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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Tracey Hayes Norrell entitled "Shattered Communities: Soldiers, Rabbis, and the *Ostjuden* under German Occupation: 1915-1918." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

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Shattered Communities: Soldiers, Rabbis, and the *Ostjuden* under German Occupation: 1915 - 1918

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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ABSTRACT

"Shattered Communities: Soldiers, Rabbis, and the *Ostjuden* during Occupation: 1915-1918" addresses the interethnic experience in Poland during the German occupation of 1915-1918. This dissertation demonstrates that the German design for 'modernization' of the East began with the First World War, which envisioned the Jews as a critically vital component, rather than an obstacle to their success. The German military made its connection to the peoples in the East via its own army rabbis and Jewish administrators. This work examines the role of the German Army rabbis, in 1915, in establishing a Jewish press and Jewish schools, along with Jewish relief agencies funded by German Jewish businessmen, in assisting the local *Ostjuden* communities. By the time the guns stopped firing in 1918, however, the German government had reneged on their promises of recognition and help, and the circumstances of many *Ostjuden* were as precarious as they had been before the war. Even worse, the experience of war in the East encouraged the rise of racist nationalism in Germany and Eastern Europe. The roots of Nazi policies toward Jews were planted firmly in Poland and Lithuania between 1915 and 1918. But for defeat in the war, it is highly unlikely that the Nazis would ever have risen to power, and in the absence of the German experience of war in the East, the later commitment to a Jewish genocide might never have been imagined. By examining the transnational relationship between the Germans and the Polish Jewish communities during the Great War, I contribute to a better understanding of the complexities leading to the crucial fracture that took place under the pressure of total war in 1917.

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Chapter 1: Prelude to Tragedy

The image of trench warfare on the Western Front prevails in the historical memory of the First World War, its authority often overwhelming any popular understanding of the great significance of the war on the Eastern Front. This reality of our historical memory does not, however, hold for Poles and especially not for Jews. In August 1914, one half of the world's Jewish population, about seven million people, was literally confined in a huge ghetto in Eastern Europe that had been created in the late eighteenth century when Poland was divided into partitions governed by three European powers. Perhaps a half million Jews lived in East Prussia, governed by the German state. The Austro-Hungarian Empire ruled over a million Jews in Galicia, to the south. In Russian Poland to the East, often called Congress Poland for its creation at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, two million Jews were crowded into towns and cities. Further to the east in the Pale of Settlement, fifteen Russian provinces that included Ukraine and Belarus, another four million Jews resided mostly in poverty, under severe civil discrimination. Eastern European Jews approached the war in 1914 with hopes that it would release them from Russian oppression that had accompanied pogroms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the conflict soon unleashed violence that brought suffering, especially to Polish Jews, as bad as any the Jews had known. More than half of all Jews in the world found themselves overtaken by destruction and cruelty in Poland and Russia's western provinces. During the war, the outside world would learn something of their continuous suffering; but even so their fate at the end of the war is among the lesser-known tragedies of world history.

By the Armistice in 1918, more than half a million Jews had fought in the war on both sides, the large majority of them serving on the Eastern Front. No single event since the Diaspora

that began almost two millennia earlier was as significant in Jewish history as the Great War. It led directly to another war and to the most tragic event in the Jewish experience, the Holocaust. It also provided the largest impetus to date for the creation of a Jewish state.

In 1914 the German Army marched into Russia's Polish partition with an agenda that included establishing a positive working relationship with local Jews. The German military saw the Jews as vital to their plans for settlement and influence in the East. Twenty-five years later in 1939, Germany invaded Poland with completely different plans—to remove the Jews in order to exploit the region, and in 1942, it began the systematic slaughter of the *Ostjuden* community. This outcome amounted to a horrific irony in light of German plans for Polish Jews at the outset of the Great War. This study will attempt to explain how this turn of events came about.

Between 1914 and 1917, the German Foreign Office and its Military High Command relied on the Army rabbis, Jewish administrators, and soldiers to establish friendships with the large Jewish population. They engaged in relief efforts, started schools, and established media communication in the regional Jewish periodicals. German Army rabbis provided crucial leadership and direction in cultivating a relationship with the local Polish-Jewish communities. The rabbis based this transnational relationship on commonalities between the German and Yiddish languages and on the reality that Jews already functioned as intermediaries in Polish society. Erich Ludendorff, German Army Chief of Staff, along with several key leaders in the German government, believed that the Jews were indispensable mediators for German occupation of Poland.[1] By examining this transnational relationship among the German, Polish, and Jewish communities with the *Feldrabbiner* at the center of this relationship, this study will

[1] General Erich Ludendorff, *The General Staff and its Problems*, edited and translated by F. A. Holt, O.B.E. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1920), 158.

show that there was a determined effort made by the Foreign Office to create and maintain an alliance with the Jews in the East.

This project alters what most historians, geographers, religious scholars, and sociologists have determined about the First World War and the causes of the Holocaust. Most scholars agree that the Holocaust involved a strong ideological foundation, and most agree that the Holocaust was the result of escalations of war politics and bureaucracy, especially on the Eastern Front and the German offensive in the Soviet Union in 1941. When discussing the Holocaust, little weight has been given the First World War's outcome and impact. Those involved in the First World War's Eastern Front, both civilians and soldiers, came away with experiences that molded participants' behavior during the inter-war period and the Second World War. Based on evidence from the German Foreign Office, the Army, the relief agencies, and the Polish and German newspapers during the war, this study recovers the experience of Jews in the East during Germany's occupation of Poland, Lithuania, and Galicia. It was vital to Germany's occupation that an ally be found among the various ethnic groups, and the only group receptive to Germany's takeover of the region were Poland's Jews.

Understanding the nuances of the relationships between the German soldiers and the Polish Jews during this occupation will shed new light on the Holocaust. Omer Bartov, Zygmunt Bauer, and George Mosse argue that the advances in military technology during the war altered society's response to war and intensified brutality was the result.[2] Hew Strachan and Steven Aschheim discuss the German Army's reaction to the *Ostjuden* community, but they do not go

[2] Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991), George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

into detail about the rich and vibrant relationship that evolved over the three years of occupation.[3] This study shows that the Holocaust was not an inevitable end to age-old European anti-Semitism, nor was it a product of simple bureaucracy or military failure during World War II. Germany's bitter defeat created a traumatized generation with many violent and embittered young men determined to seek revenge on the 'Other'. This 'Other' came to be the people of the East, the Jews.

A great deal is known about Nazi occupation policy as practiced in the East during 1939-1944 through the works of such authors as Karel Berkoff, Wendy Lower, Kate Brown, and Götz Aly, but the origins of this occupation policy go farther back. Historians are only now beginning to evaluate the occupation policy of the First World War. Many senior German officers and officials of the Second World War had formative experiences in Poland during the First World War. The power wielded by the German-Jewish soldiers, administrators, and Army rabbis on the Eastern Front during the First World War helps to explain the fullest dimensions of the tragedy that occurred in 1939. The work and influence of the German Army rabbis and Jewish administrators demonstrates that, at an earlier juncture, Germany intentionally supported the Polish-Jewish communities in order to promote its military and geopolitical agenda in the East. By implementing a philanthropic program in the East, German leadership demonstrated its recognition that ultimate success might lie partly in enfranchising the Jewish population and using its sympathies to further the German agenda.

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[3] Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003).

The majority of scholarship on the First World War's Eastern Front has been written from the German military-strategic and tactical perspective. Recently, historians have begun evaluating the occupation policy of the war, including works by Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius and Alexander Victor Prusin.[4] Liulevicius's depiction of a military utopia and its connection to a broader vision of modernization is fundamental to understanding Germany's plans for the East. Prusin concentrates on Galicia, occupied successively by Russian and then German and Austro-Hungarian troops, and traces the escalation of anti-Semitic tension that occurred throughout the war. These works constitute the foundation for understanding the military's role, both German and Russian, on the Eastern Front during the First World War.

The expansion of Germany to the East was a well-established aim among German nationalists before the war. Egmont Zechlin establishes the potential of the *Ostjuden* in Germany's plan for Poland.[5] Fritz Fischer has discussed the German geopolitical aims in Poland prior to and during the First World War. The expulsion of Poles to the far eastern border of Poland often desired and, according to Immanuel Geiss, was also part of the German agenda in creating the "frontier strip."[6] Fischer insists that the Frontier Strip was a clear war aim but that

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[4] Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Alexander Victor Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland: War, Ethnicity, and Anti-Jewish violence in East Galicia, 1914-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005). The attitudes of the *Kaiserreich* and the Prussian Army did much to shape the images of the East and this is best understood from Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

[5] Egmont Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969).

[6] Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des Kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/1918* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1961); and Imanuel Geiss, *Der Polnische Grenzstreifen: 1914-*

the position of the Jews was not definitely established.[7] Fischer and Geiss argue that the relocation of Poles was fundamental to the German agenda, but they do not agree on what the Germans intended to do about the Jews. For his part, Zechlin argues that the Germans, once they encountered the large Jewish population and observed its receptiveness to them, realized that Jews could become their only allies in the region.

The historiography on the occupiers' perspective also includes several important works on the German-Jewish soldiers' experiences in the East. Steven E. Aschheim addresses the German-*Ostjuden* relationship on the Eastern Front from the German-Jewish perspective.[8] Aschheim analyzes the German-Jewish officers' response to their poverty-stricken brethren in the East. The memoirs of the German Jewish soldiers reflect much of Aschheim's argument, which centers on the frequent dismay and disgust for the abject poverty of the *shtetl* Jew.[9] The profound cultural barrier of poverty and dirt, as discussed in Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger,* was obvious in the visceral reaction of the German soldiers.[10] Pam Maclean evaluates Germans' contempt for Eastern European culture and their antagonism toward the *Ostjuden* and the

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1918, Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Kriegszielpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg (Lübeck: Mattheisen, 1960).

[7] Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 116.

[8] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers;* Military History Research Institute [Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt], *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten 1914-1918* (Bonn: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1983), also provides valuable insight into the response of German-Jewish soldiers to the *Ostjuden*.

[9] *Shtetls* were small communities that had a large, usually majority Jewish population. *Shtetls* were largely found in the Russian Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe.

[10] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

Catholic Poles who often times undermined the aims of the occupying powers.[11] These views contributed to the growing animosity between German and East European Jews, though German Jews would become more sympathetic during their wartime encounters with the *Ostjuden.* For gentile Germans confronting military failure in 1917, the *Ostjuden* came to symbolize all that they thought was wrong with the East.

The final historiographical dimension addressed by this work is the German-Jewish desire to integrate the Jewish communities of Germany and Poland under the German flag after the First World War. Michael Meyer evaluates German-Jewish desires to belong to the greater Germany community.[12] For example, the Kaiser's declaration of a civic truce encouraged the leaders of the Jewish communities "to devote your resources to the fatherland beyond the call for duty," and he promised to work for a more positive relationship when hostilities ended at a time when right-wing voices were promoting a new wave of anti-Semitism. Gilya Schmidt details the activities and responsibilities of the German-Jewish soldiers Hermann Struck, Sammy Gronemann, and Arnold Zweig, all members of the press office in the *Ober Ost*.[13] The Army

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[11] Pam Maclean, "Control and Cleanliness: German-Jewish Relations in Occupied Eastern Europe during the First World War," *War and Society*, 6 (Sept. 1988); Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

[12] Michael Meyer, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times Volume 3: Integration in Dispute 1871-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). As far as the dates of assignments, I looked at several rabbis' memoirs including Tänzer, Levy, Rosenak, and Carlebach, and Baeck. Most had begun their assignment by the spring of 1915. Jewish soldiers participated in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 but there is no mention in the record of that war of rabbis being utilized as chaplains. The history of the German Jews also includes the work of Jürgen Kocka's *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, and Shulamit Volkov's article in the same manuscript "The '*Verbürgerlichung*' of the Jews as a Paradigm," (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

[13] Schmidt, "An die deutschen," IdR, 20/9 (September 1914), 339 in Meyer, *German - Jewish History*, 361.

rabbis relied extensively on these soldiers, and especially Herman Struck, who later became the Head of the Department of Jewish Affairs.[14]

From the outset of the war, the German Office of Foreign Affairs was intently focused on Jewish initiatives in the East. The Foreign Office established clear objectives for a mutually beneficial relationship with the Polish Jews. These objectives provided a solid foundation for a positive and mutually beneficial relationship, which according to plan would remain and continue to develop after the war. The responsibilities of the office included directing relief activities, creating and rebuilding Jewish schools, and establishing communication lines between the Polish Jews and the German Army. To be able to facilitate these activities, the German Office of Foreign Affairs set up two departments, the Office of Jewish Affairs and the Propaganda Department. These newly established divisions worked closely with the German High Command in the East, which offered its Army rabbis and Jewish soldier's opportunities to develop positive working relationships with the local Jewish communities. The Foreign Affairs office also utilized the Army rabbis' and Jewish soldiers' understanding of Yiddish. Although the German Jews frowned upon the use of Yiddish, they were still able to understand and

[14] Gilya Schmidt, *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress: Heralds of a New Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003). The historiography on ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe and Germany and the role played by religion in creating this identity includes Halmut Walser Smith's *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, and Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). See also Aviel Roshwald's *Ethnic Nationalism & the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia & the Middle East, 1914-1923* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Also, the long version of *Ober Ost* is *Oberbefehlshaber der gesamten Deutschen Streitkräfte im Osten*, which in translation is "Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East."

converse in the language because of the large immigration of *Ostjuden* streaming into Germany from Russia in the late 19th century.[15]

The most important asset of the German Foreign Office was the group of thirteen Germany Army rabbis, sent at various times during the war, to the Eastern Front to help address the needs of the Polish Jews. Throughout the war, these rabbis not only served as chaplains for the German-Jewish soldiers, who numbered about 40,000 during the war, but also provided religious services for Polish Jews and even captured Russian-Jewish soldiers. The rabbis also created relief agencies and built schools.[16] Those who had the most influence with the Polish-Jewish communities were Leopold Rosenak, Joseph Carlebach, and Aron Tänzer. To gain popular approval for the German occupation, the army rabbis relied heavily on their fellow Jewish clergymen in Poland to communicate the German agenda to the more than three million Polish Jews. German rabbis worked with their Polish counterparts to implement reforms needed to improve health in the struggling *shtetls*. The local rabbis also worked to nurture good relations between the German army and Polish Jews and between Jewish and Catholic Poles.

The Foreign Ministry supported the German civilian relief agencies in the East, which were attempting to feed and comfort the hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews displaced by the war. The agencies provided food and healthcare with funds mainly provided by American sources. The *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden,* through its sub-committee *Jüdisches Hilfskomitee für Polen und Litauen* [Jewish Emergency Committee for Poland and Lithuania], mainly served

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[15] Jeffrey Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany: From Enlightenment to the Second Empire* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 208.

[16] Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten, 1914-1918* (Bonn: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1983), 7.

the northern zone of occupation, the *Ober Ost*, which included Kurland, Lithuania, and Bialystok-Grodno and covered over 42,503 square miles.[17] The Foreign Office also relied on the *Komitee für Befreiung russischer Juden* [Committee for the Liberation of the Russian Jews], which later became *Komitee für den Osten* [*KfdO*, Committee for the East]. The *KfdO* covered the southern occupied territory including that under the *Generalgouvernment Warschau* and the military-governed Galicia.[18] The relief agencies were managed in part by Jewish civil administrators under the direction of the Foreign Ministry. The agencies not only provided aid to the decimated Jewish communities, but also promoted the German political agenda in the East. These two agencies held different views about the future of the *Ostjuden*. The *Hilfsverein* expected the Polish Jews to become assimilated into a safer, more tolerant Poland after German victory in the war. The *Komitee für den Osten*, however, was composed of Zionists who sought opportunities to create political autonomy for Polish Jews—at first in Poland, and if not there, in Palestine. The Foreign Ministry was initially willing to ignore the committee's Zionist leanings, which it strongly rejected, as long as the committee stayed loyal to the German cause and as long as Germany remained in control in the East.

The German Army leadership placed a high priority on the rabbis' work in educating Polish-Jewish children. In proud contrast to Tsarist treatment, German occupation promised liberation from the dire conditions of the *shtetle* through education. According to the German initiatives in the East, secular education was open to Jewish girls and boys. The German administration opened two schools in Kovno: the Carlebach Gymnasium directed by Rabbi

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[17] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 21.

[18] Ibid., 60.

Joseph Carlebach and the *Slobodka Yeshiva* by the Lithuanian rabbi Nosson Zvi (Nota Hirsh) Finkel. They also supported a girl's school in Galicia, *Yeshiva Bnei Tora*, organized by Sarah Schneiver.

The Foreign Office's Propaganda Department in Berlin oversaw several initiatives of the Press Office *Ober Ost.* By the fall of 1915, all of the Jewish newspapers, journals, and periodicals of Warsaw and surrounding areas were under the control of the German administration. The German Foreign Office appointed Nahum Goldmann to the Propaganda Department to review newspapers throughout the Eastern occupied zone.[19] Goldmann was then detailed to the Press Division of the Foreign Office in Warsaw and finally to the *Ober Ost* Press Office, which he staffed with German-Jewish soldiers who censored the local Jewish press and produced propaganda in pamphlets, books, lexicons, and newspapers to assist the relief agencies and the German High Command in disseminating information. The censorship of the Jewish press in the occupied East revealed the fragile position of the Jews in Poland. Still, the newspapers became a main avenue of German propaganda. The newspapers, in Yiddish or Hebrew, reflected the growing political unrest and fractures within the Jewish community itself. [20]

By 1917 Germany's occupation of Poland was severely challenged because of the mounting failure of its military effort. With the defeat of the Brusilov offensive in July 1916, Russia and its Polish partition fell into turmoil, and new assertions of ethnic nationalism gained

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[19] Raphael Patai, *Nahum Goldmann: His Missions to the Gentiles* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1987), 50.

[20] Marian Fuks, *Prasa zydowska w Warszawie 1823-1939* (Warszawa: Zydowski Instytut Historyczny w Polce, 1979).

momentum throughout the war zones. Meanwhile, the defeat at Verdun and the stalemate at the Somme in 1916 had created chaos on the home front. When Hindenburg and Ludendorff were called to takeover the Supreme Command in August 1916, they left Prince Leopold of Bavaria in command of all German armies on the Eastern front and Max Hoffmann as his Chief of Staff. Each proved to be more violent toward Polish civilians and more anti-Semitic than their predecessors. With the weakening of the German presence on the Eastern Front, open hostility surfaced among the Poles, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians, who began to express their own nationalism against the German administration and against each other. Each of these groups now revealed rising hostility to Jews.

The growth of Zionism during the war complicated German-Jewish relations in the East. Although Zionism became a powerful ideology for many Jews after the Second World War, it was hardly a consensus goal among German and Polish Jews at the start of the Great War. For some Eastern European Jews prior to 1914, Zionism had emerged as a practical solution to mounting anti-Semitism. For a few Polish Jews, immigration to Palestine provided hope and relief from the unremitting pogroms allowed under Russian rule. For German Jews, Zionism's utility was mainly as a solution to the increased immigration of East European Jews into Germany. But during the war, even before the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, disagreements about Zionism polarized the relief agencies, the army rabbis, and the Polish-Jewish community. By late 1917, the conflicts over Zionism helped to undermine the positive working relationships between Germans and Polish Jews that had been established during the previous two years.

It was not Zionism but the growing anti-Semitism in Germany that called into question Jews' patriotism during wartime. Suspicions about Jewish loyalty to Germany ultimately led to

the *Judenzählung* [Jewish count] instituted by the German Military High Command in October 1916. The perception that Jews both in Poland and in Germany were somehow traitors within each country led to the removal of rabbis, the closing of Jewish newspapers in Poland, and the refusal to work further with Jewish relief agencies. The Balfour Declaration, which won for Germany's enemies the support of Jews in England, France, and the United States, served to confirm the existence of growing German suspicion and anger toward the Jewish communities.

The relationship between Germans and Polish Jews shifted from tolerant and even friendly relations in 1915 and 1916 to one of emerging animosity in 1917 and then to intensified hostility in 1918. In the early months of 1917 Germany's war effort once again bogged down on the Western Front, but Russia was unable to maintain the advantage it had gained in Galicia and was forced out of the war. The outbreak of the February Revolution in Russia led to an increasingly volatile situation across Eastern Europe as Lithuanians, Poles, and Ukrainians each vied for national recognition along strictly ethnic lines. A second crisis occurred with the British government's Balfour declaration in late 1917. The promise of a Jewish homeland triggered upheaval but also hope throughout Jewish communities around the world. The Brest-Litovsk treaty in March 1918 caused even more unrest in Eastern Europe. The events of 1917 and 1918 undermined the success of German Jews working in Poland and ended the hope within the German government of creating an alliance with the *Ostjuden*.

This work proceeds chronologically through seven chapters. Chapter 2 examines the long and tortured relationship between Poland and Germany prior to 1914, focusing mainly on the waves of Jewish immigration into and then out of Poland. The final collapse of the Polish monarchy in 1795 resulted in the partition of Poland among Prussia, Russia, and Austria, which ultimately resulted in three different Jewish communities. By the turn of the twentieth century,

Germany began turning its attention eastward out of a desire for *Lebensraum*, or living space. Chapters 3 through 7 analyze the actions of the German Foreign Ministry and Army in organizing the war effort in the East from August 1914 through 1918. The Foreign Ministry developed strategic relationships with leading German Jews to build support and influence opinion among Eastern Jews. It utilized a group of talented civil servants to administer relief, influence political developments, and shape propaganda in the occupied East. The German High Command enlisted the *Feldrabbiners* to bring the *Ostjuden* into sympathetic cooperation with Germany. To close the cultural gap between themselves and the Polish Jews, German Jews established schools for Jewish children in the East, which represented the first co-educational schools and the first commitment to universal education for Jewish children in the region. Even as the good work was being accomplished in the East, however, anti-Semitism emerged strongly in Germany with the Jewish count in 1916 and the identification of Jews with Bolshevism in 1917. By 1917 animosity had heightened on all sides: many German soldiers developed a harsh vicious view of the East, while the German Jews realized they were going home to a hostile and embittered country, and the Polish Jews experienced a backlash from Catholic neighbors.

The eighth and final chapter shows the connections between these wartime events and the radicalization of postwar German society between 1918 and 1921. By August 1918, the vast majority of troops had been pulled out of the East, leaving the region ravaged and in utter chaos. By early October 1918, the Western front had collapsed; in November the war ended with the defeat of Germany. Along the Eastern front, violence toward Jews escalated as bitterness among German people about losing the war fueled postwar anti-Semitism. In 1919, former Eastern-front soldiers composed part of the *Freikorps* and later provided some key executioners in the Polish genocide of 1942-1944. At that time Polish Jews, recalling the benevolent treatment twenty-five

years before, hardly expected genocide. Indeed, after experiencing the hostility and violence of Poles and Ukrainians in 1919 and 1920, Jews would have more nearly expected murderous attacks from nearby.

The story of the German occupation of Poland in World War I is a tragedy. The rabbis and the Foreign Ministry forged an ambitious, constructive transnational relationship between Germans and Polish Jews. The Foreign Ministry provided the directives and the infrastructure while the civil administrators and the rabbis, across the entire Eastern Front, created and developed the relationship on the ground, from Lithuania to Galicia. Then external forces undermined and finally destroyed their work and laid the foundation for what would ultimately become one of the greatest crimes of human history, the genocide of Polish Jews during the Second World War.

This research shows that the Germans did not always want to remove the Jews. Quite the contrary, the activities of German Jews in the East were not only beneficial to the *Ostjuden* but also to the German Army, which had much to gain from this relationship between the Germans and the Polish-Jewish community. This study suggests explanations for the failure of Germany to assimilate Polish Jews into an expanded empire in the East during the Great War, a breakdown that put Poland on a path that ended in Germany's invasion in 1939 and its systematic murder of Poland's Jews.

