*, August 21, 1944, pp. 25–29.
19. “Lublin Funeral: Russians Honor Jews Whom Nazis Gassed and Cremated in Mass,” *Life*, August 28, 1944, p. 34; Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera’s Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 49–61.

20. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 263–67; Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, pp. 288–324; *German Extermination Camps: Auschwitz and Birkenau* (Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President, 1944).
21. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 263–67.
22. Robert H. Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 10–11.
23. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, p. 326.
24. Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart*, p. 19. *Atrocities and Other Conditions in Concentration Camps in Germany*, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document 47 (Washington, DC: 1945); Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, pp. 61–85.
25. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, p. 326.
26. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 63–84. Compare with David S. Wyman, “The United States,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 708–16.
27. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 86–111, 267–78; a few memoirs about the Jews’ ordeal under Nazi rule started to appear in 1945. See Mary Berg, *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary*, trans. Norbert and Sylvia Glass (New York: L. B. Fisher, 1945); Henry Shoskes, *No Traveler Returns: The Story of Hitler’s Greatest Crime* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1945); see also Clark Kinnaird’s book of photographs of German and Japanese atrocities, *This Must Not Happen Again!* (United States of America: Pilot Press, 1945), pp. 39–41, 44–53. Kinnaird’s text includes explicit mention of the extermination of the Jews.
28. Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 39–71, 291–305; Abram L. Sachar, *Redemption of the Unwanted: From the Liberation of the Death Camps to the Founding of Israel* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), pp. 162–64, 199–201. See also “Barbed Wire,” *Time*, October 8, 1945, pp. 31–32.
29. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 129. Novick refers to the Nuremberg trials only once, in connection with Telford Taylor’s protest against Israel’s kidnapping and trial of Adolf Eichmann.
30. “International Military Tribunal: Indictment, October 6, 1945,” in Michael R. Marrus, *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial 1945–46: A Documentary History* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), pp. 65, 70.
31. William J. Bosch, *Judgment on Nuremberg: American Attitudes toward the Major German War-Crime Trials* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 90–109.
32. Michael R. Marrus, “The Holocaust at Nuremberg,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998), pp. 40–41.
33. “War Crimes,” *Time*, December 24, 1945, p. 29.
34. *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime Against the Jewish People* (New York: The Jewish Black Book Committee, 1946). Seymour Krieger’s *Nazi Germany’s War Against the Jews* (New York: American Jewish Conference, 1947), provides a similar compilation of evidence from the Nuremberg trials. In the 1947/1948 *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, Josef Guttmann demonstrated how the documents introduced at Nuremberg closed “many gaps in our knowledge of

the preparation and execution of the greatest crime in our history.” Guttman, “The Fate of European Jewry in the Light of the Nuremberg Documents,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* (New York: YIVO, 1948), pp. 313–27.

35. Douglas M. Kelley, *22 Cells in Nuremberg* (New York: MacFadden Books, 1961 <1947>), pp. 128–33, 170–76. G. M. Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1947).

36. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 103; Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1954); Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1953).

37. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, pp. 22–34. On this and many other key omissions in Dawidowicz’s *The War Against the Jews*, see Raul Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), pp. 143–47.

38. See E. L. Quarantelli, “Harvest of Hate,” *American Journal of Sociology* 61:5 (1956), pp. 512–13; Norman Bentwich, “Harvest of Hate,” *International Affairs* 32: 2 (1956), pp. 230–31; Kurt R. Grossmann, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 292 (March 1954), pp. 211. Albert M. Hyamson, “The Final Solution,” *International Affairs* 29:4 (1953), pp. 494–95.

39. Whitney R. Harris, *Tyranny on Trial: The Evidence at Nuremberg* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1954); Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Scourge of the Swastika: A Short History of Nazi War Crimes* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954).

40. Solomon F. Bloom, “The Great Unsolved Crime,” *Commentary* 19:1 (1955), pp. 89–93; Hyamson, pp. 494–95; Grossmann, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, p. 211. Hyamson believed that the figure of six million was inflated.

41. Eva Reichmann, *Hostages of Civilization: The Social Sources of National Socialist Anti-Semitism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), pp.172–235.

42. Joseph Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich: The Story of an Epoch* (New York: Twayne, 1956), pp. xvi, 211–391.

43. V. C. Ferkiss, “Review of *Race and Reich*,” *Commonweal*, February 17, 1956.

44. *YIVO-bleter* 30 (1947).

45. Philip Friedman, “European Jewish Research on the Recent Jewish Catastrophe in 1939–1945,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1949), pp. 179–211; Philip Friedman, “American Jewish Research and Literature on the Jewish Catastrophe of 1939–1945,” *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1951), pp. 235–50.

46. Koppel Pinson, “Editor’s Preface,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 8 (New York: YIVO, 1953), p. 5.

47. “Jewish Organizations and Spiritual Resistance During the Third Reich,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 1 (1956), pp. 51–190.

48. *Yad Vashem Studies* 1 (1957).

49. Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 69–119.

50. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 85–88.
51. Lipstadt, “America and the Memory of the Holocaust,” pp. 198–203.
52. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorships and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).
53. Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 108–113. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951).
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