Chapter 2: Germans, Poles, and Jews before the Great War, 1096 to 1914

The story of the *Ostjuden* during the First World War can only be understood by examining their shifting fate prior to 1914. In the previous millennium, the part of Eastern Europe now known as Poland became home to the largest population of Jews in the world—about seven million people. Centuries of persistent persecutions in Western Europe and periodic opportunities in Poland drew descendants of the ancient Hebrews eastward. Once in Poland, Jews endured periods of violence and discrimination between the times of relative peace and opportunity, and eventually many would be pushed back toward Western Europe. The thousand-year history of Jews in Eastern Europe thus swung periodically from hope to desperation. At the outbreak of the Great War, the majority of all Jews in the world were hardly surprised then to find themselves in the crossfire of the first total war in world history.

The origins of the Jewish population in Poland lay in the late tenth century when European Jews began to migrate eastward in response to outbreaks of anti-Semitic violence in the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, France, and Italy. Persecutions of Jews began in German lands during the First Crusade in 1096, recurred during the Second Crusade in 1146, and reached a pinnacle of violence when Jews were blamed for the Black Plague in 1348. The Catholic Church often incited, or at least encouraged, violence against Jews. Accusations that Jews committed ritual murder of Christians began in 1150, and by 1235 this falsehood had evolved into the blood libel myth—that Jews murdered Christian children at Easter—a slander that was documented in Germany in the *Annals of Marbach*.[21] In the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, Pope Innocent III

[21] Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 44.

gave Dominican friars authority to persecute Jews. This council decreed that the Eucharist constituted a consumption of the real body of Christ, which escalated belief in the blood-libel myth among the gentile population.[22] The first charges of host desecration, asserting that Jews had destroyed the body of Christ in the Eucharist, broke out in Paris in 1290. This myth soon provoked havoc in Jewish communities of German towns. Legal persecution continued through the fifteenth century with decrees in the Council of Basel in 1431 that Jews must live separately from Christians and wear distinguishable clothing. During this dark period, the majority of Ashkenazim left German territories and settled in Polish lands.[23]

Two forces working in opposite directions shaped the condition of the Jews in Poland. The first was the need for Jewish economic skills and the special taxes paid by Jews, which elicited the protection by the provincial princes. The other was ecclesiastical power, driven by Christian intolerance, which strove to exclude the Jews from civic life.[24] During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Polish princes began allowing German colonization east of the Elbe and the Oder and throughout Silesia.[25] Prince Bolesław V of Krakow (Małopolska) and Prince Henry IV of Breslau (Wrocław), each seeking to generate more wealth, invited both German and Jewish settlers into the region. Prince Henry IV created a program of colonization that exempted German settlers from paying taxes to regional princes and gave Jews rights of self-government in

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[22] Ibid.,18.

[23] Ibid.,36.

[24] Ibid., 28.

[25] Jerzy Lukoweski and Hubert Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12.

western Poland.[26] Jews became the "third estate," the developers of Poland's first commercial class and its artisans. Polish monarchs used Jewish economic influence as leverage against urban merchant elites.[27] Jews leased and developed salt mines, held franchises for collecting customs duties, and provided banking services, especially money-lending.[28] By the end of the thirteenth century, German-Jewish merchants, landowners, traders, and innkeepers had settled much of Silesia and Małopolska. Throughout these regions, German became the language of the wealthy townspeople and Polish the language of the peasantry.[29]

As German influence increased, the Polish majority was pushed to the fringes of society, and friction between Poles and Germans escalated. The hostility caused Polish princes to seek ways to protect Jews who were caught between the two groups. In 1264 Duke Bolesław of Wielopolska [Greater Poland] issued the Statute of Kalisz to protect his growing Jewish population from German settlers, the Polish peasantry, and the Polish Catholic Church. This statute protected Jews by imposing heavy penalties for violence against their cemeteries and synagogues, and for accusing Jews of ritual murder. Anyone who made such an accusation had to prove it by producing six witnesses, three Gentiles and three Jews, and in the event that the

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[26] Lukoweski, *A Concise History of Poland,* 16.

[27] H.H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 754.

[28] S.M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: From the Earliest Times until the Present Day* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 44.

[29] Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia*, 46.

charge could not be proved, the accuser was subject to severe punishment.[30] Another statute gave exclusive jurisdiction over Jewish matters to Jewish courts and established a separate tribunal, the *kahal*, to adjudicate conflicts between Christians and Jews. It lasted through the eighteenth century.[31]

The Statute of Kalisz would be reaffirmed several times by future Polish kings in need of Jewish economic support, and as a result Jews flourished within the kingdoms of Breslau and Krakow, but this protection had the immediate and unintended result of increasing hostility towards Jews among peasants and within the Catholic Church. Jews experienced growing hostility beyond Breslau and Krakow from ethnic Germans and Poles. More important was anti-Semitism in the Catholic Church. The Church began to insist on confining Jews to separate quarters because of their alleged threat to the Catholic faith.[32]

A century of war between the Polish crown and the Teutonic Knights of Prussia redounded generally to the benefit of Jews in Poland. Beginning in 1315 with the failure of the German siege of Krakow, Poles were able to dominate the Czechs in Silesia and submit Poznan to their authority.[33] In 1320 the Pope made Władysław I the first King of Poland, and he and his son and successor, Casimir "the Great," embarked on the successful Polish-Teutonic War (1326-1332). Jews prospered when Casimir confirmed their earlier privileges and extended them to all

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[30] Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (New York: Behrman House, 1980), 88-93. These charters were the same as those issued by the Duke of Austria in 1244 with the added stipulations #28, 31-36.

[31] Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 47.

[32] Ibid.,56.

[33] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: The Origins to 1795,* v.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 77; Lukoweski, *A Concise History of Poland,* 21.

provinces of the kingdom.[34] As Casimir's dominion ascended economically and culturally, the Jews flourished.[35] To spur more growth, Casimir invited to Poland the many German Jews who were being persecuted because of the Black Death (1348-1349) then engulfing Germany. During this catastrophe, German Jews were blamed for poisoning wells, and massacres had ensued. Because of this surge in violence, seventy percent of the Ashkenazim migrated to Poland.[36] Under Casimir's protection, Jews continued to migrate into Poland and many prospered, while Jews in Germany faced ever-increasing persecution and poverty.

This golden age for Poland's Jews ended with the death of Casimir III, who left no heir to the crown, and it fell into the hands of the Hungarian king Louis in 1370. Under the staunchly Catholic Louis, the relatively good conditions for Jews gave way to intolerance. Louis's foreign reign was unpopular among Poles, raising the possibility of invasion from the Teutonic Order. The marriage of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Jogaila, a pagan, and Princess Jadwiga of Poland in 1386 created the union of Polish and Lithuanian kingdoms. Jogaila, now Jagiełło, converted to Catholicism and began official state religious persecution of Jews. In 1399 the rabbi of Posen and thirteen elders of the Jewish community were charged with the theft of the Eucharist, for which they were tortured and then burned alive. The Jagellonian dynasty reached its pinnacle of power with its victory over the Teutonic Knights at the Battle of Grunwald (also known as the first Battle of Tannenburg) in 1410.[37]

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[34] Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 51.

[35] Davies, *God's Playground*, 96.

[36] Ibid.,101.

[37] Lukoweski, *A Concise History of Poland,* 38; Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 55.

Then with the ascent to the throne of Jageillo's son Casimir IV (1427-1492) in 1447, conditions for Jews suddenly swung in the opposite direction. Casimir saw himself as a tolerant ruler and strong opponent of the Catholic clergy. Shortly after his coronation, he restored the privileges bestowed on Jews in the mid-thirteenth century. In the well-established historical dynamic of Polish history, however, Casimir's rejection of the Church's anti-Jewish policies turned the German and Polish citizens against him. Now again at war with the Teutonic Order, Poland suffered its first defeat to the Knights in 1454. The Church blamed the king for the defeat and interpreted it as punishment for his disregard of church interests and his protection of the Jews. Casimir was forced to rescind all Jewish privileges in 1454, and soon afterward, riots against Jews broke out in Krakow, Łvóv, and Poznan. German artisans and merchants conducted a pogrom at Krakow. The violence exposed the underlying cause of anti-Jewish sentiment; economic envy. Under pressure from Catholic Poles, the king failed to protect Jews from attack.[38]

With Casimir IV's death in 1492, the commonwealth was divided between his two sons, Jan Albrecht and Alexander, each of whom deferred to the Church on matters pertaining to Jews.[39] Jan Albrecht established the first ghetto in Poland at Krakow in 1494, ordering Jews to the city and to live apart from the Christians in a separate area called Kazimierz. The next year in Lithuania, Alexander expelled Jews, who had been allowed to settle in Poland under Albrecht. In 1501 Albrecht died, and Alexander assumed the Polish Crown. Then, as had happened several times before when Polish rulers faced economic hardship, Alexander realized that Jews were

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[38] Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 63-65.

[39] Lukoweski, *A Concise History of Poland,* 51.

valuable assets to the Crown. He allowed Jews back into Lithuania and enabled them to reclaim much of their confiscated property and many of their synagogues.[40]

In Poland from the sixteenth century down to the partitions of the late eighteenth century, Jews dealt with the declining power of the monarchy and the rising influence of nobles, burghers, and guilds. The weakening of centralized government and the decline of social responsibility among the most powerful elements of Polish society undermined the rights of Jews, who were then subject to more hostility from the Christian clergy, the middle class, and peasants. Jews had to endure whatever treatment the landlord or noble chose to deliver, including gratuitous persecution and forced conversions. Jewish craftsmen were denied membership in guilds so anti-Semitic hostility and violence became commonplace from the sixteenth century forward.[41]

Events in Poland and Lithuania during the sixteenth century foreshadowed the eventual partitioning of the region at the end of the eighteenth century, a development that set the context for much that happened in Poland during the Great War of the twentieth century. From Alexander's assumption of the Polish crown in 1501, the Jagiellonians were under constant assault. In the hope of gaining Hungarian lands, the Austrian emperor Maximillian encouraged the Teutonic Knights to attack Poland, and he supported the Muscovite tsar in aggression against the Lithuanians in 1512.[42] At the same time, Tartars invaded Poland from the south with the encouragement of the Ottoman Turks. With the Tartar attacks, both Poland and Lithuania turned

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[40] Ibid., 65.

[41] Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, 751.

[42] Lukoweski, *A Concise History of Poland*, 52; Davies, *God's Playground*, 139.

most of their military might toward Moscow, whereupon the Teutonic Knights launched another attack from the West in 1519. The Polish-Teutonic War came to an end in part mainly because mass conversions of Teutonic Knights to Lutheranism decimated the Catholic Crusading Order.[43]

Through the remainder of the sixteenth century, Lutheran assaults on Jews in East Prussia pushed large numbers of German Jews into Poland. It was their religious duty, according to Martin Luther. In 1543 Luther published the most vicious of his several anti-Semitic treatises, *On the Jews and Their Lies,* in which he called Jews a "base, whoring people" full of the "devil's feces . . . which they wallow in like swine." Their synagogues were like a "defiled bride . . . an incorrigible whore and an evil slut," which should be burned. Luther said that Jews' homes should also be burned, their property and money confiscated; such "poisonous envenomed worms" should be forced into labor or expelled for all time. Indeed, Christians were "at fault in not slaying them."[44] During this time, by contrast, Polish Jews lived in far greater safety. Rabbi Moses ben Israel Isserles of Krakow explained German Jews' motives for eastward migration: "Better a morsel of dry bread in peace, as in these regions [around Krakow], in which their hatred does not descend upon us as it does in the German Lands."[45]

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Thirty Years War caused more Jews to flee German lands into Poland. The Jewish population in Poland grew from about 25,000 in 1500

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[43] Davies, *God's Playground*, 143.

[44] *On the Jews and Their Lies*, cited in Robert Michael, "Luther, Luther Scholars, and the Jews," *Encounter* 46 (Autumn 1985), 343-344.

[45] Schlomo Netzer, „Wanderungen der Juden und Neusiedlung in Osteuropa," in *Beter and Rebellen. Aus 1000 Jahren Judentum in Polen,* ed. Michael Brocke (Frankfurt: Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 44.

to 500,000 by 1648, from less than one percent of the population to five percent.[46] In some towns, especially in Galicia, Jews became the majority. In many respects, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries marked the high point of Jewish life in Poland. As the towns and cities throughout the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth prospered and as trade flourished in the seventeenth century, so did Jews.

In 1569, after the Jagiellonian king Augustus failed to produce an heir, the Union of Lublin officially recognized the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, combining the Polish Kingdom with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Union created an elected monarchy, which diminished the authority of dynastic families and gave the *szlacha*, the nobility, power over Polish politics. Henceforth the Church and the *szlacha* dominated political affairs. With the new commonwealth, Poland gained territory in southern White Russia, Ukraine, Podlasia, and Volhynia. The Polish magnates wasted no time in colonizing the area, and they brought with them Jews to act as financiers and lessees.[47] Jewish settlement in the Ukraine increased from twenty-four settlements with about 4,000 inhabitants in the region before 1569 to 115 communities and 51,325 residents by 1648.[48] As Jews moved into White Russia and Ukraine to assist the Polish magnates, they were granted civil liberties because of their increased role in finance, demonstrating once again their usefulness to the nobility and again realizing significant benefits as a result.

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[46] Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 30.

[47] Ibid., 31.

[48] Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, 642.

In the newly acquired provinces, especially Ukraine, the Greek-Orthodox peasant population, or *khlops*, were hostile to both ethnic Poles and Jews. The Poles forced the Ukrainians to become part of the Polish feudal system by creating enormous estates that engulfed a large number of villages. The Polish landlords looked on the peasants as inferior both in ethnicity and religion. The Polish magnates lived far away from their Ukrainian possessions and left management of the estates in the hands of the stewards and arendars, long-term lessees of big estates. Most arendars were Jews who managed entire villages, small towns, and large landholdings. Resentment among Ukrainian peasants toward Jews was exacerbated by the contemptuous attitude of the nobility and the Polish clergy toward the Eastern Orthodox faith. Intense religious hostility thus combined with economic antagonism. Jews in Ukraine were caught uncomfortably between Polish Catholics and Orthodox Ukrainians.[49]

In 1648 the Ukraine fell into conflict when the Cossacks, a group of fugitive Slavic peasants and outlaws that the Poles had engaged to defend their southeastern border, met invading Tartars, vassals of the Turks, and pushed them back toward the Crimea. Then the Cossacks turned and waged war on the Poles and simultaneously persecuted Ukrainian Jews. Between 1648 and 1651, Bogdan Khmelnitzki, a Cossack leader called the hetman, attacked the province of Kiev and at Łvóv annihilated the Polish army. The Cossack's success prompted Ukrainian peasants and the Tartars to join together in attacking Polish estates and slaying owners and Jewish arendars. At its height, Khmelnitzki's army numbered 150,000 men who loathed their Polish masters and the Jews who dominated Ukrainian trade. No Jewish community in Ukraine

[49] Netzer, *Beter and Rebellen*, 140-41; Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, 642; Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 31.

was left unscathed, and as many as 100,000 Jews were murdered. The uprising turned into a war of independence for Ukraine and lasted until 1657.[50]

The conflict in Ukraine provoked a virtual "deluge" of invasions of Poland. To the north, Cossacks, now aligned with Russians, simultaneously expelled and exterminated Jewish inhabitants of White Russia and Lithuania. To the west, Cossack armies advanced into Poland proper and visited barbarities on Polish and Jewish inhabitants. Sweden attacked Poland in 1655, causing the decimation of Jewish communities in Warsaw and Krakow. In larger terms, the Deluge brought the final collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which also relinquished control of the Duchy of Prussia in 1657 back to Prussia. The political devastation of the Deluge created instability throughout the Commonwealth that led ultimately to Poland's partitioning in 1795.[51]

The Deluge ended the tradition of ethnic tolerance that Jews had enjoyed for much of their history in Poland. The brutal encounters with Eastern-Orthodox Russians, Protestant Swedes, and Lutheran Prussians left Catholic Poles intensely intolerant. The once prosperous Jewish community in Eastern Poland never recovered from the violence. The majority of synagogues, primary schools (*cheders)*, and yeshivas were destroyed. The Jews no longer held leading roles in finance and those who remained were largely rural and poor, especially in Galicia and Ukraine. Though King John Casimir created a charter bestowing the rights of free commerce upon the Jews of Krakow in 1661, Jews met hostility from the increasingly zealous Catholic Poles. War-weary Jews were forced to live in impoverished *shtetls*, separate Jewish

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[50] Davies, *God's Playground*, 144; Lukoweski, *A Concise History of Poland,* 54, 96; Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 143-45; Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 35.

[51] Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 38.

villages. The center of Jewish learning and culture was no longer in Poland but in Lithuania, because the persecutions occurring in the north were less devastating than in Greater Poland (the Warsaw region), Galicia, and East Prussia. These regions, where Jews had lived in relative comfort, declined economically and yielded cultural and intellectual supremacy to Vilnius, Lithuania, which displaced Krakow as the Jerusalem of Eastern Europe.[52]

The pogroms of the Deluge reversed the historic flow of Jews eastward. More than one-third of the surviving Polish Jews migrated to East Prussia. Many Prussian Jewish villages originated during this period. Beginning with the Deluge and continuing for the next two and half centuries, hundreds of thousands of Jews would head north to Lithuania and west to Germany.[53]

Like the Catholic Poles who embraced their religion more feverishly during this catastrophic period, Polish Jews searched for answers for why their lives had been made so difficult, their communities weakened so severely. Many Jewish communities in Poland were in shambles, left without synagogues, rabbis, and Yeshivas. Their governing body, the *kahal,* was weakened in most places. By 1764 *kahals* across Poland were officially dissolved. In the aftermath of the Deluge, many Polish Jews embraced new interpretations of Judaism to help them explain and understand the trauma they had endured. In general, the surviving Polish Jews in the eighteenth century turned inward and became more deeply religious.[54]

During this horrific period of East European Jewish history, the Jews discovered new spiritual responses to their misfortunes. Kabbala, a mystical form of Judaism that originated in

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[52] Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, 159.

[53] Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 40.

[54] Ibid., 40.

Sephardic Jewish communities in Spain, made the first inroads in providing answers to the Jews' earthly disasters. In the eleventh century, Judah of Hasid developed the Kabala teachings and became the father of Hasidism during the height of Jewish persecutions in Germany. In the thirteenth century the Spanish rabbi Moses de León (1250-1305) used the work of the second-century Palestinian rabbi Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai to write the *Zohar* ("Book of Splendor"), the chief work of modern-day Jewish mysticism. The *Zohar,* which claims to reveal the hidden meaning of the Torah, was the most important commentary used by the Kabbala. It provided centuries of scholars with allusions and magical formulas, as well as a systematic theosophy of mystical speculation. Kabbalist prophecy attempted to discover the positive power of God through combinations of numbers and words. Kabbalists assigned magical powers to the mythical character called the golem, who was invoked to challenge the word of the rabbi. Vital to the Kabbalists were Jewish messianic expectations. After the Diaspora, Jews believed that their travails would end, the Messiah would restore God's people to a peaceful existence, and they ultimately would return to their homeland, *Eretz Israel*.[55]

Kabbalism offered the traumatized Polish Jews of the seventeenth century a way of understanding events by looking for spiritual explanations for their suffering. Yeshaya Horowitz (1632-1689) of Kazimierz introduced Kabbala in Poland. At first his teachings were mostly rejected, but during the Chmielnitzki pogroms in the 1650s, Polish Jews began seeking a Messiah to relieve their conditions. Many believed they had found their redeemer in Shabtai Tsevi, born in 1626, a *rebbe*, or community leader, educated in the Talmud and the Kabbalah. The Shabtaian movement questioned rabbinical control and hoped for salvation. The next

[55] Ibid., 42; Abba Eban, *My People: The Story of the Jews* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1968), 232-33.

purported Messiah, Jacob Frank, continued Shabtaian teaching, but Messianism lost its appeal, and the despair of Polish Jews worsened.[56]

The failure of the Shabtaian and Frankist movements opened the way for a new movement known as Hasidism, which flourished in the regions afflicted by the most horrific pogroms of the Deluge. Its first leader was called the "Baal Shem Tov" (Master of the Name of God). Born in Podolia in 1700, the Baal Shem Tov was known as a pious man and a miracle worker with magical powers. Hasidism was a populist revolt of the unlearned against the strict law of rabbis. It offered followers hope, joy, and optimism. Hundreds of villages that had lost their rabbis and synagogues followed the Hasidic brotherhood. Baal Shem Tov's teachings were carried on by his disciples, who initiated Hasidic dynastic families. Hasidic spiritual leaders, called *Zaddiks* rather than rabbis, held power among *shtetl* Jews through their personal charisma and fellowship. By the mid-eighteenth century, the majority of Eastern European Jews were Hasidic, and Hasidism, more than anything else in the late eighteenth century, defined the *Ostjuden*. Opposition to Hasidism came primarily from Orthodox Jews in Lithuania, who had suffered least in the Deluge. Vilnius became the center of Talmudic studies in the East.[57]

The invasions of Poland that began in 1648 with the Deluge continued periodically for more than a century and steadily weakened the Polish state. The nation lost territory, its military strength was dissipated, and the power of the state steadily passed from the crown to nobles. The encroachment of its neighbors—Russia from the east, Austria from the south, and Prussia from the west—was formalized in 1772 with partitions that were made permanent in 1795, when all of

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[56] Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 46; Eban, *My People*, 237-38.

[57] Eban, *My People*, 241.

the original territory of Poland was divided. Each partition had a distinct character. Prussia's partition included the cities of Poznan and Breslau; Austria's area, Galicia, encompassed Krakow and Łvóv; and Russia's partition covered eastern Poland and the capital city of Warsaw. Russia, which had prohibited Jews within its borders for hundreds of years and condoned anti-Semitism as virulent as that anywhere, now had the largest Jewish population of any nation in the world—four million people in 1795 and five million a century later. The Habsburgs, who had expelled Jews from Vienna in 1670 and from Prague in 1744-45, now controlled a Jewish population in Galicia that numbered almost a million by the end of the nineteenth century, including the largest Hasidic community in Europe. Poverty in Galicia was more acute than elsewhere in the East; it often set Polish peasants against Jews, and Jews in direct competition with one another.[58]

Prussia incorporated a smaller Jewish community than the other partitions, and its Jewish population shrank as a result of the forced separation. Jews there numbered less than 100,000, but they were disproportionately influential in the history of Poland's Jews during the time of the partitions. The most rigid of the absolutist regimes, the Prussian *Reglement*, in place since 1750, restricted self-rule and economic activities of Jews. But because the region itself was the wealthiest of the three partitions, the Jews in Prussia underwent social and cultural improvements similar to what other German Jews were experiencing in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, Polish Jews in the Prussian partition gradually acquired a German Jewish identity.[59]

Each imperial government limited Jewish self-rule but allowed them some freedom in the towns. Because Jews had ties to Polish nobility, who were allowed to maintain their privileges,

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[58] Geoffrey Drage, "Pre-War Statistics of Poland and Lithuania," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 81 (March, 1918), 234-240.

[59] Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 34.

Jews did not immediately feel a heavy burden from the partitioning. As the outside governments strengthened their control, however, the nobility weakened. Nobles' attempts to rebel against outside rule always failed and weakened their position of power, thus leaving the Jews more vulnerable to government oppression and peasant frustrations.

In addition to coping with outside control of Poland, the *Ostjuden* of the 19th century confronted a growing Polish nationalism. Poles defined their national identity fundamentally by Catholicism and by setting themselves against the Other, especially Jews. The Catholic Poles in each partition developed a sense of Polishness at different times, for different reasons, and with different responses. Polish nationalism was strongest in the Russian partition, the origin of most of the rebellions against outside control. Ethnic communities were most pronounced in the Russian sector, where large enclaves of Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Byelorussians, and Jews had their own ideas about their religion, language, and nationhood. To keep alive the hopes and aspirations of a future Poland, Polish nationalists first promoted the memory of political independence and military glory through a collective discourse about the past. Then they exercised the more sinister side of modern nation-building, drawing ethnic lines and promoting state-sanctioned expulsions and pogroms. The Habsburgs were the least forceful of the three ruling powers in enforcing their own authority, and as a result Polish nationalism also thrived in the Austrian partition. Krakow became the center of Polish culture, which saw a nationalist revival through festivals and celebrations. These commemorations integrated Polish society both vertically among the classes and horizontally among the Poles outside of Galicia. By emphasizing and defining Polishness through commemorations and memorials, it also defined those who were excluded—the Jews and Ukrainians in East Galicia. Polish nationalism was

weakest in the German partition, but it would increase in strength in the late nineteenth century when the new German state began imposing anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf* policies on the Poles.[60]

The Jewish population of Prussia and the other German principalities grew because of the large migration of Polish Jews westward from the mid-seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries. The movement began before the Deluge, was accelerated by it, and continued during the decline of Polish monarchical authority and the political chaos that marked Polish history from the 1650s through the eighteenth century. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, waves of Polish Jews, mostly from Poland's western provinces, moved to Germany, France, England, and the Netherlands. They came from all strata of Polish Jews; those who were learned in Judaism were the most welcome as rabbis, cantors, and teachers, but many found their place as tradesmen and shopkeepers. A substantial minority were recognized as *Betteljuden,* or begging Jews, and sometimes were known as "wandering Jews." The *Betteljuden* often encountered hostility in German towns and cities from gentiles and sometimes from older Jewish residents. In general, though, Polish Jews found a better life in Western Europe and were well received during periods of expanding individual rights in France and more gradual liberation in the Netherlands and Germany. Over generations, formerly Polish Jews adopted new national identities as western Europeans, though the Polish cultural and religious inheritance remained influential. The migration westward accounted for a large expansion of Jewish

[60] Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism begins to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

population in the German lands especially, where it rose from about 25,000 in 1700 to 65,000 in 1750 and then to about 200,000 in 1800.[61]

The emancipation of German Jews took place gradually over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After the Thirty Years' War, German Jews played a crucial role in rebuilding the war-torn economy. Jewish bankers Elias Cleves, Levi Berend, and Israel Aaron helped Frederick William of Brandenburg create a powerful capital in Berlin. In 1750 King Frederick II (the Great), who earlier had issued discriminatory orders against Jews, ordered protections for the status and rights of Jews in Prussia.[62] A century later, the revolution of 1848 resulted in the partial emancipation of Jews in Germany and fuller equality in 1864 and 1869. The edict abolishing "all remaining restrictions of civil and political rights derived from the difference in religious creed" was applied to the new German Empire in 1871.[63] Austrian Jews also won civil rights in 1871.

Improving conditions for German Jews in the late eighteenth century nurtured an emerging Jewish Enlightenment, *Haskala*. The late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Enlightenment advocated more integration of Jews into secular German society and stronger embrace of German national values. Jewish supporters of the *Haskala*, the *Maskalim*, called for Jews to leave the ghetto, cease using Yiddish, and study the language and culture of the nation in which they lived.[64] The city of Berlin became the center of German Jewish enlightenment and

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[61] Moses A. Shulvass, *From East to West* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1971), 73.

[62] Eban, *My People*, 250.

[63] Ruth Gay, *The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 161-65.

[64] Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 51.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) its father. A pious Jew, Mendelssohn's greatest contribution to the Jewish community was translating the Torah into German. Many German Jews, following his lead, began seeking secular education because they could now write and read in German instead of Yiddish. Jewish emancipation in Western Europe "destroyed both the assumptions and bases of traditional Jewish society," Steven Aschheim has written, effectively undermining the older solidarity in which Jews everywhere consciously shared the Jewish historical experience as a basis of identity. "Political equality demanded a new kind of Jew whose identity was so closely interwoven with the modes of his particular society that he would be recognizable only with that specific society," Aschheim concluded. "This marks the birth of the *German* or *English* or *French* Jew."[65]

Many Polish Jews, especially the *Hasidim*, resisted the changes of the Enlightenment. For them, assimilation meant giving up the essence of their Jewish identity. Their religion and their separation from gentile society made them Jews. Language was a main point of contention: Yiddish and Hasidism accorded them a feeling of superiority over their coreligionists in Germany.[66] Still, the ideas of acculturation had an impact politically and culturally on the *Ostjuden*. The *Haskala* movement took strongest root in Lithuania, where the Hasidim were much less influential. From the Deluge of the 1650s to the partitions in the late eighteenth century, Jews in Eastern Poland had become more isolated from the Christian majority in Poland, while those in the Prussian partition and Congress Poland became more assimilated as they migrated into cities. But as some Polish Jews embraced the Assimilationist ideals of *Haskala,* a shift that became more apparent as they congregated in Polish urban centers during the

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[65] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 4.

[66] Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe*, 1.

nineteenth century, antagonism grew between Jews and Poles. This often resulted in a worsening of conditions for Jews. At the same time, Polish Jews became more politicized. They began to write in Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, and Russian, and their linguistic diversity was reflected in the various political persuasions within Jewish communities. Jewish newspapers in these languages emerged, another indication of rising politicization. The one segment among Polish Jews that resisted political engagement, however, was the most numerous, the *Hasidim*.[67]

As they embraced the Jewish Enlightenment, Western European Jews often looked on the *Ostjuden* as culturally and socially inferior. The feeling was most acute in Germany, because it bordered Poland and had historically been the gateway for Polish Jews migrating westward. A large segment of German Jews had roots in Poland, and many had worked to overcome their Polish cultural inheritance in the first half of the nineteenth century. Emancipation had been harder to achieve in Germany than in France, where the revolution of 1789 advanced the values of equality and liberty for all, and German Jews on the whole were less secure in their improved status. For German Jews, Aschheim has written, "assimilation was not merely the conscious attempt to *blend* into new social and cultural environments but was also purposeful, even programmatic, *dissociation* from traditional Jewish cultural and national moorings." The modern "German Jew" was a new identity achieved in part because he was the opposite of the "Eastern Jew," who embodied negative traits that German Jews had left behind. After the mid-nineteenth century, Eastern European Jews became exclusively identified as "ghetto Jews." Stereotyped as poor and insular, speaking Yiddish loudly, dressed in a caftan and wearing the *peyes*, or sidelocks, the ghetto Jew confounded the substance of Jewish assimilation in Germany. German Jews embraced the Enlightenment ideal of *Bildung,* which referred to a kind of self-improvement

[67] Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, 755; Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe*, 5.

based on the adoption of rationality and refinement. "*Bildung* seemed to require that old Jewish habits be discarded and traditional modes of Jewish solidarity disbanded," Aschheim concluded.[68] As participants of a modern new class, the Jewish bourgeoisie of Germany took pride in who they were—and were not.

Jews in nineteenth-century Germany embodied *embourgeoisement.* Over the course of the century they became heavily urbanized: Berlin's Jewish community grew from 3,000 in 1816 to 54,000 in 1854 to 144,000 in 1910, by which time it represented one-fourth of the nation's Jewish population. Shulamit Volkov has argued that urban, professional Jews were good representatives of the German bourgeoisie because their positions as bankers, merchants, industrialists, lawyers, and doctors placed them firmly within Germany's growing middle class.[69] An estimated 60 percent of German Jews in 1871 were middle class; no more than five percent were *Betteljuden,* begging Jews.[70] Indeed, Jews made up a disproportionate part of the expanding German bourgeoisie. In 1900 in Frankfurt 63 percent of Jews had incomes in excess of 3,000 marks, while only 25 percent of Protestants and 16 percent of Catholics earned that much; in Berlin in 1905 Jews composed four percent of the population but paid 30 percent of the municipal taxes.[71]

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[68] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers,* 5-8.

[69] Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 171-80.

[70] Gay, *The Jews of Germany,* 180.

[71] Walter Laquer, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 25.

German Jews acquired a remarkable prosperity over the course of the nineteenth century. By 1862 Jews controlled 550 of the 642 banks in Prussia.[72] In the late nineteenth century, Jewish families owned large influential banks all over Germany: the Rothschilds in Frankfurt, the Mendelssohns in Berlin, the Oppenheims in Cologne, and the Warburgs in Hamburg. Even enterprises that were not considered Jewish, such as Deutsche Bank, and Dresdner Bank, relied heavily on Jewish investments and management. In the early nineteenth century Jewish industrialists had emerged in the metals, paper, and textile industries, while several decades later during Germany's industrial boom, Jews led in the development of the chemical industry, including I.G. Farben; the electrical industry, founded in Germany by Emil Rathenau; and machinery manufacturing, including sewing machines and guns. Abraham Oppenheim of Cologne, Maurice de Hirsch of Munich, and Bethel Henry Strousberg of Neidenburg, East Prussia, were the leading entrepreneurs of railroad development in Germany. The Mosse and Ullstein families of Berlin and the Sonnemanns of Frankfurt dominated a large portion of the newspaper business in Wilhelmine Germany.[73] In the late nineteenth century Jews entered the legal profession in growing numbers: in 1904, when Jews made up one percent of the German population, they composed twenty-seven percent of the lawyers in Prussia.[74]

The great economic success among Jews in Wilhelmine Germany hardly meant that they had realized full equality. Although Jews readily entered the legal profession, they were hardly ever appointed to the judicial bench or to the prosecutor's office. Jews were expected to serve in

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[72] Gay, *The Jews of Germany,* 169-70.

[73] Ibid.,169-70.

[74] Peter Pulzer*, Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority 1848-1933* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 45-52.

the Prussian Army, but they were wholly excluded from the reserve officer corps. There were no Jewish officers in the navy. Although Jews were ten times more likely to attend university than their share of the population indicated, they were unlikely to be appointed to university position unless they were baptized. Discrimination against Jews in Germany was, however, uneven; it was worse in Prussia and Saxony than it was in Baden or Bavaria or Hamburg.[75]

Anti-Semitism surged in Germany in the late 1870s and 1880s, and it was no accident that this occurred simultaneously with the increased westward migration of the *Ostjuden*. In 1873 the journalist Wilhelm Marr published an influential pamphlet *The Victory of the Jewish Spirit over the Germanic Spirit* and soon coined the term anti-Semitism. The historian and politician Heinrich von Treitschke promoted an intellectual anti-Semitism in the 1870s with accusations that Jews refused to assimilate into German society and with attacks on Jewish migration from Poland. Treitschke popularized the phrase "Die Juden sind unser Unglück!" ("The Jews are our misfortune!"). In 1881 some 250,000 German citizens signed a petition demanding the end of all Jewish immigration into Germany. In the mid-1880s Polish nationals were expelled from Prussia; while non-Jews as well as Jews were ejected, much of the justification for the action was anti-Semitic. At the same time German universities placed quotas on Jewish enrollment. Otto von Bismarck himself was not known for anti-Semitism, but his press secretary Moritz Busch published one of the most virulent statements of nineteenth-century German anti-Semitism, likening Jews to vampires who sucked the life-blood from real Germans. Much of the anti-Semitism was based on the ugly stereotypes that many Germans held about Polish Jews, regardless of how much contemporary German Jews defied the images. On the other hand, the

[75] Ibid.,109-117.

populist *völkisch* ideals supported the anti-Jewish attitudes of the late nineteenth century—the sense that the German folk spirit was antithetical to Jews and Judaism.[76]

The liberal influence of Jews in German politics both provoked and reinforced anti-Semitism. Jews were overwhelmingly Liberal, opposing the domination of Wilhelmine society by the conservative, nationalistic, and Protestant Prussian *Junker* class and the Prussian military establishment. The Jewish-owned newspapers and the opinion journal *Die Nation*, also edited by Jews, were persistently critical of the economic protectionism and anti-democratic structure of the Prussian government. The leading Jewish businessmen were typically Liberal. After 1878 the Bismarck government distrusted Jews as a group, and in 1893 anti-Jewish appeals elected sixteen anti-Semites to the *Reichstag*. The Conservative Party of the *Junkers* and the Prussian Army was openly anti-Semitic. At that point Liberal Germans, Christian and Jewish together—but with only Jewish money—created an organization, the *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* (Association for Defense against anti-Semitism) to oppose the rise of prejudice. Many Jews decided that a defense organization consisting solely of Jews was also needed, a feeling that in 1893 yielded the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, known commonly as the C.V. The C.V. would enlist 40,000 German Jews by 1914 and would be the most important force for counter-propaganda against German anti-Semitism.[77]

At the same time in the East, Jews faced a much more virulent form of anti-Semitism. The course of history for Polish Jews changed drastically for the worse with the onset of pogroms in the Russian partition and the Pale settlement in 1881. At this point the Russian

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[76] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 58-61.

[77] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 106-8.

government was the most violently anti-Semitic in Europe; it created an environment so severe that 2.75 million Jews fled the region between 1881 and the eve of the First World War. In 1791 Catherine II had declared that the Jews could not settle in Russia, especially in Moscow, and that they were to be resettled in the newly-acquired Polish territory. This laid the foundations for the Pale of Settlement, in effect a huge ghetto on Russia's western frontier. Catherine's successor, Alexander I, expelled Jews from hundreds of Russian villages between 1808 and 1823. Anti-Jewish policies in Russia's Polish partition escalated through various measures to ensure a miserable existence, including forced conscription at age twelve into mandatory 25-year service terms. All Jewish organizations were banned, additional taxes were put on kosher foodstuffs, and synagogues became subject to gentile supervision.[78]

The March 1881 assassination of Czar Alexander II by a revolutionary terrorist organization provided Russian peasants and some of the bourgeoisie with an excuse to punish Jews, though Jews were not involved in his death. State and town officials' incited pogroms that began in Kiev and Odessa in the spring of 1881, continued across the countryside throughout the summer, and flared at Christmas in Warsaw. During Easter week of 1882, violence against Jews broke out in Podolia after the town council held a public meeting blaming them for the public disorder. Pogroms continued through 1883 in the Ekaterinoslav province of the Ukraine and came to a temporary end in Nizhniy Novgorod in Russia on June 1884.[79] The so-called May Laws of 1882 gave local officials authority over Jewish-gentile relations. Jews were prohibited from settling in villages in the Pale; they were forced out of the countryside and into crowded

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[78] Haumann, *A History of East European Jews,* 86.

[79] John Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, ed., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 41.

towns and cities. They were not allowed to own property outside the Pale's urban areas or beyond the Pale at all. They could no longer own mines or oil fields, which had been a source of significant wealth among Russian Jews. Nor could they work for the government or be teachers except in Jewish schools, which left for them only occupations in trade and commerce that quickly became overcrowded. Quotas severely limited the number of Jewish students who could enroll at secondary schools or universities.[80]

The pogroms of 1881 had an enormous impact on Polish Jews. Unlike their response to the Cossack pogroms of 1648, during which the traumatized Jewish community turned inward and looked for answers within Judaism, the reaction in the early 1880s was outward-looking and highly politically-charged. Since the partitions, many Polish Jews had believed that assimilation and intellectual development would provide acceptance by the gentile population, but the pogroms of the 1880s convinced many that they would never be able to coexist with gentiles. The pogroms called into question the Jewish commitment to the Diaspora—the spreading of Jewish religious values among gentiles—and provided the impetus for the emergence of Zionism and a distinctly Jewish form of socialism.[81]

The publication of the virulent anti-Semitic manuscript, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1897), which promoted a paranoid vision of a Jewish world conspiracy, prompted a renewal of anti–Jewish violence at the turn of the twentieth century. It appeared at the same time the Jewish social democratic party, the General Jewish Workers Union in Russia and Poland, known popularly as The Bund, was founded. After the pogroms in Częstochowa in Poland in

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[80] *Jews of the Eastern War Zone,* 31-35.

[81] Klier, *Pogroms*, 3.

1902, the Bund organized Jewish self-defense units. These Jewish militia units provoked even greater violence from the local police and the army, which the defense units usually were not able to counter. The most horrific pogrom came in the Kishinev massacre in Bessarabia of 1903, during which the local officials turned a blind eye, and the atrocities ranged from murder to gang rape, torture, and mutilations. The Russian government offered no apologies, maintaining that Jews brought the violence on themselves. Soon peasants in Gomel in Belarus attacked the town's Jews, who composed half the population and were well organized by Bund and Zionist groups. Prepared for trouble by the Kishinev pogrom, the Zionists and the Bund defended themselves against the Belarusian peasants and fended off the attacks. The success of the Gomel defenders moved other Jewish communities throughout the Pale to train self-defense groups.[82]

This civil war amounted to the tremors of a quake yet to come. When an ill-prepared Russia stumbled into the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the internal decay of the Russian monarchy was exposed. Russian defeats and humiliations in the first months of the war emphasized the corruption and incompetence of the central government. Conscripts began protesting the government's involvement in Manchuria, while anger at the government incited scapegoating of Jews, as witnessed in the forty-three pogroms in 1904. As 30,000 Jews served the Czar in Manchuria, their towns in the Pale were being burned and the reservists of the Imperial Army were raping their wives and daughters.[83]

Jews throughout the world were deeply concerned about the persecutions of Jews in Poland and the Pale. The *Ostjuden* were already the object of concern for Western Jews;

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[82] Ibid., 192, 200, 208.

[83] Ibid.,213, 215.

Kishinev had shocked Jews around the world and called into action Jews from the United States and Western Europe. Relief organizations had long since been concerned with the fate of the *Ostjuden.* In 1860 French Jews had established *Alliance Israélite Universelle* to help their Eastern European co-religionists. In 1871 a Jewish relief agency in England, the Anglo-Jewish Association, was formed, and two years later Austrians created *Israelitische Allianz*.[84] The most effective help for the *Ostjuden* came from the large sums of money raised by Jewish bankers, including the Rothschild family, originally from Frankfurt; the Briton Sir Samuel Montagu; the German Baron Maurice de Hirsch, who funded both emigration and colonization projects with a multi-million-mark contribution in the 1890s; and the German-born American Jacob Schiff. All these bankers were hostile to the Czar and demanded amelioration of Jewish conditions in his empire. When the Czar failed to cooperate, which was usually the case, the Rothschilds and Schiff made it their business to prevent the Russians from getting loans in the West. Schiff almost single-handedly financed the Japanese war effort in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905—and made sure that Russians got no help from Western bankers in their surprising failure in that conflict.[85]

The persecutions in Russia concerned Jewry throughout the world. American Jews believed that their nation had become the main solution for the Eastern-European Jewish problem, and they helped approximately two million to migrate to the United States between

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[84] Edmund Burkard, "Hilfsverein Der Deutschen Juden, 1901-1936," (Prüfungsarbeit, Pädagogische Hochschule Westfalen – Lippe Abteilung Münster, 1971), 7.

[85] Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 46-47, 82-84.

1881 and 1914.[86] German Jews, on the other hand, mostly agreed with gentiles that the *Ostjuden* were unwelcome within German borders; they saw their country as merely a transit stop to the United States. Nonetheless, in 1882 they accepted the responsibility of enabling Jewish migration by raising more than 600,000 marks to help refugees.[87] In 1891 a Jewish central committee to relieve the *Ostjuden* was first established, and then in 1901 the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* became the main German agency in dealing with immigrants. The *Hilfsverein* facilitated the rescue of millions by taking them through Germany to Bremen and Hamburg and putting them on ships to new homes. It may have been the largest migration of people ever organized by private groups. Composed of both Orthodox Jews and the *Maskalim*, the *Hilfsverein* reflected the values of assimilation into German society and acceptance of German nationalism and *Bildung.* Paul Nathan, editor of the Liberal journal *Die Nation* and descendant of a wealthy banking family, along with James Simon, a textile merchant and one of Germany's wealthiest men, directed the organization through the Great War.[88]

Close personally to Wilhelm II, Simon and other members of the *Hilfsverein* kept open channels to the German Foreign Office. In 1898 Wilhelm, in counsel with Simon and Paul Nathan, embraced a plan to give Germany a stronger position in the Near East by cultivating an alliance with the Ottoman Turks. "European civilization is destined to play a significant role in this part of the world," Nathan wrote, and "German know-how and diligence are contributing

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[86] Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff,* 46-47, 82-84.

[87] Zosa Szajkowski, "Conflicts in the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Founding of the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Vienna Allianz and the Hilfsverein," *Jewish Social Studies*, 19 (Jan. - Apr., 1957), 29-50.

[88] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers,* 34-35; Szajkowski, "The Komitee für den Osten and Zionism," 199.

conspicuously towards Turkey's development." Nathan believed that a strong German presence in the Ottoman world would redound to the benefit of European Jews. After the turn of the century, the *Hilfsverein* leadership encouraged the German government to ask the Turks for help in sponsoring the emerging Jewish settlement in Palestine, but resistance from their putative ally, the Sultan of Turkey, halted German state involvement. The *Hilfsverein* went forward with its support of education in Jewish settlements in Palestine by sponsoring schools there in the first years of the twentieth century.[89]

The Russian pogroms changed the perspective of many Jews about the longterm future of Jews in the East. The continuous suffering of the *Ostjuden* propelled a movement for a Jewish national state, advanced most notably by Theodore Herzl in his 1896 book *Der Judenstaat* and the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Even amid the dominant Assimilationist ethos of German Jews, Zionism gained adherents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the leading German Zionists was the Cologne lawyer Max I. Bodenheimer, who embraced Zionism as early as 1891 when he published a pamphlet, *Wohin mit den russichen Juden?* [Where Shall the Russian Jews Go?]. Bodenheimer called for the resettlement of Russian Jews in Palestine and Syria, and shortly afterward led in the establishment of a resettlement association for Jewish farmers and artisans in Palestine. In 1897 he had helped to form the *Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland (ZVfD*), the organization of German Zionists, of which he served as president until 1910. In the *ZVfD* he joined with such leading German Zionists as the sociologist Franz Oppenheimer who had been an early associate of Theodor Herzl. Starting in 1910 Bodenheimer served as chair of the Jewish National Fund, an organization founded at the Fifth Zionist

[89] Isaiah Friedman, "The Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, the German Foreign Ministry and the Controversy with the Zionists," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook (*1979), 291-319.

Congress in 1901 to buy land for Jewish settlement in Palestine. The Jewish National Fund helped to create the city of Tel Aviv in 1909.[90]

Zionism divided German Jews. Assimilated Jews typically viewed their national loyalty as entirely to Germany, and the idea of a separate Jewish nationhood as contrary to the mission of the Diaspora to spread Jewish values to the gentile world. Orthodox Jews objected strongly to the secular, usually irreligious attitude of Zionists. Zionism also prompted a debate about the fate of the *Ostjuden*. Assimilationists generally wanted to improve the lot of the *Ostjuden* in order that they might be able to stay in Poland. The Orthodox saw the *Ostjuden* as the purest form of Jewishness; their religiosity had to be honored, protected, and preserved—most likely in Poland. Zionists viewed the *Ostjuden* as potential allies against assimilation, supporters of Jewish nationalism, and likely residents of a new Jewish state.[91]

German Zionists were themselves divided. Bodenheimer led moderate Zionists who encouraged cooperation among all German Jews, including the creation of a permanent assembly of all German Jews. Bodenheimer, the Berlin lawyer Adolf Friedemann, and the linguist Franz Oppenheimer—all original allies of Herzl—worked to make Zionism attractive to mainstream German Jews. After the turn of the century, however, they were challenged by younger Zionists, many of them recent East European immigrants and radical German students who insisted on a separate Jewish nationality. In 1912 they demanded that "every Zionist—in the first place the

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[90] Jay Ticker, "Max I. Bodenheimer: Advocate of Pro-German Zionism at the Beginning of World War I," *Jewish Social Studies* 43 (Winter, 1981), 11-15.

[91] Zosa Szajkowski, "The Komitee für den Osten and Zionism," *Herzel Year Book: Essay in Zionist History and Thought,* ed. Raphael Patai *vol. VII*, (New York: Herzl Press, 1971), 200.

economically independent—to incorporate settling in Palestine into his life's program." Bodenheimer knew that Assimilationist German Jews would reject entirely such an imperative.[92]

An open conflict between the younger Zionists and the Assimilationists emerged when in 1913 and 1914 the former condemned the *Hilfsverein* for insisting that classes at the technical college it sponsored at Haifa be taught in German rather than Hebrew. The Zionists interpreted the *Hilfsverein* decision as an act of oppressive Assimilationist cultural hegemony. The leaders of the *Hilfsverein* believed, on the other hand, that German Jews could do far more for settlements in Palestine by promoting an alliance between the *Kaiserreich* and the Ottomans who controlled Palestine. As with virtually all the forthcoming debates about Jews' future and Zionism, language was the most contested issue.[93]

The growth of Zionism also shaped the evolving attitudes of Orthodox Jews, who objected to the generally secular nature of Jewish nationalism. In 1912 at the Tenth World Zionist Conference, the body rejected a proposal of the Mizrachi, the religious movement among Zionists, for the establishment of religious schools. In response, Orthodox Jews created *Agudas Yisrael*, whose purpose was to unify Orthodox Jews around the world to defend traditional Judaism against the influences of secularism and especially Zionism. *Agudas Yisrael* was based in Frankfurt and mainly supported at first by German Orthodoxy.[94]

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[92] Ticker, "Max I. Bodenheimer," 12-13.

[93] *Isaiah Friedman*, "The *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*, the German Foreign Ministry, and the Controversy with the Zionists, 1901–1918," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 24(1979), 291-319.

[94] Alan Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah the Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 93-140.

Despite the many divisions among Jews, Max Bodenheimer believed that German Jews could play a crucial role in relieving, and perhaps saving, the *Ostjuden*. In 1902 he proposed to the German Foreign Ministry that it assist in the creation of a new homeland for Polish Jews. He explained that the Yiddish language of six million Eastern European Jews was a "popular German dialect" that created a powerful cultural affinity between Imperial Germany and the *Ostjuden*. German support for a mass settlement of Eastern Jews in Palestine would redound to the political and economic benefit of the Reich. "The influence of Jewry in foreign lands would accrue to the benefit of Germany," Bodenheimer wrote, "and trade with Russia and the Near East would be promoted in no small measure."[95] German Jews then dominated international Zionism, and they could offer powerful support for German imperial ambitions. But he acknowledged to the Foreign Ministry that such a plan depended on persuading Jews in the recently established *Hilfsverein* to support it. Such wealthy and assimilated Jews as Paul Nathan needed official state endorsement to forge a united Zionist front with Bodenheimer and his group. Nathan and other Assimilationists apparently rejected such unity. For in the decade after 1902, assimilationists and Zionist Jews in Germany became further alienated. Nonetheless, Bodenheimer's idea of German state support for a Jewish homeland would be resurrected amid the crisis of world war in 1914.

Bodenheimer's 1902 proposal emerged in the context of rising imperialism in Wilhelmine Germany. When the Prussian Army defeated France in 1871 and German unification was completed, Otto von Bismarck set the goal of Prussian dominance of the new state and the policy of *Realpolitik* in international affairs. Bismarck worked to expand the new German nation's influence in Europe. In 1879 the Dual Alliance was formed between the new German

[95] Ticker, "Max I. Bodenheimer," 13.

Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. One of the aims of the alliance was to create "Mitteleuropa," a central European trading block to counterbalance the commercial partnership of Britain and the United States. But Bismarck had no desire for expansion eastward, because he viewed it as an unnecessary disruption of the balance of power.[96] Strongly committed to German cultural unity, Bismarck also understood that acquiring possessions in the East invited ethnic conflict in the new empire. His *Kulturkampf*, in which the state gave preferences to Protestant schools and officialdom in the mostly Catholic southern region of Germany, was also applied to the Prussian partition of eastern Poland. Over time, perhaps an unintended consequence of the *Kulturkampf,* would be increased Catholic anti-Semitism, as Catholic victims of discrimination displaced their resentment on a more vulnerable group.[97]

After Bismarck's departure in 1890, Germany's foreign policy followed two distinct and far more aggressive paths: the first was what Woodruff D. Smith has called *Weltpolitik* [global policy], which focused on the acquisition of territory in Africa and Southeast Asia; and, the second was *Drang nach Osten* [yearning for the East, or thrust toward the East], which in 1901 would be renamed *Lebensraum* [living space].[98] Those envisioning *Lebensraum* emphasized eastward expansion on the European continent and designated Poland as the most logical new German territory. In 1890, Leo von Caprivi, Bismarck's replacement as chancellor, changed the direction of foreign affairs to focus on establishing a central European economic system linking

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[96] Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1967), 4.

[97] Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 17-49.

[98] Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986).

Germany to its neighbors. During Caprivi's tenure, the influential economist Gustav Schmoller argued that Germany's influence had to expand in order to be competitive with other great states of the modern world order. A central European federation was needed in order to save Germany from destruction and to preserve Europe's higher culture itself— of course; Smoller and like-minded men assumed that was German culture.[99] At the turn of the twentieth century influential geographers such as Fredrick Ratzel joined scientists, political activists, and officials in the German Foreign Ministry and the High Command in this belief. By 1913, economic ambitions combined with aggressive imperialist views in creating a general conviction that transcended many political divisions: Germany's frontiers were simply too narrow, and in order for the nation to survive they had to be expanded.[100]

At the same time, Germany undertook a rapid military build-up. This was a response to the emerging alliances between France and Russia as well as England and France, the great strength of the British Navy, and the rise of the United States as a world power. It became a settled assumption among policymakers in Wilhelmine Germany that powerful and aggressive rivals encircled the Empire. To counter such encirclement, huge resources were poured into naval armaments at the behest of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz.[101] After 1908 Germany anxiously waited for war. The Balkans experienced destructive war during 1912 and 1913, and Serbia, the strongest and most belligerent country within the newly formed Balkan League, looked to its northern neighbor, the Habsburg Empire, with growing hostility. After Bosnia was annexed in

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[99] Gustav Schmoller as quoted in Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, 9.

[100] Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War,* 11.

[101] Ibid., 8, 22-23, 95-96.

1908, followed by the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, in which Serbia was embroiled in conflict with Bosnia and Macedonia, allowed Austria to push its border with Serbia further south. Serbia pushed back against its northern neighbors and asked for assistance from its historic ally Russia, thus placing the Habsburg and Romanov empires in direct conflict with one another. The conflict set in motion the previously arranged alliances and propelled Europe into what would be the biggest war to date in human history in August 1914.[102]

Amid the rush to war in the summer of 1914, no one knew and few predicted that the conflict would lead to the level of human suffering that it eventually yielded. It would change the world in drastic ways, and no place was altered more than the lands that the *Ostjuden* had occupied for a millennium. No people would pay more in pain and loss than they did, and few of them would make it through the ordeal unchanged.

[102] Ibid.,50-92.

Chapter 3: The Reliable Pioneers of Germanhood in the East, July to December 1914

The First World War set in motion events that brought profound changes in the relations among Germans, Poles, and Jews. When Austria declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, it set in motion the wheels of a global conflict that rolled on for four grueling years and cost millions of lives. With the possible exception of eastern France and Belgium, no part of the world felt the impact of the war more awfully than western Poland in the fall of 1914. Total war that dominated the life of virtually every person arrived with a swiftness that no one could have imagined. The fate of Russia, Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire rested in large part on the outcome of the war on the Eastern Front. The violence and suffering among Poland's Jews, visited on them at hundreds of places, descended to the depths that they had felt during the pogroms of the 1880s and in 1903. Their survival was in doubt from almost the first day of hostilities.

The six million Jews who lived in the Pale of Settlement, including those in Ukraine, Belarus, and the other Russian provinces, found themselves in an awful predicament. About 350,000 Jewish soldiers served the tsar, an obligation they had no option to reject. Nevertheless, many Russian Jews patriotically supported the Russian cause. In September 1914 a leading Jewish newspaper in Russia declared that "we Russian Jews are bound to Russia by ties which cannot be broken." They were, it proclaimed, "custodians of the commandments of our forefathers, nucleus of the entire Jewish nation" and were "united inseparably with the country in which we have dwelt for hundreds of years, and from which neither persecution nor oppression can tear us away." Such words may have been intended to prevent terrorism of the kind that

Russian Jews had known since 1881, but it also surely represented some measure of Russian patriotism among Jews.[103]

All the major European powers immediately mobilized troops. Germany implemented its Schlieffen Plan, which called first for the defeat of France and then for a rapid about-face turn of troops to an Eastern offensive via Germany's excellent railways. General Helmuth von Moltke, Chief of the German General Staff, responsible for executing the Schlieffen plan, soon discovered that the best-laid military plans could go awry once conflict actually began. He learned that Germany could not dictate the situation in the East, as Russian mobilization was faster than expected. By the early fall of 1914 the Central Powers found themselves in a two-front conflict that neither Germany nor Austria wanted—with Germany fighting in Belgium and East Prussia while Austria was engaged in both Serbia and Galicia.[104]

Just three weeks after the war began, Russian guns fired in East Prussia. To the shock of the rest of Europe, the Russian Army had mobilized many months sooner than anticipated. Lieutenant General Alexei Brusilov directed thirty-five divisions on a deep penetration into East Prussia. On 17 August, the Russians executed a two-pronged attack in East Prussia. The First Army, under the direction of Paul von Rennekampf, along with Alexander Samsonov's Second Army, struck on 19 and 20 August at the Battle of Gumbinnen. Thirty divisions trapped Germany's Eighth Army.[105] The Russian offensive so daunted General Max von Prittwitz und Gaffron that he weighed the order to retreat behind the Vistula River but decided against it. His

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[103] The Russian newspaper was quoted in The American Jewish Committee, *The Jews of the Eastern War Zone* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1916), 37-38.

[104] John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 24-70.

[105] Norman Stone, *World War One: A Short History* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 47.

retreat displeased his Chief of Staff, Max Hoffman, who had drawn up plans for a counterattack, and it cost Prittwitz his command. Witnessing the early battles, Hoffman presciently observed that "there has never been such a war as this, and never will be again—waged with such bestial fury." Villages burned and refugees jammed the roads as they fled the fury.[106]

On 23 August new commanders, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff, arrived on the Eastern Front and began pushing Hoffman's plan for a counterattack. Hindenburg had served in the Prussian Army as early as 1866 and had retired as a professional soldier in 1911. Now at age 67 he was called back to rescue the Army in the East, a mission that would win him great fame and influence. Ludendorff, also a career officer of long experience though much younger than Hindenburg, had served as the chief implementer of the Schlieffen plan and was known to be an effective administrator. Rennenkampf and Samsonov were bitter rivals, unwilling to work together, and as a result the Russian First and Second Armies failed to create a united Front. This fracture increased the jeopardy to the invaders of East Prussia's geography, which consisted of a series of lakes that ran 50 miles across Prussia and facilitated the German counterattack. The marshes provided a natural wedge between the two Russian Armies and allowed the Germans to encircle Samsonov and the Second Army at Tannenberg on 29 August. Always ready to recall Germany's glorious past, Ludendorff called the Russian defeat the Battle of Tannenberg, which he proclaimed was vindication for defeat of the Teutonic Knights by the Poles in 1410. The eighteen divisions of the Eighth Army under Hindenburg's command then turned south against the nine divisions of the Russian First Army in the Battle of Masurian Lakes. The Russian Tenth

[106] Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 132.

Army reinforced the First and drove the Germans back to the west. The battle of Masurian Lakes created a stalemate on the northern part of the Eastern front.[107]

At the same time to the south, Russian Forces engaged the Austro-Hungarian Army in Galicia, where they were confident of victory. The Russian Empire had long viewed Eastern Galicia as primordial Russian land. Galicia provided a route, by way of Krakow and through the Carpathian Mountains, to Silesia, Austria proper, and the Kingdom of Hungary.[108] The Habsburgs had gone into the war hoping to fight Serbia alone, and the Austro-Hungarian Army arrived on the Eastern Front ill-prepared for the war in Galicia, and not just logistically. They were also fundamentally uncertain about what they were to achieve.[109] In late August, the Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff Conrad von Hötzendorff initiated an attack in southern Poland with the intention of occupying Warsaw. Rather than defend Warsaw, however, the Russians launched the Galician offensive.[110] Conrad von Hötzendorff was uncertain about how to attack Russia, but he was under intense pressure from the German High Command to engage the Russians in order to draw Russian power away from the northern sector of the Eastern Front. Between 23 August and 12 September the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians engaged in a series of battles for control of Galicia. The Austro-Hungarians lost their fortress at Lemberg (Łvóv) on 3 September, and by 15 September Russian troops took the fortress of Przemyśl and occupied Galicia north of the Carpathian Mountains. Of the 1,800,000 Austro-Hungarian troops

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[107] Keegan, *The First World War*, 149-50.

[108] Alexander Victor Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland: War, Ethnicity, and Anti-Jewish Violence in East Galicia, 1914-1920* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 13.

[109] Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), 80.

[110] Keegan, *The First World War*, 151.

sent to Warsaw and Galicia, 400,000 died or were taken prisoner. Emperor Franz Josef's best regiments were severely depleted and never replaced.[111]

Six weeks into the war, German officials were alarmed at the failures on the Eastern Front. "The military situation is not in our favor," an informant from the East told his commanders in Berlin, "because of the concern with the growing number of Russian troops gathering on the outskirts of Cracow—the local population is very worried about an invasion."[112] Realizing the finality of the Austro-Hungarian collapse, General Moltke on 15 September ordered the formation of a new southern German army, the Ninth, to protect Silesia and attack Warsaw. The Austro-Hungarian collapse left undefended the industrial area of Upper Silesia, which the Tsar coveted. Learning of a planned Russian offensive into Silesia from a captured soldier, the German commander-in-chief Erich von Falkenhayn, ordered most of the German Eighth Army from Eastern Prussia into the area of Cracow for an offensive against the Russians.[113]

By the end of September 1914, Ludendorff had amassed troops for an effort to envelop the Russian Army from the North and South. Hindenburg and the newly formed Ninth Army arrived south of Warsaw, joined by remnants of the Austro-Hungarian First Army. The battle for Warsaw officially began on 9 October and lasted until 17 October when Hindenburg reached the banks of the Vistula River 12 miles from the city. Here the German offensive faltered when the Russian Northwest Front brought forward reinforcements. Hindenburg continued to push the

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[111] Ibid., 159-61.

[112]Auswärtiges Amt (AA), *Der Weltkrieg* No.11, adh. 2, 714/62 Bl.1-2:714/59:8 September 1914. Written from Kattowitz to Herrn Dr. von Bethmann Holweg.

[113] Keegan, *The First World War*, 162.

offensive against Warsaw, but the Germans were unfamiliar with the land and unable to bring sufficient reinforcements to the Ninth Army, which allowed the Russian General Ruzsky to concentrate his front against Hindenburg. Hindenburg ordered a retreat, and by 31 October the battle was lost for the Germans.[114]

In this, the most destructive of wars that humans had fought to date, Russian casualties were even greater than those of the Germans and Austro-Hungarians. During the first five months of the war an estimated one million Russians either died or were wounded in East Prussia and Galicia. As large as their population was, Russia by early 1915 had difficulty staffing a strong military effort.[115]

Their own suffering apparently increased the Russians' longstanding propensity for persecuting their perceived enemies, especially Jews in Galicia who had lived in relative peace under Habsburg rule. Russian persecution of the Jews, well known throughout the Pale of Settlement for more than thirty years, would prove especially vicious during wartime. From the moment of their arrival, Russian troops terrorized the civilian inhabitants of Galicia and Eastern Poland. They saw the Jews as pro-German and assumed they were spies for the enemy. The ethnic Poles encouraged this view: a leading Polish politician declared that "90 percent of the Jews are traitors and 10 percent are spies."[116] Any perceived enemy of the state, which many Russians believed the Jews had always been, would be treated as a traitor and punished accordingly. They assumed that Jews would practice sabotage and economic subversion and

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[114] Ibid., 161-66.

[115] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 46.

[116] S. Ansky, *The Enemy at his Pleasure: a Journey through the Jewish Pale of Settlement during World War I* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2002, originally published 1925), 4.

would collaborate with the Germans and Austro-Hungarians.[117] "The Jews are betraying us," a Russian solder wrote home. "They disemboweled one Jew's carcass, stuffed it with eight million rubles' worth of gold and carried it across to the enemy." When the war was over, the soldier vowed, "we'll get even with them."[118]

Although most such rumors were too fantastic to be true, the Russians were in some measure correct about collaboration of Polish Jews with the armies of the Central Powers. During the first days of the war, border guards and customs officials had begun cooperating in the smuggling trade of Jews and some gentiles living behind the lines. The prices they offered for such goods as alcohol, cigarettes, and clothing were much lower than the cost of importing from Germany or other parts of Poland, plus smuggled items were free from duty taxes. For these reasons, the German High Command decided that there was "no need in stopping this trade between the soldiers and Jewish mediators."[119]

The military conflict aggravated the historic antipathy of ethnic Poles for their Jewish neighbors. Just prior to the war, strongly nationalistic Poles had been angered by an assertion of Jewish political rights, and they began boycotts of Jewish tradesmen and professional men. A Russian journalist investigated the situation in Poland in the fall of 1914 and found "red-hot anti-Semitism" everywhere. "We have anti-Semitism in Russia, but of a different kind," S. Ansky [Shloyme Zanvel ben-Aaron Rappaport] reported. Polish newspapers accused Jews of every kind of crime, without any contradiction from more progressive voices. The anti-Semitism resulted in

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[117] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 20.

[118] Ansky, *The Enemy at his Pleasure*, 4.

[119] AA, *Der Weltkrieg*, No. 11, adh. 2, 714/62 Bl.1-2: 714/59: 714/62: 11 September 1914 Report written from Kattowitz.

part from economic competition between Polish peasants and Jews from the East, who were being driven westward by the Russian army, but more of it derived from the belief among Polish nationalists that the war was providing an opportunity for them to free themselves of outside control. "We don't need our independence if the Jews stay in our country—they have defiled it," Ansky reported as the typical Polish anti-Semitic attitude.[120] Poles cited Jewish smuggling and spying after the arrival of the Kaiser's forces as more reason to mistreat Jews amid the war's chaos. When Russian troops drove the Austrian Army from the town of Zamość in Galicia in the fall of 1914, local Poles told the Russian commander that Jews there had helped the Austrians, whereupon the Russians hanged several Jews. In many other towns, ethnic Poles accused Jews of aiding the Central Powers' Armies, and Russians imprisoned Jews who were no more guilty of collaboration than the Poles themselves.[121]

In a terrible irony, some Jews awaited the Russian Army with hope of relief from the hostility of their Polish and Ukrainian neighbors who viewed Jews as overly sympathetic to Russian authority and frequently attacked them. Because Polish Jews believed their loyalty to the Tsar in the war would bring them more civic equality, many openly embraced the Russian war effort. After all, between 350,000 and 400,000 Jews were serving in the Russian Army. Russian assumptions about Jewish disloyalty, however, soon cancelled Jews' hope. Russian Army commanders Grand Duke Nicolas and his chief of staff Nicolas Yanushkevich, an especially intense anti-Semite, justified their wholesale persecution of the Jews on the allegation that they were spies for the Germans. While thousands of Germans, Poles, and Austro-Hungarians in

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[120] Ansky, *The Enemy at his Pleasure*, 4.

[121] American Jewish Committee, *Jews of the Eastern War Zone*, 41-56.

Galicia were deported to Siberia, Jews were forced at first to stay and endure the arrival of the rabidly anti-Semitic Russian troops. With every mile they covered, Russian troops looted and destroyed villages. Russian forces were composed heavily of Cossack cavalry, known for centuries for their hostility to Jews, including their brutality in the 1903-05 pogroms. Upon entering a Galician town, Cossacks usually asked, "Where are the Jews?" Poles and Ukrainians often flashed Christian crosses to spare themselves violence, and then regularly joined with Cossacks in beating Jews and stealing their property. To be sure, the Russians mistreated Poles and Ukrainians too, but not with the brutality visited on Jews.[122]

In typical pogrom tactics, the Russians ordered Jews out of Radom, Lomza, and Lublin provinces within twenty-four hours, while local Poles confiscated Jewish property. In Radom the Russians hanged nine Jews reportedly for "welcoming Germans in a friendly way," S. Ansky reported. The Russians did the same to seven Jews in Zamość and four in Krasnik.[123] In *shtetl* after *shtetl*, town after town in Galicia, the invading Russians burned Jewish homes and shops. In two villages alone in August, 716 Jewish homes were burned. The Russian Army and its Cossack marauders killed Jews by the dozen, raped women, and mutilated children. A Russian officer reported to an investigator that Cossacks had tossed a two-year-old Jewish child in the air and then speared him with their swords as he came down. Ansky reported on a Russian soldier who wrote home that he secretly felt sorry for Jews: "The soldiers whip them," he said, "hitting

[122] American Jewish Committee, *Jews of the Eastern War Zone*, 41-56.

[123] Ansky, *The Enemy at his Pleasure*, 5.

them with sticks seventy-five times, countless times, they shoot them, perhaps even innocent people."[124]

By September the Russians had executed pogroms on successive *shtetls* as they moved further west into Galicia. On 27 September, after official promises of religious toleration, Russian soldiers led by Cossack riflemen carried out a violent pogrom in the city of Łvóv, to which many *shtetl* Jews had fled during the invasion. The Łvóv pogrom left many Jews dead on the streets. A Russian soldier reported to Ansky that when the Army entered a village the Christians would put their religious icons in their windows: "If there was no icon," he told Ansky, "the house was therefore Jewish, and the soldiers could destroy it without fear of punishment." In one village his brigade found a house in which twenty scared Jews were hiding. "Slice them up!" the commander was said to have ordered. "Chop them up!" Another Russian Jewish soldier wrote that his arms "go numb when I think of the horrors I've seen in Galicia, when I remember the soldiers' and the Cossacks' atrocities."[125] Jews in Galicia were not just murdered but "the women [are] raped in the streets, old women's breasts are slashed off, and the people are left to die in their agony." According to N.M. Friedman, a Jewish member of the Russian Duma, "4.11 percent of the Russian (this included Russia's partition of Poland) Jews were killed and these pogroms made the Spanish Inquisition child's play."[126]

The surprise among Jews at the rapid Russian attack, combined with the historic pacifism of Orthodox Jews, resulted in a general failure to meet the Russian persecution with strong

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[124] Ibid., 6.

[125] Ibid., 7-8.

[126] Quoted in Josef Fraenkel, "German Documents on Zionism," *Herzel Yearbook: Essays in Zionist History and Thought*, VII (New York: Herzl Press, 1971), 190.

resistance. Those Jews who were not pacifists, especially the socialists and Zionists, were over-represented among those who fled Galicia immediately when the war began. The first Jews to leave, even before the Russian army's arrival, were the wealthy. Rail stations filled with frightened people clamoring for too few seats on railcars to safety. When the Russians invaded, the roads toward Krakow and Austria were filled within days with thousands of poor Jews pushing carts filled with their possessions. Soon Vienna would be crowded with 137,000 Galician-Jewish refugees. In all, by the end of 1917, about 200,000 Galician Jews had been forced to migrate to Austria, Hungary, and the Czech lands.[127]

Many of the Jews who did not get away were put into forced labor camps to build fortifications and roads within the occupied parts of Galicia, but more significantly, the Russians began to deport Jews, between 20,000 and 30,000 of them, to locations as far away as Turkestan and Siberia. They justified this action as necessary to clear the captured territory of potential enemy manpower and suspected Jewish spies and saboteurs. In early 1915 they expelled 8,000 Jews from the town of Zaleszczyki, killing many Jewish men in the process. In some instances they focused their removal efforts on Jewish doctors, politicians, merchants, and rabbis—people who owned property that the Russians confiscated. By early 1915 Russian removals of the Jewish population had turned into mass attacks characterized by murder, pillage, and rape. When trains full of Jewish deportees arrived in Kiev in early 1915, Russian authorities turned the cars around, without providing food or water to the people locked inside.[128]

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[127] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland,* 44-45, 62.

[128] Ibid., 52-3.

It was a significant irony of the Great War that, while it caused huge suffering for Jews in occupied Poland, the fate of their fellow Jews in the Central Powers went in the opposite direction, at least at first. When war began in 1914, Jews in Germany had endured rising anti-Semitism for at least a generation, including avowedly anti-Jewish representatives in the Reichstag and the appearance in 1912 of the League against Jewish Arrogance. Jews were still denied positions in the courts and universities, and were never appointed officers in the German Navy or the Army's reserve officer corps. The onset of war, however, immediately improved conditions for Jews, especially in Germany. Official political and military powers in Germany understood that they needed the financial and manpower skills that German Jews could provide the war effort. They assumed that the deep animosity Jews in the West held for Russia made their support for the Central Powers likely. [129]

A declaration of "civic truce" (*Burgfrieden*) in Germany raised morale among German Jews more than anything since the extension of civil rights in 1869. "I know no parties any more," the Kaiser said, "I know only Germans." Germans spoke patriotically of the ethnic and class unity of the "Spirit of 1914." Anti-Semitism was officially, if not completely, suppressed. The government warned anti-Jewish speakers and publications to be quiet or face a ban. The spirit of 1914 did indeed open doors of state service that had previously been closed: qualified non-commissioned Jewish officers in the Army were promoted to officer rank. Jewish businessmen soon took leading roles in the war effort. Walther Rathenau, the electrical manufacturer, organized resources in the German economy to maximize military production in the *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*. Albert Ballin, the shipping magnate from Hamburg, ran the

[129] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 109-117.

Zentraleinkaufsgesellschaft, the central purchasing agency, with the help of a Hamburg banker, Carl Melchior. Eduard Arnhold, another Jewish banker, took over the coal industry.[130]

The influence of Jews in Wilhelmine Germany at the start of the war far exceeded their share of the population. The Kaiser frequently socialized with a group of highly-assimilated and wealthy Jewish businessmen—merchants, industrialists, and bankers, all free-traders who were mostly Liberals in German politics—at boating regattas in Hamburg and Kiel, where they also advised him informally about economic and foreign-policy matters. The group included James Simon, the textile merchant; the bankers Paul von Schwabach, Carl Fürstenberg, Eduard Arnhold, and Max M. Warburg; Walther Rathenau of the electrical industry; and Albert Ballin of the shipping industry. Chaim Weizmann, the English Zionist who had studied in Berlin and was later the first President of the State of Israel, derisively called these men the *Kaiserjuden,* "Emperor Jews" of Germany. Simon, with whom the Kaiser shared an interest in Egyptology and Near Eastern concerns and to whom he looked for advice on various matters, was particularly influential at court. "One cannot overestimate how much I have learned from him," Wilhelm said of Simon. Because of Wilhelm's admiration for him, Simon became the unofficial spokesman for Jewish concerns with the Kaiser. Through Simon, the longtime president of the *Hilfsverein,* the assimilationists *Kaiserjuden* secured a hearing for their positions in the halls of Wilhelmine power. At the same time, these well-connected Jews, apparently to a man, supported the war effort being run mainly by the Conservative Party and the military.[131]

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[130] Ibid., 195-97.

[131] Eugene Mosse Werner, *The German-Jewish Economic Elite, 1820-1935: A Socio-cultural Profile* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 75-76, 197-207.

All segments of the German Jewish population—Reform, Orthodox, Zionists, and socialists—responded promptly with declarations of support for the war. The *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (*CV*) and the *Verband der deutschen Juden*, the two main organizations for defense of Jewish rights, released a joint statement: "Fellow Jews of Germany! We call on you to devote your resources to the fatherland above and beyond the call of duty! Volunteer to wear the colors! All of you—men and women—place yourselves in the service of the fatherland through personal help of every kind and through donating money and property."[132] Just after the war began, Eugen Fuchs, head of the C.V., ended a speech to his organization with the exhortation, "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!"[133] German Zionists promised that out of their "loyalty to the German fatherland, we shall, as German citizens, gladly fulfill all demands on our possessions, on life and blood."[134] Arnold Zwieg, a young Zionist intellectual, spoke of "deeply binding power of the cultural community [Kulturgemeinschaft]" that had intensified during the war. "Greater Germany is here again," and as a Jew, "I will take passionate interest in Germany's destiny . . . Indeed, in my inherently Jewish way, I will make Germany's concern my own concern."[135] Orthodox Jews joined the Army with the same high level of patriotism as the more numerous Liberals (Reform) and Zionists, and apparently no Orthodox rabbis counseled against serving the war effort. Those who dissented from supporting the war amounted to a very small minority, though the number would rise over the course of the

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[132]*Im Deutschen Reich*, September 1914, 339.

[133] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 194-5.

[134] *Judische Rundschau*, August 7, 1914, 343.

[135] Arnold Zweig, *The Face of East European Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, originally published 1920), xiii

conflict. Albert Einstein, the physicist, and Gustav Landauer, a leading socialist, were against the war from the outset. Several of the leading Jewish men of business, including Albert Ballin, and several Jewish newspaper editors eventually came to think that the German military was mismanaging the war, but they never became open dissenters.[136]

The patriotism of German Jews never strayed, however, far from the concern about the *Ostjuden*. "We are delighted in the confident belief that through the heroic victory of our Fatherland," the noted Neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen wrote soon after the war started, "the God of Justice and Love will put an end to the yoke of barbarism that weighs upon our Jewish brethren in the Russian empire, whose entire political existence mocks all justice, all political rationality, all religion and morality, all human compassion, and all respect for the nobility of mankind." Cohen expressed his confidence that "the *triumph* of German arms" would "raise these people up to the dignity of man, which they, through their glorious martyrdom, have preserved in themselves." German Jews expected something from the war as well: "the further establishment of full equality for our *confessional community* alongside the other religious communities in the German state—that the reluctance will disappear that permits us to participate in the highest and most holy tasks of our state, [but] without love or trust; *that the moral and religious equality of our religion will find unqualified recognition."*[137]

German Jews joined the military in extraordinary numbers, as did Jews in Austria. It was a well-established tradition: Jews had served in the military in large numbers during the Franco-

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[136] Rivka Horwitz, "Voices of Opposition to the First World War among Jewish Thinkers," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988), 233-259.

[137] Hermann Cohen, "Germanness and Jewishness," in *Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918: Solders describe Combat III: Hans Stegemann (1914)* in *German History Documents and Images*, 1.

Prussian War. One hundred thousand German Jewish soldiers served in the army during the Great War, and approximately one-fourth of those would fight on the Eastern front.[138] A large portion of the approximately 60,000 Austro-Hungarian Jewish soldiers fought the Russians in Galicia.[139] Army rabbis would follow the movement of the soldiers on the battlefield, serving the needs of soldiers and soon those of Jewish civilians all along the entire Eastern Front. The German High Command immediately recognized that German and Austro-Hungarian Jews could perform special propaganda tasks in winning the support of Polish Jews to the cause of the Central Powers.

Still, it would be mistaken to over-emphasize Jewish affection and confidence in the German state, because like the powerful influences in the German government, German Jews kept their minds fixed on Russia: as Hermann Cohen suggested, much of the enthusiasm for the war among German Jews was based on their intense antipathy for the Tsarist government.[140]

The reality of war in the East brought to the foreground the German elite's geopolitical agenda of *Lebensraum*, or living space, an idea that had been based on the concept of *Drang nach Osten* for more than a century. Now Germany's foreign policy plans specifically included the creation of a line of buffer states between Germany and Russia. In Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg's September Program of 1914, the German government articulated its war aims by

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[138] Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt. *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten,1914-1918* (Bonn: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1983), 7.

[139] István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 172.

[140] Peter Pulzer, "The First World War," in Michael A. Meyer, ed. *German Jewish History in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 360-67.

clarifying that the Frontier Strip was to be settled with nationally reliable German elements.[141] This policy had three complex goals. The first aim was the extension of the German border to include Warsaw. The second aim was to move the Poznan Poles and Jews further east to a new semi-autonomous Polish state under Germany's jurisdiction.[142] The third aim of the Frontier-Strip policy was the creation of a buffer zone in modern-day Belarus and Ukraine in order to secure Germany's eastern frontier, thereby warding off Russian aggression. As the German Army was projected to move farther and farther east, this plan included provisions for protecting the upper Silesian industrial region, acquiring northern seaports, and developing the agricultural regions in Ukraine.[143]

Development of this region of buffer states became the focal point of Germany's war aims in the East during late 1914 and early 1915. This plan constituted a formidable challenge, one that required a total German victory. The plan was in direct conflict with Austria's desire for Warsaw as well as Russia's current control of Congress Poland, the area surrounding Warsaw and Lublin and extending north to East Prussia. Many German officials and politicians wanted to annex Congress Poland, without Poles, directly into German territory. Congress Poland in theory was now included in the Pale of Settlement but since the turn of the century had forbidden permanent Jewish residency. German plans for the Frontier Strip included the Pale provinces of Bessarabia, Wilna, Vitebsk, Volhynia, Grodno, Yekaterinoslav, Kovno, Minsk, Moghilef,

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[141] Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967), 271.

[142] Ibid., 114.

[143] Immanuel Geiss, *Der polnische Grenzstreifen 1914-1918,* as quoted in Fischer, *Germany's Aims,* 116.

Podolia, Poltava, Taurida, Kherson, Chernigov, and Kiev. Soon called the Polish *Grenzstreifen*, the proposed strip in some versions would extend east to the Bobr, Narew, Bzura, and Warta rivers, thus comprising an area of more than 20,000 square kilometers, and inhabited by some 2,000,000 Poles, 270,000 Jews, and 100,000 Germans.[144] All the Poles and Jews from the German partition of Poland were to be relocated to this region, along with German settlers from Russian Poland.[145] This newly allocated region already had four million Jews.[146]

With the invasion of Poland in August 1914, Germany began implementing its plans for the East. As the German army marched eastward from Poznan and into the Russian partition, the soldiers encountered the ethnically diverse region of Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Russians, and large communities of Jews. The Jewish element was highly concentrated within the urban areas and made up a large percentage of the population, ranging from thirty percent to eighty percent in any given village, town, or city.[147] This first encounter with the *Ostjuden* communities east of Warsaw was startling to the entire German Army, including the German-Jewish soldiers who came from assimilated Jewish communities throughout Germany. "Instead of the 'shtetls' coming to Germany," as had happened for so long, noted the Army Rabbi Leopold Rosenak, "the German Army found its way into the 'shtetls.'"[148] To the surprise of many German soldiers and

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[144] Geiss, *Der polnische Grenzstreifen,* 21.

[145] Ibid., 25.

[146] American Jewish Committee, *Jews of the Eastern War Zone*, 7.

[147] Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe: From the Early Fifth Century to the Present* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 109.

[148] Minnie Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak: vom Feldrabbiner zum politischen Engagement* (Tel Aviv: Bulletin des Leo Baeck Institutes, 1988) (79): 5.

the High Command, Polish Jews were friendly in a way that Poles and Lithuanians were not. In the surreptitious ways possible in wartime, some Jews helped the German Army by supplying scarce goods and information about the Russians.

Although the atrocities of the Russian army against the *Ostjuden* had not yet materialized in early August 1914, German Jews expected the worst based on the long history of Russian violence against Jews. The *Ostjuden* needed either protection from a strong power or a safe place to go. There existed no good place for them in the current state of war. Migration to America was suddenly impossible with the outbreak of hostilities. Jewish settlements in Palestine, the Zionist hope for safety and peace since the 1880s, were literally starving under isolation imposed by Ottoman Turks. This frontier-strip plan had already prompted the German Jewish leadership to propose its own idea for what should happen in the East.

On 4 August 1914, Max Bodenheimer, the Stuttgart lawyer and leading Zionist, had sent the German Foreign Ministry a plan for how the Jews in Eastern Europe might help the German war effort in the East.[149] Bodenheimer imagined a buffer state between Russia and Germany composed of the various national groups, including Jews, who would become loyal allies of Germany. The announcement of such a plan, he advised, would insure the loyalty of the *Ostjuden* to the Central Powers.[150] Germany's war objectives, largely geopolitical and economic in nature, were less important to Bodenheimer than his desire to find a safe place for the embattled Russian Jews. He proposed a larger buffer state than Poland between Russia and Germany in approximately the location of the historic Pale of Settlement. It would be composed

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[149] Dr. M.I. Bodenheimer, *So Wurde Israel: Aus der Geschichte der zionistischen Bewegung* (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), 190.

[150] AA, *Der Weltkrieg*, 253/4 no.11 adh. 2, Vol. 1-2.

of many different nationality groups, including Jews. The northern boundary of Bodenheimer's imagined buffer state would be the League of Eastern European States, the union of Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Estonia.[151] The German military establishment had already planned this northern union to maximize its authority in the postwar East. Germany and the newly created Jewish state, Bodenheimer suggested, would offset the northern league and ultimately make it subordinate to Germany.

This proposal offered two advantages. First, because of the large number of Jews in the East, the increase in population supporting the German agenda would create a political stronghold in the entire region. Second, according to Bodenheimer, "by creating a Jewish national state, located within Russia proper, the German Empire would be freed from the constant threat of a Russian attack." The argument provided a compelling rationale for the German government to implement the Bodenheimer plan. His main purpose was to defend fellow Jews: Bodenheimer believed the Germany Army could rescue the Eastern Jews from their miserable existence by establishing their political autonomy in Poland.[152]

The Bodenheimer proposal of 4 August arrived in the German Foreign Office at an opportune moment. The German foreign minister Gottlieb von Jagow had been adamant in his initial directives about Poland, but as Austria faltered on the battlefield, his original commitment to Austro-Hungarian control of Congress Poland began to wane. Reports of Jewish support for German troops—providing information about Russian Army movements and acting as intermediaries between German soldiers and local inhabitants—demonstrated their potential as

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[151] Bodenheimer, *So Wurde Israel*, 183-4.

[152] Ibid., 156.

allies, at the same time that gentile Poles were hostile to Germans.[153] On the ground in Poland during the fall of 1914, German plans changed about what to do with the native population. The only inhabitants friendly to German occupation were the Jews whom they had slated for shipment to the east**.** The *Ostjuden*, therefore, emerged as the Germans' main ally in the East. The German Jewish leadership saw that the German Army needed the *Ostjuden* to help counterbalance the antagonistic Poles. German officials recognized that Jews were the "most reliable pioneers of Germanhood in the East."[154]

The German High Command focused intently on what Polish Jews would do as the conflict between Russia and Germany escalated. Tsar Nicholas II had sent out a circular in August 1914 in which he addressed "Dear Jews" of the Russian Empire, calling for their loyalty in the war with the Central Powers. The German High Command wanted a quick propaganda response to challenge the Tsar's appeal. The Foreign Ministry began to use Jewish organizations to implement propaganda in the East. The ministry also entertained propaganda plans submitted by the German industrialists Otto and Reinhart Mannesmann, who had extensive contacts in the East and hoped to foment rebellions among ethnic minorities against the Russians behind the lines. Ministers had also had discussions with another group of Zionists, Bodenheimer's more radical rivals led by Nahum Sokolow, about what to do in the East.[155]

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[153] Ibid., 157.

[154] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland,* 68.

[155] Zosa Szajkowski, "The Komitee für den Ost and Zionism," *Herzl Year Book: Essays in Zionist History and Thought* (New York: Herzl Press, 1971), 207-15.

The Foreign Ministry set up a meeting with Bodenheimer to discuss his ideas with the General Staff's political expert, Count Hutten-Czapski.[156] Bodenheimer strongly opposed any cooperation with the Mannesmanns, whose motives he thought were primarily profiteering, not humanitarian. He did, however, think that German Jews should create an inclusive Jewish consultative body, one representing the various strains of Zionism and the *Hilfsverein* group led by Paul Nathan, in order to present a united front to the German government. When asked to attend a meeting at the Foreign Ministry with the Mannesmanns, he declined and asked for the convening of a broad-based Jewish group. The meeting with the Mannesmanns did take place in early August, and it included Sokolow, who offered a draft of an appeal to Polish Jews.[157] The Mannesmanns quickly had the Sokolow text copied for distribution in Poland.

At a small meeting in late August at the Foreign Ministry, Bodenheimer was asked to draft a circular for Polish Jews in response to the Tsar. He was given the Sokolow appeal, which he rejected because it made no promise of Jewish autonomy and indeed few promises to Jews at all. Along with Franz Oppenheimer, the sociologist, Bodenheimer composed a circular and had it translated into Yiddish. The Foreign Ministry then incorporated the main points of both drafts. Bodenheimer and Oppenheimer disapproved of the revised circular. They had begun to have some misgivings that the propaganda program might not only hurt the Zionist cause in the Entente nations and neutral countries, but also could further endanger the well-being of Jews in

[156] Bodenheimer, *So Wurde Israel*, 184.

[157] The draft memorandum has not been located. Only the subsequent memo, discussed below, appears to have survived in the historical record.

the Eastern war zones and in Russia. At this point, however, they were unable to stop the propaganda effort from going forward. [158]

"To the Jews in Poland!" read the heading of the circular that both the German and Austro-Hungarian armies soon distributed all along the Eastern Front.

> The inspired armies of the central European states, Germany and Austria-Hungary, have invaded Poland.
> The powerful march of our armies has caused the despotic government [Russia] to flee. No one will confront them.
> Our flags symbolize rights and freedom, equal citizenship, freedom of belief, to live undisturbed in all areas of the economic and cultural life as well as in your spiritual life.
> Too long you have suffered under the iron yokes of the Muscovites.
> As friends, we come to you; the barbaric foreign yoke is over. A new era for Poland approaches. We will put all of our forces to work, so that the same rights apply for the Jews and a solid foundation will be established.
> Do not let yourselves be deceived by flattering promises you have heard too many times.
> Did the Tsar in I905 not promise the Jews equal rights, and has he kept this promise and again with the highest manifesto?
> Remember the terrible expulsions against the large Jewish masses since then. Remember the cities, Kishinev, Homei, Bialystok, Siedle and the hundreds of other pogroms.
> Remember the Beilis-affair and the efforts of the barbaric government to convict [Menahem Mendel] Beilis of ritual murder and allowed the terrible lie of the blood libel to spread.[159]
> Therefore, the Tsar gave his imperial word to the Jews only when he needed them.
> And now he is between hammer and anvil, and this is the reason for his promises.
> Your sacred duty now is to unite all forces in cooperation, in order for the liberation to be successful.

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[158] Szajkowski, "The Komitee für den Osten" 210-11.

[159] Beilis was a Ukrainian Jew accused in 1911 of the blood libel, killing a Christian as a sacrifice. Beilis was tried and acquitted in 1913.

> All forces: your youth, your communities, your associations must cooperate; it is the holy duty to help.
> We expect the facts will demonstrate themselves to your mind and your devotion.
> Turn yourselves over with supreme confidence to the commanders of our armies in the places that you are living.
> Ensure all deliveries are prompt and they will be properly paid.
> This will pave the way for the enemy to be defeated completely in order for freedom and justice to prevail.[160]

This leaflet clearly was an anti-Russian condemnation and not necessarily the kind of commitment of Germany to future help and independence for Polish Jews that Bodenheimer and Oppenheimer wanted.[161]

With the initial propaganda task addressed, if not necessarily to his liking, Bodenheimer moved to help the government enact his political plan for the East. On 17 August he helped establish the *Komitee für die Befreiung russischer Juden* [Committee for the Liberation of the Russian Jews].[162] The early leadership of the committee also included Oppenheimer, who was responsible for the social and economic framework of the new committee. The committee attracted the support of some of Germany's leading Jews, including the theologian Martin Buber, the Social Democratic politician Oscar Cohn, the lawyer Julius Magnus, the Islamic scholar Eugen Mittwoch, and the writer Hermann Struck. In the next few months, the organization established branch offices in all the major German cities and many in East Prussia. But from its inception, the committee was politically controversial among German Jews. The staunchest Zionists thought the propaganda mission undermined the possible creation of a Jewish state in

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[160] Szajkowski, "The German Appeal to the Jews of Poland, August 1914," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 59 (April, 1969), 311-320.

[161] Ticker, "Bodenheimer," 16-17.

[162] Bodenheimer (ed.), *Prelude to Israel,* 126.

the East and that it further threatened the safety of the *Ostjuden.* They did not care about the political interests of Germany and her allies, as did the more centrist Zionists like Bodenheimer.[163]

Few supporters of the *Hilfverein* joined the effort, and most notably absent was Paul Nathan. The *Hilfverein* members typically were suspicious of Bodenheimer's plan for a Jewish state in the East. Max M. Warburg, the Hamburg banker and an adviser to the Kaiser, believed that separate action in Eastern Europe on behalf of Jews would provoke more anti-Semitism "even in Germany."[164] Nathan had long believed that a dominant Germany in the East could better protect Jewish rights than a separate Jewish state. During the recent furor over what language would be used in the *Hilfverein*-sponsored technical school in Haifa, the cotton magnate James Simon had expressed his intense suspicion of essentially all Zionists' motives.[165]

The *Hilfverein* and the *KfdO* also disagreed over relationships with the United States, still very much a non-belligerent in the fall of 1914. The *KfdO* wanted to encourage America to support the German cause in order to maximize its chances of defeating the Russians in the East. Many in the *Hilfverein*, on the other hand, had strong ties to the Allied countries, which reinforced their reluctance to support political Zionism in Poland. The *KfdO* sent an emissary to the United States with the partial support of the German government. Isaak Straus, a wealthy banker and a committed Zionist, visited the United States in the fall of 1914. Most American Jews were pro-German at the time, because they were so strongly anti-Russian. Thanked by Paul

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[163] Szajkowski, "The Komitee für den Osten and Zionism," 207-215.

[164] Ibid., 217.

[165] Isaiah Friedman, "The *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*, the German Foreign Ministry and the Controversy with the Zionists," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1979), 312.

Nathan for his support of German in the early days of the war, Jacob Schiff had replied: "How else could it be in a fight by Germany against Russia?" Second only to J. Pierrepont Morgan as the most powerful American banker and a native German with close ties still to the Jewish business elite of his home country, Schiff made it his business to stop loans to Russia during the war—as he had done since the 1890s. Such notable Americans as the lawyer Louis Marshall, leader of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), openly favored the Entente "because of the love and admiration that I have always had for England and France, whom I regard in this great conflict as the protagonists of humanity against despotism." Thus Isaak Straus's—and the *KfdO*'s—main task was to encourage American Jews to press their own government, and by extension the German government, to act to help Jews in Poland as part of the war effort. As long as Americans remained on the sidelines, Jews in the United States had leverage on the German government to come to the aid of Polish Jews. If the United States sided with the Entente, the Russians would be given a free hand to continue their murderous ways against the *Ostjuden.*[166]

The greatest problem for the Polish Jews was a basic and immediate one: the lack of food. In the winter of 1914-15, the *Ostjuden* were on the verge of starvation. Ludendorff drew on military provisions to feed the local population, and he called on the *Jüdisches Hilfskomitee für Polen und Litauen*, a subcommittee of the *Hilfverein,* to assist the Army in keeping the population alive. Long experienced in providing relief for Polish Jews, the *Hilfverein* mobilized to send food and other support to the *Ostjuden.* Most of the *Hilfverein*'s money came from American sources, mainly the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), composed

[166] Zosa Szajkowski, "Jewish Relief in Eastern Europe 1914-1917," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 10(1965), 24-27

of well-assimilated and wealthy American Jews. Jacob Schiff worked furiously to raise millions of dollars for relief. He had collaborated with the *Hilfverein* leadership, and Paul Nathan particularly, since the organization's inception in 1901 in facilitating the migration of *Ostjuden* to the U.S. Schiff and the American Jewish Committee still relied on the *Hilfverein* for guidance about relief work. Like Nathan, Schiff was opposed to political Zionism, but again in common with his German friend, the American banker had been raising money to support Jewish settlements in Palestine for the past decade. The more recent Jewish immigrants to the United States from Russia formed another American committee, an indication that conflicts over policy and organization were not confined to Jews in Germany. Because the chaos of war allowed no sure way to get relief to the suffering Jews in Poland, the Americans often felt their efforts were stymied, or at least delayed to the point of frustration. [167]

Within weeks of the war's beginning and continuing through the early months of conflict, Jews in Germany and the West struggled to act on behalf of the *Ostjuden*. Though deeply committed to providing help, western Jews suffered vexing divisions about how to proceed. Moreover, those committed to humanitarian relief did not yet know the severity of the problem in the East.

Bodenheimer immediately ran into difficulty in forming a united front of German Jews to support his plan for Jewish political autonomy in the East. The close association of Bodenheimer and Oppenheimer with a Zionist agenda was a political liability for them with both Orthodox Jews and the Assimilationists, who had little tolerance for a form of nationalism that competed

[167] Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1999); Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters, II* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928).

with German patriotism. Invited to join the *Komitee für Befreiung russischer Juden,* James Simon and Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein* informed Bodenheimer that, though fully committed to providing humanitarian aid for the *Ostjuden*, they could not support a political agenda for the East. A significant segment of German Zionists also objected to the political goals for Polish Jews. The World Zionist Organization had declared its neutrality in the war, and following that position, the dissenting German Zionists had reservations about Bodenheimer's close association with Germany's war aims. They threatened to abandon the new committee altogether. [168]

At that point, in early October 1914, Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff summoned Bodenheimer and Oppenheimer to the High Command headquarters in Radom, Poland, to discuss the situation with the *Ostjuden.* The two Jews were anxious to serve the famous military men: "The names of Hindenburg and Ludendorff were on every tongue," Bodenheimer later wrote, "Their deeds were almost legendary." As they traveled from Berlin to Radom, they were startled at the sight of the *Ostjuden*. "We are in the habit of looking upon native dress as a sign of backwardness," Bodenheimer confessed about the black hats and kaftans of the *Ostjuden*. "Among the Jews of eastern Europe this mode of dress was the common habit of the people and a sign of their peculiarity." It is this, he wrote later, "which makes them a source of annoyance in the eye of the assimilated Jews. It shows that the Jews are still a separate people." In one village the Poles in lambskin coats and fur caps stood on one corner of the square, the Jews in black cloth kaftans on the other. "They looked like two hostile camps," Bodenheimer wrote, "eyeing one another distrustfully." All around were burned-out houses, fallen trees, and dead horses, the carrion being consumed by dogs and crows. They passed large groups of injured soldiers on foot.

[168] Bodenheimer, *Prelude to Israel*, 241.

Russian prisoners of war, some of them Cossacks, were surprisingly well-dressed. Finally arriving at Radom, Bodenheimer saw only Jews in the city, and those he met still reeled from the recent Russian retreat. On the pretext that Jews had been sniping at the invaders, the Russians had summarily hanged three local Talmudic scholars "amid the wails of a frightened crowd." [169]

Ludendorff received the two Jews warmly, though Bodenheimer later concluded that, "his disposition betrayed calculation and a cold heart." He suspected that they were to the general "only pawns on the chess board of the war." Still, Ludendorff showed lively interest in Bodenheimer's suggestion of creating Polish-Jewish support for German authority in the East. Bodenheimer and Oppenheimer were to communicate to the Polish Jewish community Germany's plans to improve the living conditions of the *shtetl* Jews following the Central Power's political victory, and thus win their sympathies and support. Bodenheimer asked whether the currently occupied territory would remain safely under German control, to which Ludendorff replied that there would be no need for a retreat or the surrender of Galicia. The general's optimism would prove unwarranted.[170]

Afterwards, Ludendorff forwarded Bodenheimer's recommendation to Hindenburg, who agreed with Bodenheimer that it was vital to instill in the newly acquired Jewish communities in Galicia the German Army's higher standard of culture. This agreement paved the way for the Committee for the Liberation of the Russian Jews to begin its work in southern Poland.[171] Bodenheimer soon received a letter from Hindenburg saying he had "a benevolent interest in the

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[169] Bodenheimer, *So Wurde Israel*, 191-96.

[170] Ibid., 191-96.

[171] Ibid., 194.

endeavors of their Committee and am prepared to further its aims."[172] The Army set up a communication route via Army chaplain Dr. Arthur Levi to insure constant communication between the relief agency, located in Galicia, and the General Staff in Kovno.

The vicissitudes of war caused an alteration of Germany's war aims and, with that, the goal of a Jewish state in annexed territory in the East. On 26 October 1914, the Russians pushed the German Southern and Austro-Hungarian Armies out of South Poland.[173] As Bodenheimer described the German retreat, he concluded that, "our forward-looking political plan for establishing a national federation from the Baltic to the Black Sea had to be postponed."[174] The retreat of German troops shifted the goals of the agency from seeking the creation of a Jewish state to achieving cultural autonomy for the Jews within Poland. The Reich, with the help of Bodenheimer and his committee, began planning for negotiations with Polish leaders about the integration of the Jews into the Polish state.

Bodenheimer returned from the East to deal with dissension in the *Komitee für Befreiung russischer Juden*. Following the directives of the World Zionist leadership, many German Zionists declared their opposition to Bodenheimer's group. He knew that his efforts would fail without Zionist support. To maintain some support, he resigned his position as head of the Jewish National Fund, which organized and financed settlements in Palestine. He agreed that all efforts to relieve the *Ostjuden* would steer clear of any involvement in Palestine. He agreed to change the name of the organization to *Komitee für den Osten* to evoke a broader, more

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[172] AA, *Der Weltkrieg* No.11, adh.2, 714/298 Bl.1-2.

[173] Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1*99.

[174] Bodenheimer, *So Wurde Israel*, 197, 255.

humanitarian outlook, as opposed to that of a political program heavily focused on Jewish political autonomy in the East.[175]

The focus of Bodenheimer's committee moved away from the creation of a Jewish state in the East. The *Komitee für den Osten* emphasized the cultural autonomy of the Galician Jews, which meant working more closely with Polish leadership to begin integrating Jews into Polish society. The delicacy of this new relationship required Bodenheimer to take on a different role. The committee created two offices, one in Berlin to address the political responsibilities of the committee and the second office in Stryz, Galicia, to assist the German Army with the local populations. Because of the enormity of his task, Bodenheimer handed the leadership of *KfdO* to Vladimir Wolf Kaplun-Kogan, a political economist born in Yalta, Russia. Kaplun-Kogan had published a notable book on the migration of Jews. His knowledge of the *Ostjuden* led him to emphasize that the language and culture of Polish Jews could be used positively to advance Germany's position in the East. He and Bodenheimer agreed that Yiddish could become an instrument for the propagation of German influence in the region. They promoted the idea that Yiddish was a German dialect useful to Germany's interests. If Germany embraced the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Poland, the *Ostjuden* could provide a bulwark of German speakers against the nationalistic and often anti-German tendencies of the Poles.[176]

At the end of 1914, the *Komitee für den Osten* had become an invaluable resource to the Foreign Ministry's goals in the East. In December 1914 Bodenheimer went to Galicia to support

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[175] Szajkowski, "Komitee für den Osten," 211-12.

[176] Isaac Landman (ed), *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., 1942), 311-12. Kaplan-Kugan's book titled *Die Wanderbewegungen der Juden* was published in 1913.

the German Army's relief of Jews as they struggled to recover from the violent retreat of the Russian Army. There he encountered the Orthodox Rabbi Leopold Rosenak, a *Feldrabbiner* assigned to the *Südarmee* headquartered at Stryz. Rosenak came to the East from his position as the Chief Rabbi of Bremen and one of the founders of the *Hilfsverein* in 1901. Through the *Hilfsverein,* he had long been involved with facilitating the migration of Eastern European Jews fleeing Russian pogroms. Under Rosenak's supervision in 1913 alone, the *Hilfsverein* had sent 35,000 migrants to the United States from the port of Bremen. Now Rosenak was face-to-face with the Polish Jews in their own environment. He began to assist with the relief effort among Jews in Stryz. Soon, however, the *Südarmee* was forced to retreat, leaving Galician-Jewish communities again subject to Russian Army terror. According to Rosenak, "during the nine months of Russian occupation, there was an uninterrupted chain of suffering." Not until the German Foreign Ministry read Rosenak's report did they fully realize the enormous task that was at hand in the region. Rosenak observed that, before the German Army's arrival into the region, "the Russians plundered, raped, and shot the Jewish population, and expulsions to Siberia were daily occurrences." Rosenak praised the efforts of the German Army, claiming that "we (the German Army) are the genuine liberators for the entire Jewish population."[177]

According to his orders from Ludendorff, Rosenak's mission was to support and represent both the German Jewish soldiers and the non-German Jewish civilian population on the Eastern Front. He was charged with leading religious services, counseling Jewish soldiers, visiting the wounded and sick in hospitals, and maintaining contact with soldiers' families. In addition, Rosenak was asked to improve understanding between German soldiers and the local

[177] Minnie Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak: Vom Feldrabbiner zum politischen Engagement* (Jerusalem: Bulletin des Leo Baeck Institutes, 1988), 5-6, 11.

Jewish communities. He became the conduit of aid for all Jewish communities in the area; thousands of people came to him with all their problems and suffering. In turn, he gave them moral support and relieved them, if only temporarily, from the feeling of fateful isolation. Rosenak did succeed in reducing tensions amongst the various ethnic groups in the region, for which efforts the military authorities formally thanked him. "The blessing of your work," Ludendorff wrote to Rosenak, "is not merely that you have acquired so much desperately needed supplies, but also that you have brought the population back to well-regulated work."[178]

Although the losses on the battlefield in 1914 had forced the German Foreign Ministry to reconsider its plans to annex much of the East into the *Kaiserreich*, the High Command operated in the East as if it intended to acquire and hold Poland and Lithuania at least. While German civilians were eventually appointed to oversee the General Government of Warsaw, Hindenburg and Ludendorff commanded both the Army and the civil administrations east and north of Warsaw, called Ober Ost, in a distinctly militaristic manner. By placing the Army in charge of a civilian population, the military mindset imposed a regimental style of governing. Ludendorff viewed the East as a long-term project to civilize and cultivate the region on the German societal model, at least as understood by the Army. The General Staff saw its military system as the school for Poles to learn how to build a nation on the German model. Thus, the Eastern Front remained to Germans not only the site for military maneuvers but also a region for settlement and colonization.[179]

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[178] Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak,* 7, 13-15.

[179] Strachan, *The First World War*, 149.

By 1 November 1914, the German Ninth Army was back where it had begun before the siege on Warsaw, except that it had lost 21,350 soldiers. The First Army had lost 50,000 soldiers. The Russians counted 15,000 dead and 50,000 wounded.[180] The October attack was the first of a series of attempts by the Germans to capture Warsaw. Ten days after the first retreat, Hindenburg made another attempt at Warsaw, culminating in the Battle of Łódź between 11 November and 6 December 1914. The results of the Battle of Łódź were inconclusive, both sides having achieved their most important objectives. The Russians had repulsed the Germans and saved Warsaw, which had been the objective of the original German offensive. The Germans, for their part, had caused the Russians to abandon their offensive into Silesia. Superior numbers on the Eastern Front had given the Russian army the advantage in the fall of 1914. The struggle on the Western Front had bogged down into a war of attrition, which left no additional German troop support for the East.

At the end of 1914, the Russian offensive had moved as far west as it would get for the entire war. In December hostilities were effectively halted for two months by bad weather. In February 1915 the Germans gathered reinforcements to renew an assault on the Eastern Front and began pushing Russian forces back eastward. As the Russians reversed course and the Germans achieved more control over Poland, the Kaiser's men confronted the suffering among the Jews they intended to make their allies during the war—and beyond it.

[180] Stone, *World War One*, 79-81.

Chapter 4: Beside the Blood of Thy Neighbor: Poland, January to October 1915

As the German Army regrouped on the Eastern Front in the winter of 1914-15, it faced a formidable challenge in overcoming a Russian Army that had proved to be more tenacious than expected. At the same time that the Germans were struggling on the battlefield, they confronted huge logistical issues in their occupation of the East. The German Army rabbi Arthur Levy was shocked by what he saw when he arrived in Poland. In December 1914 Levy reported on conditions in Radom and other cities, and his accounts appeared in newspapers as far away as the United States. He described the fate of Rebbe Alexandrower, "famed throughout Poland . . . revered as a saint here by the entire community, and who, spending his days over the Talmud, studying in solitude and pious meditation, busied himself not at all with the affairs of this world." The Russians hanged Rebbe Alexandrower. Levy counted pogroms in 215 places and "no end of this terror is in sight." In Stasew eleven Jews in their praying shawls and shrouds had been hanged in the synagogue on Yom Kippur. In Bechawa near Lublin, 78 Jews had been hanged in one day on charges of espionage. In Łódź, 15,000 small tradesmen had their property taken from them and were left destitute. "This is a picture, in brief excerpts, of the unprecedented persecution of Jews in this country," Levy explained in an article in the *New York Times*. "I have considered it my duty to present it to you in some of its most striking phrases—my duty toward truth, culture, and Judaism." Then the rabbi quoted the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, the third book of the Torah, on one's responsibility to others: for 'thou shalt not stand beside the blood of thy neighbor.'"[181]

[181] "Tells of Russians' Murder of Jews," *New York Times*, February 4, 1915.

For Rabbi Levy to help his fellow Jews in the East, however, things had to improve for Germans on the battlefield. During the first battle of Warsaw, which occurred between 19 and 30 October 1914, German and Habsburg troops failed to take the city and withdrew as a fierce winter freeze set in during December. At this point, Paul von Hindenburg was elevated from Commander of the Ninth Army to Supreme Commander of the East. In January 1915 Erich Ludendorff, who remained Hindenburg's Chief of Staff, reported to Berlin that "Austria's emergency is our great incalculable," which signaled Army Chief General Falkenhayn to send four corps from the Western Front to reinforce the Eighth Army in East Prussia and to prepare for a second Masurian Lake offensive. Blizzards halted the launching of the offensive until February and left the Tenth Army all but stranded and in poor fighting condition. To catch the Russians off guard and not alert them to the Masurian offensive, the Ninth Army, under the direction of August von Mackensen, attacked Bolimów east of Warsaw on 31 January. On 7 February the Eighth Army, commanded by General Otto von Below and supported by the German Tenth Army under General Hermann von Eichhorn, attacked to the north in order to envelop the Russian Tenth Army. The offensive proved to be successful until the move on Osowiec at the end of February, where the Russian Twelfth joined the Tenth Army and forced Ludendorff back into East Prussia. There the Germans held. The Russians then turned their attention to the Carpathian Mountains to the south. The Habsburg Army lost two-thirds of its strength when Przemyśl fell on 19 March 1915.[182]

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[182] Stone, *The Eastern Front,* 122, 116; Erich Ludendorff, *Ludendorff's Own Story: August 1914-November 1918: The Great War from the Siege of Liege to the Signing of the Armistice as viewed from the Grand Headquarters of the German Army*, vol. I (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919), 142.

By the end of April the Habsburg Army was exhausted and could no longer hold its position in the mountains, therefore putting Silesia and Budapest in jeopardy. The Austrian collapse came at a time when the Western Front had bogged down. Because the war on the Western Front had failed to yield success, the Germans needed a decisive victory against Russia—in the hope of forcing it out of the war. The Western stalemate meant that Falkenhayn could afford to send several units to the East, which were formed into the German Eleventh Army under General von Mackensen. Meanwhile, Ludendorff sent some of his troops south under the command of General Georg von der Marwitz. In early May the Germans and Austrians launched the Tarnów offensive in Western Galicia, a two-pronged attack intended to halt the Russian offensive in the Carpathians and stop their movement across Congress Poland. The German Eleventh and Austrian Fourth Armies moved eastward. On 2 May the Eleventh Army caught the Russians by surprise and collapsed their lines. By 1 June the Russians were fleeing Galicia. On 22 June, Lwów was liberated after nine months of brutal occupation. In mid-July, the German Eighth and Tenth Armies moved from the north to the south, and the well-rested German Ninth Army, under the command of Field Marshall Prince Leopold of Bavaria, moved toward Warsaw from the west. On 5 August the Russians abandoned Warsaw. The three German armies then drove rapidly eastward, and by 25 August Brest-Litovsk had fallen to them.[183]

The Great German Advance eastward in the spring and summer of 1915 forced the Russians into full retreat, and as they abandoned Western Poland kilometer by kilometer, they left a path of violence and destruction through the Polish population. The German counter-offensive and the Russian retreat caused some of the worst physical destruction known in

[183] Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 121, 142; Ludendorff, *Ludendorff's Own Story*, 165, 171, 273.

warfare up to that time. After their defeats at Gorlice and Gromnik, the Russian High Command ordered its troops to take all machinery, grain, and livestock and to burn or blow up everything else. Russian soldiers systematically destroyed railroads and the equipment attached to them, bridges, and oil wells. As they won important victories on the battlefields, the Germans also caused much collateral damage to the countryside and the civilian population. The level of human suffering that resulted from military engagements and the Russians' determination to remove Jews from Poland shocked both victims and observers alike.[184]

The Russian Army looked for an explanation for the bad turn of its fortunes in Poland and found it among the Jews. Russian defeats at Shavli and Kuzhi were attributed to Jewish aid to the German Army. "We have heard many rumors and they have been published in German papers, that the Jews are helping the Germans everywhere," a Russian general told his troops. "Not only do the Jews give the Germans food and shelter, but they are also their best and most trustworthy spies, always ready to serve them to the utmost in order to harm the interests of Russia. The Jews see in a German victory their salvation from the yoke of the Russian Czardom and of the Polish anti-Semitism." When taking a town, the general said, the leaders of the Jewish community should be taken hostage. "At the same time a warning should be given to all Jews that if any one of them should in any way help the enemy, even after we have left the town, these Jewish leaders will be killed," the general ordered. "And this warning should really be carried out at the first opportunity."[185] Russian soldiers were ordered upon occupation of an area to look for wireless telegraph equipment, signaling stations, and messenger pigeons among Jews. The

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[184] American Jewish Committee, *Jews of the Eastern War Zone*, 48-56.

[185] "Russian Distrust of Jews," *New York Times*, June 5, 1915; "Russia's Expulsion of Jews," *New York Times*, August 15, 1915.

Russians were then besieged by accusations from the gentile Polish population of Jewish spying.[186]

War-weary and now defeated Russian troops took out their frustrations on the Jewish population. The retreat turned into mass attacks of murder, pillage, and rape. Once again Jewish homes were burned. Russian troops and Cossacks drove Jews like cattle from the Galician towns of Delatyn, Sokal, Kamionka, Rawa Ruska, Żółkiew, Brody, Gródek Jagielloński, and Horodenka. In Sniatyn in Eastern Galicia, they forced more than 4,000 Jews into the town square and hanged nineteen of them for alleged treason, while Russian soldiers looted Jewish houses and raped Jewish women. Thousands of Jews were finally driven to the Russian-Galician border where they were left without food and shelter. In a cruel maneuver in March 1915, Grand Duke Nicholas, the supreme commander, ordered that Jews be expelled westward, *toward* the enemy lines. He justified this inhumane tactic by citing Jews' alleged sabotage and making the dubious claim that they had provoked Austrian reprisals against Ukrainians.[187]

Tens of thousands of Polish Jews were deported in a more organized fashion. By early March most Jews had been sent from the occupied areas of Kovno, Lublin, and Warsaw to Siberia. The Russians expelled 8,000 Jews from the town of Zaleszczyki, killing many Jewish men in the process. The Russians failed to provide adequate food and clothing for the people they rounded up for deportation, nor did they show any mercy to those they pressed into labor camps and worked without pay under the supervision of violent Cossack guards. Jewish deportees were locked in rail cars, often without food and water, and then moved eastward to

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[186] American Jewish Committee, *Jews of the Eastern War* Zone, 48-56.

[187] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland,* 52-3.

Kiev and other cities. There they sometimes were held in cars indefinitely. When trains full of Jewish deportees arrived in Kiev in early 1915, Russian authorities turned the cars around, without providing food or water to the people locked inside. On one train with 3,000 Galician deportees, seventy-six died and others went insane. The Russian Army had expected to benefit from the Jews' confiscated property. In some instances they focused their removal efforts on Jewish doctors, politicians, merchants, and rabbis—people who owned property that the Russians wanted, though often Poles and Ukrainians had rushed in first to take everything of value. When the Russians finally were able to stop their retreat in the late summer of 1915, they had given up Congress Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, but still controlled parts of Galicia and continued to abuse the Jewish population there. In the winter of 1915-16, they would work 3,000 Jews in Tarnopol in sub-freezing temperatures, causing the deaths of many of them.[188]

As the Russian Army retreated eastward in 1915, it left devastation that shocked all who saw it. Some 4,000 Polish towns and villages had effectively been demolished. The only artifacts of these places that the British reporter Robert Crozier Long found throughout the countryside in May 1915 were "gaunt, erect pillars," remnants of thatched cottages that had caught fire from the first shelling. Frequently, "only ugly rows of brick chimneys remained." Along twenty miles of the Nida River, Long counted eighteen out of thirty villages that either had been burned or blown up in order for Habsburg mortars to search out Russian trenches. Residents had been given ten minutes to leave the towns. "Refugees assure me that in a circle extending thirty miles around Łódź only five villages were spared," Long reported. Fields where winter grain should have been growing were now wastelands, scarred by military trenches and

[188] Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 54-59, 122-29.

criss-crossed with huge tangles of barbed wire. Mortars and incendiary fire had leveled huge expanses of forest. Bombs had knocked down factories in the industrial cities. The debris of battle and retreat often left roads impassable and rendered the delivery of food and medical supplies impossible in much of Poland.[189]

Many thousands of Poles were "huddled in the tottering fragments of cottages, while 10,000 are shivering in the abandoned trenches and terraced Russian dugouts at Skaryszew," Long wrote. "Every second man is a refugee." Refugees tramped the roads "begging despairingly from people themselves beggars." The destruction in Poland's larger cities— Łódź, Warsaw, and Kielce—was equally devastating. Only about a third of houses remained intact in Warsaw and Kielce, and to make the homelessness in the cities worse, they were filled with refugees from the countryside. Warsaw had 60,000 refugees, a third of them Jews. Long found 15,000 refugees in Radom and 20,000 in Kielce. A Warsaw rabbi was certain that 100,000 Jews from Łódź, Piotrków, and Lowicz were homeless. "Poland's population is suffering as no Europeans have suffered since the Thirty Years' War," the reporter concluded.[190]

Amid this destruction in the summer of 1915, the *Kaiserreich* embraced three main goals in the East. It had to solidify gains made on the battlefield and work for the total defeat of the Russians. The German High Command hoped either to knock the Russians out of the war altogether or to gain a separate peace with them. Second, it needed to relieve suffering on the part of Polish civilians to make its occupation workable. Third, it intended to create a pro-

[189] "Burnt-Out Poland Literally a Desert," *New York Times*, May 10, 1915.

[190] Ibid.

German political attitude among Poles. All three goals would prove to be more difficult than anyone could imagine in mid-1915.

As the German Army moved quickly to shore up its control of newly-occupied territory, it worked to gain the support of Poland's war-devastated Jews. When the German Army crossed into the Pale of Settlement, it confronted hundreds of thousands of starving and terrorized Jews. The Jews hoped the occupiers would relieve them from decades of violence under the Russian regime—and from the special horror caused by the war. To maximize its efforts in winning the support of the *Ostjuden*, the High Command and the Foreign Ministry deployed a number of talented German Jews. They fell into two groups: a cadre of Army rabbis who ministered to soldiers and civilians, and a group of civilian administrators and cultural liaisons who worked to shape the relationship between Germans and Polish Jews in ways favorable to the political agenda of the *Kaiserreich.*

It was hardly surprising then that the Jewish population of Poland welcomed German troops. "Christen und Juden, sonst wütende Feinde," began a popular song repeated during the German advance, "Aber im Russenhass eine Gemeinde." ("Christians and Jews are violent foes, but they're united when it comes to hating the Russians.") A German newspaper published in Warsaw claimed that the "advance patrol and officers were received with indescribable jubilation, particularly by the Jewish population."[191] A Jewish leader in Vilnius exclaimed: "The Jew has suddenly, as if by magic, ceased to feel like a pariah, and now struggles energetically for his political, civil, and national rights."[192]

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[191] Songs quoted in Szajowski, "Komitee für den Osten," 203-204

[192] Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926 (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 39.

German soldiers typically went East with some dread. "We began our trip to Poland, frankly, not very enthusiastic," Unterarzt Otto Köhler, a Jewish medical assistant, wrote from Rzeczyca bei Tomaszow, "because we had never thought of coming to the East, and according to newspaper reports, it was bad in Poland and Galicia in every respect."[193] Köhler was startled by the difference between the East and Germany. "There are no roads, just paths, and the bad trails have been and remain a major obstacle," Köhler said. "The general impression crossing the border was in brief that one believed one had gone from a good room to a dunghill."[194]

"I find Poland more interesting," Herbert Czapski, a German-Jewish medical officer, wrote on his arrival at Warsaw. He and his co-workers had "very cordially been taken up" by the local Jews. "To a man, the Jews welcome us with open arms and utter obedience." Nevertheless, it was another world, "another people whom one got to see, doubly interesting if one himself is a Jew." There was an "immense difference" between his residence in the *Krähwinkel* (field hospital) and the homes of the local Jews.[195]

In their initial encounters, German soldiers, even the Jewish ones, often recoiled from the *Ostjuden*, who seemed to them alien in almost every way. Otto Köhler first sighted *Ostjuden* in the mostly Jewish town of Jerichow. "Our brethren made a bad impression," he wrote. "The fear and distress of the past weeks could be seen clearly in their faces. With unpleasant deference they welcomed us and wished us luck and success." Many houses were in ruins, and Köhler was

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[193] Otto Köhler letter, January 15, 1915 in Sabine Hank and Hermann Simon (ed.), *Feldpostbriefe Jüdischer Soldaten 1914-1918*, Band I &II (Teetz: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2002), 356-7.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Ibid., 156.

struck at how those still standing "were consistently low so you had to stoop on entering." He was shocked that the Jews' houses were terribly dirty; their windows were opaque with dirt. "With horror," Köhler wrote home, "I remembered that I would have to soon also live in this hole."[196]

Victor Klemperer, also Jewish and later professor of literature at the Technische Universität in Dresden, believed that German *Kultur* was vastly superior to the East. "I do not belong to these people, even if one proved my blood relation to them a hundred times over," Klemperer wrote. "I belong to Europe, to Germany, and I thank my creator that I was German."[197] General Otto von Moser thought a *shtetl* in Galicia was a "horrible dirty Jewish nest" where people "stand lazily around with their great round eyes, the men and boys with their dark little hats, the long black locks draped round the ears." Nothing like it existed in the Fatherland, Moser insisted.198 German soldiers typically reported on the Ostjuden as dirty people constantly trying to profiteer among the arriving Army. They also noted the relatively high incidence of Jewish women among prostitutes in Poland.199 German soldiers on the Eastern Front also responded negatively to Yiddish. Words had changed their meaning in modern vernacular in Germany, whereas the original meaning had held in Yiddish. This made the *Ostjuden* seem to the Germans a backward people.[200]

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[196] Ibid., 356-7.

[197] Victor Klemperer, *Curriculum Vitae. Erinnerungen, 1912-1918, vol. II* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 687.

[198] Quoted in Aschheim*, Brothers and Strangers,* 143.

[199] Ibid., 144.

[200] Ibid., 180.

The *Ostjuden* returned the favor about the comments made by the soldiers concerning their lowly state. They joked about the German preoccupation with cleanliness and order, which the Poles could not deny. According to a lowly beggar on the street, "Whereas before there was corn, now there is order . . . whereas before there were oxen, now there is order."[201]

Some soldiers, however, came to see the *Ostjuden* in a different light. Jacob Sonderling was a Hamburg rabbi commissioned just after the war began and assigned to Hindenburg's command. Born in Germany of Hungarian parents in 1878, the son of a Hasidic rebbe, Sonderling had lived in Moravia as an adolescent and studied at a gymnasium where he was taught by a learned Catholic priest. He attended university in Vienna and then the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, which taught the doctrines of Reformed Judaism advanced by Abraham Geiger—emphasis on Judaism as an evolving religion, using historical criticism in light of contemporary cultural realities, and on Jewish theology as a practical means for articulating religious and moral duties in a modern, open society.[202] Then Sonderling attended a *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, or Higher Institute for Jewish Studies, in Berlin. "I wanted to get the various views and answers to the never ending problem of the Jew," Sonderling later explained. "Breslau, influenced by German correctness, created and developed the historical approach, while Berlin, in those days, was the Mecca of the people who wanted to disappear and to be nothing but German citizens of Jewish persuasion." He was persuaded by Julius Wellhausen's higher criticism of the Bible. Sonderling earned his Ph.D. at Tübingen with a dissertation offering a critique of Kant's concept of reason. He became a rabbi in Göttingen,

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[201] Ibid., 181.

[202] Martin Goodman, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 764.

and then in 1907 was chosen rabbi of Solomon Temple in Hamburg, an important center for Reform Judaism in Germany. As a young Reform rabbi, Sonderling lived "through the storm and stress of the finding of ourselves—what are we, a people or a religion—and official Judaism insisted that we are not a people, ONLY a religion." In Lithuania amid terrible suffering and deprivation in 1915, Sonderling found clarity: "Here, for the first time, I met people who did not try to give a definition of what they are," he later wrote. "They were Jews who did not need sermons to be reminded of their Jewishness. Here I found spiritual knowledge, not restricted to professionals, of dignity and inner-independence." In Germany Jews were always labeled, Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform. "Here I was accepted as a Jew without attribution," Sonderling remembered. "Here surrounded by those people, I got the answers to my questions. . . . Those four years in [Poland] made me a Jew."[203]

The German Army turned to its *Feldrabinner*, including Jacob Sonderling, Arthur Levy, Aron Tänzer, and Leopold Rosenak, to address the relief problems of the approximately five million Jews living in the overall area of the Eastern Front. The initial reason for allowing the *Feldrabbiner* to accompany the Army was to support and minister to its own Jewish soldiers. There were at any one time about 30,000 Jewish soldiers on the Eastern front, and most of the time about ten rabbis.[204] The rabbis wrote to the families of Jewish soldiers who became

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[203]Jacob Sonderling Papers, American Jewish Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[204] Bryan Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers*: *The Untold Story Of Nazi Racial Laws And Men Of Jewish Descent In The German Military* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 72. "About 10,000 volunteered for duty, and over 100,000 out of a total German-Jewish population of 550,000 served during World War One. Some 78 percent saw front-line duty, 12,000 died in battle, over 30,000 received decorations, and 19,000 were promoted. Approximately 2,000 Jews became military officers and 1,200 became medical officers." About forty percent of German soldiers served in the East. The number of rabbis is based on a wide assortment of reports from rabbis, most of them deposited at the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin.

casualties of the war. The rabbis held Shabbat services in the field each week. When possible, they included in their services local Jews and Russian Jewish soldiers who were prisoners of war. They organized large observances for high holidays, often with funding for special meals from German-Jewish relief agencies. They worked with local Polish rabbis to facilitate relief agencies' work in aiding Jewish communities in the Austrian partition of Poland, Congress Poland, and Ober Ost. Their mission covered virtually the whole area affected by the violent and destructive retreat of the Russian Army.[205] The rabbis were so busy that they hardly had time to write home. Sonderling received a letter from Hermann Cohen, the famous German philosopher and his former teacher, saying: "I should answer your letter. Not having received a line from you, I have to write you to receive an answer."[206]

One of the Army's first efforts at the outset of occupation was to send Leopold Rosenak to the recently-occupied areas in March 1915. Ludendorff's orders to Rosenak were to support and represent the interests of both the German Jewish soldiers and the Jewish civilian population on the Eastern Front. He was charged with leading religious services, counseling Jewish soldiers, visiting the wounded and sick in hospitals, and maintaining contact with soldiers' families. He was asked to improve understanding between German soldiers and the local Jewish communities and to try to establish a school system for Jewish children. To perform all these duties, Rosenak had to travel extensively throughout Poland, sometimes going long distances in war-torn areas. He often held services for soldiers and invited local Jews to the observances. He worked to educate local Jews about how to cope with serious health problems such as typhus, diphtheria,

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[205] Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (ed.), *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten, 1914-1918* (Herford u. Bonn: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1983), 37.

[206] Sonderling autobiography.

and cholera. He wrote health-instruction pamphlets in Yiddish and Hebrew that the Army distributed.[207]

From Bialystok, Rosenak wrote to his family about the Shemini Atzereth observance (the eighth day of the Festival of Sukkot) he had conducted there. "It was a great satisfaction that my soldiers had such a nice Yonteff (a Jewish holiday on which work is forbidden)," he wrote. "I had 20 berches (potato hallah) baked and not a crumb was left." Rosenak spoke at the Great Synagogue in Bialystok and then at a public kitchen to 3,000 people. "The poor women with their children penetrated into the synagogue and like a stream, not to be stopped, poured to my seat and cried for bread," he later wrote. "It was a shattering moment which threatened to become dangerous with the general screaming and pushing." He asked the more prosperous families to take a poor family into their homes "to give them something warm to eat" and for "the poor ones to see that also the rich ones now suffer." As Rosenak left the gathering to go to beg for help from the mayor of Bialystok, the people called to him "Go with God—and bring us bread." He succeeded in getting help from the German Army: one day, he happily wrote his family, "I obtained bread for 5,000 to 6,000 people from the military authorities as well as herring and salt."[208]

Rosenak did succeed in relieving suffering and reducing tensions among the various ethnic groups in Poland. He became the conduit for all Jewish communities in the area; thousands of people came to him with all their problems and suffering. In turn, he gave them

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[207] Rosenak, *The Rosenaks of Bremen*, 15-19.

[208] Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak*, 5-15.

moral support and relieved them, if only temporarily, from the feeling of fateful isolation. In June 1915 the Army transferred him north to Lithuania.[209]

As the Great German Advance began in 1915, the *Kaiserreich* took seriously the importance of Poland's Jews to the growth of German influence in Poland. It remained committed to propaganda work among Polish Jews and open to working with all varieties of German-Jewish opinion to that end. In January 1915 the Foreign Ministry explained to military authorities that there were currently three organizations engaged "in propaganda activities" among the *Ostjuden*. It identified the Bodenheimer group as the Zionists, showed respect for the *Hilfsverein* and Paul Nathan, but perhaps had greatest hope for help from an Orthodox group led by Jacob Rosenheim of Frankfurt am Main, who the Foreign Ministry believed had "substantial funds at its disposal and is about to launch large-scale propaganda campaign" in Poland.[210] The Orthodox could also be most useful in influencing Jewish opinion in Poland: between sixty and seventy percent of *Ostjuden* were Hasidic or Orthodox, which meant that the German Orthodox were likely to be more readily accepted in the East than the Assimilationists *Hilfsverein* or the Zionist *KfdO*.[211]

The High Command took definite steps toward positive relations with the *Ostjuden* by deploying some of Germany's most talented Jews, nearly all of them Zionists, to develop knowledge about, and a relationship with, the *Ostjuden*. In late 1914 the Foreign Ministry established what would become the "Jewish Section" of its administrative structure. It engaged

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[209] Ibid.

[210] Szajowski, "Komitee für den Osten," 223.

[211] Alexander Carlebach, "A German Rabbi Goes East," 6. *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1961), 61.

nineteen-year-old Nahum Goldmann to do research on Jewish life and activities in the East. At the start of the war, Goldmann had been sequestered in a refugee camp for aliens; he had been born in Russia and migrated as a child with his family to Frankfurt. His father was an intellectual and ardent Zionist who had taken Nahum to the Tenth World Zionist Conference in 1911 when he was sixteen. At the start of the war, Goldmann was studying law and philosophy but like all other aliens was forced to leave his university. He volunteered for the Army but was turned down; Army service would have given him German citizenship, and he believed the rejection reflected the belief that quick German victory was so certain that there was no need to make another Jew a citizen. But in spite of such treatment, Goldmann strongly embraced German patriotism. He wrote a series of articles for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Der Deutsche Krieg* that justified German involvement in the war on broad historical and philosophical bases. In his article written for the *Der Deutsche Krieg* titled *Der Geist des Militarismus*, he insisted that Imperial Germany, based on its authoritarianism but also its social legislation, was a superior form of government to the individualistic liberalism of France, England, and the United States. He defined German militarism by its emphasis on equal duties as much as equal rights (the focus in the Western nations) and the orderly management of society. Germany's aristocratic principles of subordination gave it a spirit superior to the more democratic nations. "Let us say it in opposition to all those who want to annihilate Germany," Goldmann wrote, "the German spirit rules the world."[212] Years later, after a long life of engagement with Jewish and humanitarian issues, Goldmann would be embarrassed by his youthful opinions, but in 1914 they won him favorable attention and a job at the Foreign Ministry to manage information about the Eastern

[212] Nahum Goldmann, "Der Geist des Militarismus," *Der Deutsche Krieg: Politische Flugschriften* (Berlin und Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1915), 7-42.

Front. It was perhaps a telling reflection on the German Foreign Office that it vested such important responsibility in a non-German adolescent, albeit a brilliant one. Such well-informed figures as Albert Ballin thought the Foreign Office was filled with inefficient snobs.[213]

At the Foreign Office Goldmann studied news reports and public opinion and reported on what he found to the propaganda department. He paid close attention to public opinion in Poland. After a time he suggested to his superiors the usefulness of a department of Jewish Affairs, which was soon created with Goldmann as the primary investigator on circumstances among the *Ostjuden*.[214]

Wladimir Kaplun-Kogan also lent his expertise on the *Ostjuden* to the Foreign Office. The acknowledged expert on the *Ostjuden* among Germans at the start of the war, Kaplun-Kogan emphasized that the eleven million Yiddish speakers in the East could provide a bulwark of German sympathizers against the separatist tendencies of the Poles. In 1915, Franz Oppenheimer and Moritz Sobernheim, both highly respected academics and *KfdO* members, gave lectures to Reichstag deputies on "the Jargon as a German language" and "The German trade interests and the Jargon." As the occupation of Poland became more a reality, language use emerged as a highly charged political issue among Germans—Jews and Gentiles alike—and among Poles. It was clearly deemed practical to use Yiddish, or "Jargon," as it was commonly known, in German propaganda efforts among the *Ostjuden.* Contemplating long-term involvement in the East, the *KfdO* leadership assumed that the *Ostjuden*—and especially their children— would also learn the

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[213] Nahum Goldmann, *The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann: Sixty Years of Jewish Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1969), 45-64; Lamar Cecil, *Albert Ballin: Business and Politics in Imperial Germany, 1888-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 123.

[214] Raphael Patai, *Nahum Goldmann: His Missions to the Gentiles* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 45-54.

High German as they came to accept the German political leadership.[215] "Let's talk about Jargon as a middle German dialect and whether it should be taught in the schools," Franz Oppenheimer and Adolf Friedemann of the *KfdO* suggested to Arthur Zimmermann at the Foreign Ministry. "Or should High German and cultural superiority be taught?" That was, after all, "the culture of Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Lessing," and the Yiddish should not be taught in schools. "We have a natural responsibility to promote German thought in the East and not let them fall to Slavic ways." The *Ostjuden* could keep their colloquial language, the *KfdO* leaders seemed to be saying, but to advance politically they would have to embrace the true German language.[216]

The *KfdO* leadership believed that as the Jews of the East came to be better understood back in Germany, the *Ostjuden* would find acceptance among Germans and in turn would provide a pro-German element in the region after the war. The *KfdO* called on the artist and soldier Hermann Struck to write about the cultural roots of Yiddish to help the German Foreign office see the benefits of forming an alliance with Jewish communities in the East. A 39-nine-year-old Berliner, Struck was one of Germany's most accomplished artists, having published a seminal work, "*Die Kunst des Radierens*" [The Art of Etching], tutored such notables as Marc Chagall, and done portraits of Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Theodore Herzl. He was also a staunch Zionist and a founder of its religious segment, the Mizrachi movement. In January 1915 Struck completed a study on the language and culture among the Jews in Poland.[217]

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[215] Szajowski, "The Struggle for Yiddish during World War I: The Attitude of German Jewry," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 9(1964), 132-136.

[216] AA, R20.942, Memo from Franz Oppenheimer and Adolf Friedemann to Arthur Zimmermann, October 11, 1915.

[217] Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen, 1914-1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1920), 233.

Struck's *Jüdischdeutsche Texte. Lesebuch zur Einführung in Denken, Leben und Sprache der Osteuropäischen Juden* [Jewish-German Book for the Introduction to Thinking, Life and Language of the East European Jews] provided the German administration with a positive outlook on the position of the Jews.[218] In February 1915, this publication played a part in the negotiations between the *Reich* authorities and the local Polish-Jewish communities, because it helped German authorities see the close connections between their own language and Yiddish.

Later Struck would go to the Eastern Front and work as a translator for the Army, where he would meet an old friend, Sammy Gronemann, who was already on the Eastern front in 1915. The son of a rabbi from Gdansk and Hanover, Gronemann had studied the Talmud and then practiced law in Berlin but had gained more fame as a writer, satirist and editor for the humor magazine *Schlemiel*.[219] Like Struck, Gronemann was a longtime Zionist; the two had been to Palestine and knew Theodore Herzl. Gronemann had used his satire to poke fun at the Assimilationists Jews he encountered in Berlin before the war. On the Eastern Front in 1915, Gronemann was stationed with the *Sanitätskompagnien zu Feldlazaretten* [field hospital, sanitation department], working with doctors. Like many of the medical staff, he got seriously ill after two years and had to return to Berlin. When he returned to Poland, Gronemann joined Struck in a propaganda office of the First Army that worked on translating German materials into

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[218] Herman L. Struck, *Jüdischdeutsche Texte. Lesebuch zur Einführung in Denken, Leben und Sprache der Osteuropäischen Juden* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich's SCHE Buchhandlung, 1917).

[219] David A. Brenner, *German-Jewish Popular Culture Before the Holocaust: Kafka's Kitsch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 34.

Yiddish and censoring Polish newspapers. He also served as an interpreter between German soldiers and local Jews, translating Yiddish.[220]

The Foreign Ministry worked with both the *KfdO* and the *Hilfsverein* because each was suited to different areas across the vast Eastern Front. The *Hilfsverein* worked best in Warsaw and in the northern Ober Ost, while the *KfdO* served better in Galicia to the south, where, because of poverty and industrialization, most Jews were Hasidic or Zionist and few were Assimilationists. The small number of Assimilationists in the south was due to the earlier inability of the Jews to enter professions and the forced isolation of the Jews. The Hasidim had little desire to assimilate. In the north and in Warsaw, Jews were largely Orthodox and assimilated, and they expected to remain in Poland. In Warsaw Jews were allowed to reside within the city and become workers in industry, which gave rise to workers' parties such as the Bund and to the *Folkists*. Finally, Galician Jews were more supportive of Austria-Hungary and Palestine, while those in Warsaw and *Ober Ost* supported the German government and a Greater Polish government.

The Foreign Ministry continued to work with the *KfdO* to gain influence and protection for Polish Jews. In March 1915 the Foreign Ministry convened a meeting of its "Polen Committee" in Vienna with Austrian officials and the leaders of the *KfdO*. Present from the Committee for the East were Oppenheimer, Bodenheimer, Adolf Friedemann, and Professor Moritz Sobernheim to discuss the situation among Galician Jews. German officials operated on the assumption that "the newly created Polish community has many races living within its territory, with several languages and denominations, each wanting the guarantees and blessings

[220] Sammy Gronemann, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich: Erinnerungen an die Ostjüdische Etappe* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1924),11-15.

of free development which must become reality to all citizens." The various groups will "become part of the German Reich and must become a rich part of the German community," the Foreign Ministry declared. "There will be an infusion of High German language and culture" in Galicia, and in return Yiddish would "be allowed as a German dialect." Allowing use of the Yiddish dialect gave "the Jew full possibility of self-preservation and development of his language and his special culture."[221]

The German Jewish organizations remained deeply divided. Max Warburg, the Hamburg banker influential in the *Hilfsverein,* insisted in January 1915 that separate action on behalf of Jews specifically, rather than a collective effort on behalf of all sufferers in Poland, would only increase anti-Semitism. But fellow members of the *Hilfsverein* already had recognized that collective efforts would be difficult and perhaps impossible. In late January 1915 Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein* reported to Jacob Schiff on problems with the distribution of relief funds. Schiff had been working feverishly to raise relief funds for the *Ostjuden* and would continue to do so for the remainder of the war; later in the year he insisted that American Jews should raise $30 million ($660 million in 2010 dollars), and Schiff himself contributed heavily toward that goal.[222] In January 1915 Schiff had demanded to know how the American relief money was being distributed and where it was going. Schiff believed that there had been a major "*grossen Schaden*" [disaster] about relief money. The Foreign Office in fact sent a representative to the United States to smooth relations with Schiff.[223]

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[221] AA, *Der Weltkrieg,* no.11 adh. 2 Bd 3.1 Jan. – March 1915.

[222] *New York Times*, November 23, 1915.

[223] AA, *Der Weltkrieg,* no.11 adh. 2 Bd 3.1 28/1/1915: memo from Ludwig Hollander to Foreign Office.

Nathan had been committed to interconfessional relief efforts in Poland, but he now admitted to Schiff that he no longer believed that a fair distribution of relief funds was possible through any Polish national committee. "Based on my knowledge of the Polish-Russian relations at the moment, despite the best intentions of this large inter-denominational committee," Nathan said, "I do not doubt that the Jews will receive less distribution of funds and believe they will greatly suffer because of local injustice." If the Americans now sent emissaries to Poland, "they will be intimidated by the Poles, so an anonymous small quietly active Jewish Committee to which I belong, is a necessity." This specifically Jewish Committee, Nathan said, "will also have the task of eliminating the possibilities for serious hostilities to escalate between Poles and Jews. These hostilities are a double misfortune, because Poles and Jews are denouncing each other and the Russians and now the Germans are denouncing them both."[224]

In February 1915 Nathan travelled to Poland, first to badly-damaged Kalisch and then to Łódź. He now managed relief funds, about 24 million marks, most of them from American sources. He served as mediator between civil relief efforts and the military on how to help the *Ostjuden*. With the military going forward, many serious issues for helping the Polish Jews had to be dealt with—particularly food, clothing, and medical aid. "It is our responsibility as a cultured nation [Germany] to bring culture to the East," Nathan told the military authorities—a direct appeal to the German chauvinism that underlay much of the *Reich*'s attitude toward the East at the time.[225] In April 1915 he returned to Poland, but this time was unable to see much,

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[224] Paul Nathan to Jacob H Schiff, January 27, 1915, *Schiff Papers*, box 439, American Jewish Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[225] On the general attitude of Germans toward the territories to the east, see Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*.

especially after he briefly got behind Russian lines. Nathan went to Königsberg and Lithuania, where he met with the leadership of the civil administration, the military command of *Ober Ost*, and local Jewish organizations.

In his travels Nathan discovered that there was no cooperation between Christians and other relief committees, particularly the Jewish ones. This presented a huge problem for relief: Nathan had access to enough money to provide real help to Polish Jews, but the actual distribution of food and medical help was a perplexing issue. Apparently, the German government had expressed a preference for relief funds to be distributed through general, nonsectarian committees, but money turned over to a general Polish relief committee was reported to have gone only to Catholic Poles. In Kovno Nathan met with Oberst Ernst von Eisenhart-Rothe to discuss a plan for relief channeled through German military officers.[226] Nathan persuaded German authorities that relief funds for Jews should be handled through an exclusively Jewish committee. Accordingly, in September 1915 the *Hilfsverein* established the *Deutsche Vereinigung für die Interessen der ost-Europäischen Juden* [German Association on behalf of the interests of the Eastern European Jews], which was formally separate from the *Hilfsverein* but in practice one and the same. The new relief agency was politically and financially well-connected: its working committees were populated by James Simon, Max Warburg, Albert Ballin, and many other wealthy, assimilated German Jews.[227] Just as important, it had close ties to American philanthropists, especially Jacob Schiff. The *Hilfsverein* took progressively more responsibility for helping the *Ostjuden* as the war went on.

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[226] Ernst Feder, *Paul Nathan: ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1929), 110-116.

[227] Szajowski, "Komitee für den Osten," 217

Deep divisions remained, however, among the Jewish groups in Germany over how to help the Ostjuden. In 1915 the *Hilfsverein* leadership remained staunchly opposed to Zionism and reluctant to work with the *KfdO.* The *KfdO* at one point accused the *Hilfsverein* leadership of taking American money that was intended for the Zionist group, and then had to apologize when it discovered that the funds were in fact intended all along for the other group. "The miserable spectacle of a crass Ghetto spirit," Max Bodenheimer later admitted, "showed itself in a total lack of solidarity." German officials had thought they were working with a united Jewish front in the *KfdO*, only to hear harsh criticisms of the organization from other Jews. Kaiserreich ministers began to treat all Jews with some contempt. Otto Lewald of the Imperial Cabinet smiled contemptuously at the Zionist Bodenheimer one day when he said: "Every day some other represtatives of the German Jews present themselves to me. One day it is Jams Simon and Dr. Nathan, then it is Herr Rosenheim of Frankfort and Rabbi Monk [leaders of Germany Orthodoxy]; and they maintain unanimously that the Zionists are without any influence in eastern Europe. Whom shall I believe?"[228]

There were legitimate differences among German Jews of policy about the Ostjuden. In 1915, as the German Army occupied Poland and Lithuania, German anti-Semites began demanding *Grenzschluss*, the closing of the eastern frontier to Ostjuden. They raised specter of "judaised mongols"—many of them cripples, idiots, and sexually-diseased deviants—clamoring at the eastern border of Germany. The anti-Semites warned German Jews that *Ostjuden* emigration into the Fatherland was the certain way to cause the reinstitution of civic inequality for all Jews. Paul Nathan and Max Warburg submitted to the German Foreign Office of the

[228] Bodenheimer, *Prelude to Israel*, 263.

Hilfsverein their *Denkschrift* (memorandum) advocating the closing of Germany's borders to all Poles, not just Jews, until the Ostjuden raised their cultural and economic standards. Many German Jews, and not just the wealthy Assimilationists, feared an invasion. It was "not in Jewish interests to see 200,000 schnorrers [beggers] from the East coming into Germany," the prominent Zionist sociologist Franz Oppenheimer, Bodenheimer's close ally, wrote privately at the time. "The road to Germany must remain blocked for the caftan Jews." Other German Jews disagreed, and the issue escalated during the war. [229]

The various German Jews engaged with wartime Poland learned that the *Ostjuden* were even more opinionated and divided about religion and politics than they were, though the proportions of main groups were decidedly different. In the early 1900s Jews in Poland had become as heavily politicized. All the major Polish cities—Łódz, Posnan, Krakow, and especially Warsaw—had become centers of Jewish activism and political thought. Jews in Poland had many political parties, a reflection of the history of partitions and the deep divide over cultural issues. There were territorial or regional parties, class parties, and organizations that reflected disagreements over the efficacy of Jewish nationalism and which language should be used. "Thus a Jewish socialist might be Zionist, non-Zionist, or anti-Zionist, with a preference for Hebrew, Yiddish, or Polish culture," one scholar has explained: "Because many Jewish parties had no class character, they included among their members people with socially divergent views and were, therefore, prone to internal conflicts and splits. In addition, most Jewish parties,

[229] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers,* 174-6.

unlike those of other people, cut across international frontiers, so that global differences, as well as domestic ones, had to be reconciled."[230]

About two-thirds of Polish Jews were *Hasidic*, whereas in Germany there were few *Hasidim* and the closest group, the Orthodox, counted for a minority, perhaps a quarter of German Jews.[231] The *Hasidim* spoke Yiddish almost exclusively. The Hasidim generally opposed the Zionists, which they perceived as hostile to keeping faith as the foremost part of Jewish life. Zionists constituted a minority in Poland of about 30 percent, similar to the proportion in Germany, though they were even more divided than their fellow Jewish nationalists to the West. During the early years of the war, the Warsaw merchant Heschel Farbstein led the majority of Zionists with an agenda of full political involvement in Poland and relief work among poor Jews; he was committed to supporting Palestinian settlement but even more strongly to the exclusive use of classical Hebrew in Jewish schools in Poland. There were a few Zionist socialists who had founded in the *Poalei-Zion* party. There were also irreligious, anti-Zionist Jewish socialists among those who flocked to the city looking for work; they had organized the Jewish Workers' Party, the *Bund*. The Folkists, mostly petty-bourgeois merchants and traders, were centered on maintaining Jewish cultural autonomy in Poland, especially the exclusive use of Yiddish, and had relatively little interest in Palestine. The Folkists were particularly adept politically with the establishment of their *Folkspartei.*[232]

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[230] Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*, 261- 2.

[231] Alexander Carlebach, "A German Rabbi goes East," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book VI* (1961), 60.

[232] Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 49-53; Stefanie Schiller-Springorum, "Assimilation and Community Reconsidered: The Jewish Community in Königsberg, 1871-1914," *Jewish Social Studies*, 5

Assimilationists, who composed a majority of German Jews, were also prosperous middle-class people in Poland, but they formed a much smaller portion of the *Ostjuden*, perhaps five percent. Assimilationists strongly favored the use of Polish and generally opposed reliance on Yiddish or Hebrew. Their first concern was political emancipation, and to that end they were willing to forsake Jewish language and culture in order to be integrated in Polish society. "People say of them," the Berlin Zionist Moritz Soberheim declared, "that they are more Polish than the Poles." In December 1914, at a low point of Russian destruction of their country and abuse of Jews, a group of young Assimilationist Jews in Warsaw declared that their goal was "the elevation of the Jewish masses through enlightenment and their solidarity with the country and the Polish nation." They further opined that "the Jewish problem is a purely internal one" that could be "solved favorably only on this soil without interference from foreign political groups." The Assimilationists' strongest antipathy was for Zionists—and not just those from Germany. Russian Zionists, they said, were using Polish anti-Semitism as a pretense for meddling in Polish political affairs. Polish Zionists returned the contempt, insisting that the assimilationists were wrongly acquitting the gentile Poles of responsibility for mistreatment of Jews.[233]

As they got more involved in the situation in Poland, German Jews naturally took sides in the intramural divisions among the *Ostjuden*. Not surprisingly, Bodenheimer and the *KfdO* were alienated from the Polish assimilationists. They wanted the Polish liberal Jews to have as little influence as possible in shaping reconstruction and relief policy. Paul Nathan, on the other hand, thought the assimilationists should be listened to carefully, and he criticized Bodenheimer's

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(Spring-Summer, 1999), 113.

[233] Szajowski, "Komitee für den Osten," 228-231.

hostility to them. The biggest and most important question, though, was how the Germans would get along with the Orthodox and Hasidic Jews in Poland, and that would only be addressed when full and regular German occupation began.

The relations between Polish Jews, whatever their religious or political persuasion, and Catholic Poles loomed as a troubling challenge as the military conflict subsided in the summer of 1915. Over the past months, the deprivations in the country had worsened the anti-Semitism among Poles. Hostility was particularly acute in Warsaw, where 80,000 Jewish refugees lived in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions that had resulted in outbreaks of typhus. Jewish and Polish merchants competed for business, and Jews and Poles alike engaged in black market trading. In the fall of 1915 Polish government officials in Galicia began to dismiss Jewish employees from public service. With the tacit acceptance of Austrian authorities, they replaced Jews in the administration at Komarno, Lwów, Rymanow, and Boryslaw, and the result was intense hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Jews declared that gentile Poles mistreated them using the "Russian model." At the same time, the Polish press of several political persuasions complained bitterly about Jews' alleged pro-German sympathies. The anti-Semitism became so intense that German occupation authorities warned one newspaper to stop its diatribes with the threat of shutting it down. The anti-Semitic nationalist party, the *Endecja* [Polish National Democratic Party], which constantly assigned pernicious racial attributes to Jews, influenced much of the Polish press. Aleksander Świętochowski, the Polish nationalist public intellectual, accused Jews of war profiteering and collaboration with Germans and sabotage. Świętochowski insisted that Jews were trying to build "Judeo Poland" within the country, something he said that a true Polish nation would not tolerate because Jews were nomadic, had offensive personal traits,

and were therefore incapable of assimilation in a Catholic-dominated country. Much of the Polish press echoed Świętochowski's views.[234]

With the success of the Army's advance in 1915, German war aims remained consistent with what had been outlined in the September Program of 1914. The Imperial Chancellery consistently backed proposals for the annexation of a Polish Frontier Strip, as well as Lithuania and Kurland. The *Kaiserreich* still planned on extensive settlement of these areas with Germans and groups from the East that Germans believed would be loyal to their empire. There was much discussion about a possible Polish state that would be incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Germany, however, fully intended to make such a state subordinate to its overall authority. To the Germans, the potential usefulness of the *Ostjuden* in their geopolitical goals for the East continued to be a central assumption of their foreign policy. To that end, treatment of Jews during full-scale occupation was a crucial matter.[235]

On 5 August 1915 the German Army occupied Warsaw. A wide cross-section of Poles welcomed German soldiers with flags and hats waving.[236] It was a joyous day for many Polish Jews. "*Die Russen zaynen shvayne*," Jewish children in Poland sang as the Germans moved into Warsaw, "*die Daytshen zaynen fayne*." [The Russians are swine, the Germans are fine].[237] "You should have seen how the Jewish families," a German Jewish soldier wrote home, "had put all

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[234] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland,* 66-69.

[235] Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegzielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914–1918* (published in English as *Germany's Aims in the First World War:* New York: Norton, 1968*)* 114, 138-143.

[236] "Germans Describe Capture of Warsaw," *New York Times*, August 8, 1915.

[237] Szajowski, "Komitee für den Osten," 204.

their eatables and drinkables on long tables right in the middle of the street in order to regale the soldiers marching through." It was a strange sight, the soldier thought, "to see a group of elderly Jews, in their silken caftans, sleeves rolled up, standing around a barrel, one of them hacking ice into small bits, others cutting lemons into narrow strips and pounding in sugar. . . . It was easy to see that all these people, of the better business element every one of them, would have given everything they owned most willingly to relieve the tired soldiers."[238]

With the occupation of Warsaw, the *Kaiserreich* placed most of Congress Kingdom under German civilian administration, creating the Government General of Warsaw.[239] General Hans Hartwig von Beseler, a Prussian aristocrat from a military family, was made Governor of General Government of Warsaw. Beseler commanded all military and civil authorities in this region, and answered directly to the Kaiser. He determined to restore law and order to Poland and reverse what he considered to be longstanding Russian misrule. He also made some gestures to reconcile the Poles, including the re-opening of the University of Warsaw and of schools. Lithuania and Kurland to the north in September 1915 were placed under a military administration titled Administrative Area *Ober Ost* (East Command), commanded by Paul von Hindenburg but in effect run by Erich Ludendorff. They objected to Beseler's independent authority and to his relaxation of strictures over the Poles, but Beseler's Prussian self-confidence was equal to that of the two northern commanders. Krakow and parts of Galicia remained under Austrian occupation, ruled from Lublin by military governors.[240]

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[238] *New York Times*, August 15, 1915.

[239] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 54.

[240] Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 340.

German occupation immediately improved the political prospects for Jews in Poland, who had always been denied civic rights. Beseler immediately declared the end of all Russian-created governmental councils and ordered new elections for local governments in Congress Poland.[241] In August 1915, the newspaper *Im deutschen Reich* reported that "Jews now are emancipated under the new German administration of Russian Poland." According to the new municipal decree for the territories under German occupation of Poland, members of city councils and the town delegate boards were to be appointed. In Łódź, Pabianice, Wieluń, and other towns, the appointments had already taken place, and thus far the Jewish population was represented proportionally on these governing bodies. In Wieluń, for example, four Jews were appointed among the twelve seats available. Because of their strong educational and business backgrounds, Jews had also been appointed tax assessors.[242]

An early response of the German Foreign Ministry to the occupation of Warsaw was to move its *Dezernat für Jüdische Angelegenheiten* [Office of Jewish Affairs in the German Foreign Ministry] to the Polish capital.[243] It deployed the talented linguist and writer Nahum Goldmann to work on the communications with Polish Jews. Goldmann, now experienced in wartime propaganda, relied on both German-Jewish soldiers and rabbis to speak Yiddish with the Polish-Jewish population and to write for Jewish newspapers. To head the Office of Jewish Affairs, the Foreign Ministry sent Ludwig Haas, a forty-year-old lawyer from Karlsruhe in southwestern Germany and Liberal deputy to the Reichstag since 1912. His political experience

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[241] Ibid., 340.

[242] *Im deutschen Reich,* August 1915.

[243] Meyer, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 368.

may have been what prompted the call for him to leave the Western Front for Warsaw. The *KfdO* recommended Haas for the sensitive job, but he was not a Zionist. He did support Jewish settlement in Palestine, as of course did the leaders of the *Hilfsverein.* He was known to disagree with the strong anti-Zionist position of Orthodox Germans, who also doubted his religiosity as a Jew. Haas's centrist, pragmatic approach, as well as his significant political stature in Germany, made him a good choice for the difficult job in Warsaw.

A year into the war, German Jews continued to have their patriotism challenged, though they typically remained strong in their support of the Fatherland. When an English Jew, Dr. M. Epstein, wrote in the *News of London* that the *Kaisereich* was insensitive to its Jewish citizens, Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein* fired back in defense. Nathan understood that the Englishman was trying to persuade American Jews to support the Entente. German soldiers, Epstein reported, objected to the *Ostjuden*'s caftans; that the Kaiser's wife refused to visit Jewish hospitals; and that there were no Jewish chaplains in the German Army. Nathan contradicted the allegations point by point. "As a fellow Jew it is my duty to fight harmful errors, misconceptions, being spread by Dr. Epstein," Nathan wrote. "I believe that the terrible suffering of the Jews in Russia can be alleviated and perhaps eventually even eliminated with the present political constellation, in particular through the efforts of our co-religionists in the United States." But American Jews would surely be misled "if they receive a wrong picture from the [English] position about what was happening to German Jews," Nathan warned," or "if they believe [wrongly] that the German government is acting on anti-Semitism." In the fall of 1915, German Jews still felt strongly that they and their country were on the right course.[244]

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[244] CJA, *Bericht der Grossloge für Deutschland VIII U.O.B.B. Eingetragner Verein*, „ Eine wichtige Richtigstellung," 9 November 1915.

With occupation of a vast area on the Eastern Front, the Army rabbis faced huge new responsibilities amid difficult circumstances. Aron Tänzer, a 44-year-old Orthodox rabbi born and educated in Pressburg, Hungary (now Bratislava, Slovakia), and trained in rabbinical studies at Berlin and Bern, was stationed at Brest-Litovsk near the easternmost area of occupation in the fall of 1915. Tänzer had served congregations in Austria and Italy before going to a synagogue in Göppingen in Baden-Württemberg, where he was active in local civic life before volunteering for the Army in 1914. At Brest-Litovsk he noted the wholesale destruction caused by the war; the roads were impassable for any motorized vehicle. He commented wryly that "the riding lessons I took in Stuttgart were not superfluous, but very necessary."[245] In spite of the harsh circumstances, Tänzer was well pleased with his religious work, especially with the Rosh Hashanah observance in 1915. "I held the New Year celebration by myself with the help of Russian prisoners of war who assisted me in getting the Brest-Litowsk synagogue ready for three services," he reported. About 50 soldiers from different units attended each service. "Soldiers prayed, one blew the Schofar (sacred ram's horn) rather well, and I read the Torah," Tänzer reported. He preached a sermon at each service, which the soldiers heard "with deep seriousness" and which they received "with contrasting points of view." Hundreds of soldiers came to the three services held on Reconciliation Day, including officers and doctors. "The emotion of these hours will remain unforgettable to us to all," Tänzer believed.[246] The traditional rabbinical duties were far less taxing for Tänzer, however, than the needs of the local Jewish population, which were rising at an alarming rate in the area of Brest-Litovsk. "They live in indescribable wretchedness," he reported. The Jews are unable to meet the demands made of them by the

[245] CJA, 1, 75A Be2, Nr. 2, #501, Bl.4 3 Oktober 1915.

[246] Ibid.

command so they turn to the rabbis for relief from their discomfort and make every conceivable request." Tänzer had doubts if he was up to the tasks at hand. "I may not have the competence to meet the responsibilities, but I cannot simply watch the unhappiness of these people," he said. "I try to offer instruction, clarification, and consulting and often to give austere admonitions that patience and compliance go hand in hand." The beleaguered rabbi was hardly confident that his ministrations comforted the many in distress that he met. [247]

By the fall of 1915 the suffering that Aron Tänzer encountered in Brest-Litovsk was spread across Poland, and not just among Jews. Huge portions of the population had lost their homes and were living in makeshift shelters. Millions were malnourished and hundreds of thousands were literally starving. Many people ate only at soup kitchens, most of which were set up by the German Army. If food could be found, it came at a highly inflated price: butter and beans, for example, cost five times more in Poland than they did in the United States in 1915.[248] To address the awful and worsening conditions a full year into its engagement in the East, the *Kaiserreich* faced a huge challenge in its goal of winning the support of Poles for its war aims. As serious as the relief challenge was as the Germans looked forward, the political problems may have loomed even larger.

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[247] CJA, 7 Oktober 1915: „Neue Synagoge Berlin –1 (Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden), 75A Be2, Nr. 2, #501, Bl.4 – Report from Feldrabbiner Aron Tänzer to the German Foreign Ministry.

[248] "Thousands Starve to Death in Poland," *New York Times*, November 30, 1915.

Chapter 5: All Flesh of My Flesh and Bone of My Bone, November 1915 to October 1916

The German occupation of Poland and Lithuania in 1916 brought not peace but new kinds of anxiety among the Germans, the *Ostjuden*, and Catholic Poles concerned with the fate of the East. The occupation presented two pressing issues: how to relieve the suffering among Poles, especially the Germans' prospective Jewish allies; and how to manage the political situation to maximize Polish support for future German domination of Eastern European lands. One possible German war aim was to remove much of Poland's native population further east in order to make Congress Poland and Lithuania part of their empire. In the meantime, the German government continued to work with Jewish relief agencies to feed the masses of *Ostjuden* who were hungry and to develop schools for Jewish children. In 1916 the government advanced its propaganda efforts among Polish Jews through sponsorship of newspapers published in Yiddish. It deployed German Orthodox rabbis both to the civil and military administrations of O*ber Ost* and the General Government of Warsaw to try to win the support of the large Hasidic majority among the *Ostjuden*.

Producing a pro-German political environment proved to be, however, a mighty challenge. Reverses on the battlefield in mid-1916, both in the East and the West, left German policymakers less focused on domestic conditions in Poland and Lithuania and more worried about how to regain the upper hand in the war. Polish Jews were divided internally along several lines, which complicated the creation of a broad, pro-German posture. The German High Command consequently turned even more to their pool of talented German Jews to try to create an allegiance to the Central Powers among the *Ostjuden*. All the while, however, Polish

nationalism was growing and creating new pressures on Germans to accommodate the Catholic Poles, who had been often been anti-Semitic.

As the war went on, Poles, both Catholic and Jews, had abundant cause to feel increasing hostility to the occupying Germans and Austro-Hungarians. Both of the Central Powers systematically stripped Poland of raw materials and labor. It was estimated that 70 percent of the raw materials in Lithuania and Congress Poland were taken to Germany. The goal of the administration of *Ober Ost*, to the north of Poland's center, was under the direction of Erich Ludendorff, whose aim was to make that territory an autarchy. To that end the Germans confiscated livestock, draught animals, foodstuffs, and timber with little regard for the needs of Poles. Between January 1916 and July 1917, Germans took from Lithuania four-fifths of the 40 million pounds of potatoes gathered; six-sevenths of the 14 million tons of cattle slaughtered; and 97 percent of the butter and eggs gathered. Some appropriated goods, especially lumber, became German war materiel. The Germans took apart factories and even confiscated church bells to send back to Germany. By 1916 nearly half of Congress Poland's industrial plants had been closed. In Łódż the Germans took away all the machinery, jute, and cotton and put all textile workers out of their jobs. [249]

In 1916 the depredations wrought by the occupying Central Powers gave new force to Polish nationalism. Two competing Polish nationalist groups had long since formed. While fighting for the Central Powers against the Russians, Josef Piłsudski continued to advance the dream for a Poland within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth under his Polish Socialist Party. Pilsudski envisioned a pluralistic nation that accommodated Jews, Lithuanians,

[249] Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 340-1, 369.

Ukrainians, and Belorussians under one relatively tolerant Polish flag. A different vision of a Polish nation had taken shape under the direction of the National Democracy (*Endecja*), the "*Endeks*," led by Roman Dmowski. A partisan of the Entente, Dmowski embraced a kind of social Darwinism that expected the various ethnic groups to foreswear their particular identities in favor of the traditional Slavic culture of Poland. He and his movement were distinctly anti-Semitic. They had supported the vicious anti-Jewish boycott of 1913-14, an attempt to beggar Jews throughout Poland that only ended with the outbreak of war. They freely blamed Polish Jews for the successes of the Germans in the war and during the occupation. In 1916 the *Endeks* attitude gained adherents. Poles could express their anger at Jews when it was too dangerous to rebel against occupying armies. In Galicia, when Jews informed on local peasants for looting, Austrian officials forced Poles and Ukrainians to return stolen Jewish property. Such situations became a source of mounting hostility to Jews in occupied areas. Ukrainian peasants who had no nationalist attachment to Poland often shared an ugly anti-Semitism with the *Endeks*. The Jewish press in Poland made much of Jewish loyalty to the Central Powers, claiming that Jews were in effect the Germans' and Austro-Hungarians' only friends in the East. In this environment, for many and especially those on the far-right, Polish nationalism became effectively inseparable from anti-Semitism. [250]

By 1916 mistreatment by the Germans had turned many Polish Jews against the occupiers.[251] Jews were forced into labor and made to clean streets on the Sabbath and to open stores on Yom Kippur. Many Jews had no recourse but to engage in black market activities, and

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[250] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland,* 69.

[251] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front,* 182, 191.

many women to engage in prostitution, to survive. Germans extracted money from Polish Jews by demanding loans under threat of being shot or imprisoned. Germans rounded up both gentile Poles and Jews and transported them to Germany as forced labor. Jews in Vilna had to pay 600 marks to avoid going into forced labor. Germans monopolized and taxed the distribution of sugar, salt, and tobacco and therefore extracted from Poles financial support for the German regime and took away the livelihoods of many of them.[252]

"*Krieg ist Krieg"* [war is war] the Germans coldly explained to the hapless Poles. "The working assumption was that everything in the land belonged to the army," one scholar has written.[253] The situation was much the same under the Habsburg troops in Galicia.[254] Poles inevitably developed deep animosity to their occupiers, even the Jews who had been friendly when the Germans arrived.

In the winter of 1915-1916, residents of the Eastern war zone still faced a severe lack of food. Large segments of the population were on the verge of starvation. In early 1916 about 700,000 *Ostjuden* in some 225 villages and cities were in "urgent and continuous want," according to news reports. Almost a half million of these sufferers were in Congress Poland, and 50,000 of those were described in a *New York Times* report as "persons who are without homes and in particularly distressful circumstances." The number of needy was increasing constantly;

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[252] Zosa Szajokowski, "East European Jewish Workers in Germany during World War 1," in Salo Wittmayer Baron: Jubilee Volume 2 (Jerusalem, 1974), 895-903

[253] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 65.

[254] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland,* 69.

opportunities to earn money were few. At least 500,000 marks ($125,000) were needed each month just to keep the needy from starving.[255]

To help meet the crisis, Erich Ludendorff drew from the military's provisions, and he called on the *Jüdisches Hilfskomitee für Polen und Litauen* to assist the Army in keeping the remaining population alive.[256] An outbreak of cholera in the winter of 1916 took many lives, and the malnourishment of so many Poles magnified the epidemic's impact. A report of the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* revealed a dramatic parallel between the food crisis and the increasing number of deaths.[257] The German Army continued to provide Leopold Rosenak and other rabbis with food for the starving Jewish communities. Eventually there would be 900 kosher soup kitchens in the Jewish *shtetls*; approximately 15,000 schoolchildren received a hot meal each day. The soup kitchen in Kovno, named for Ludendorff, owed its existence to the personal initiative of Rosenak.[258]

The relief of suffering in occupied areas was still an unsolved problem when in June 1916 five Russian armies marshaled a huge new attack against the Austrian-German troops all along the Eastern front. The Brusilov Offensive, named for the Russian commander, was intended to draw German troops eastward, away from the ongoing battle in the West at Verdun. Its timing was coordinated with the British attack at the Somme. Taken by surprise, the Central

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[255] "700,000 Jews in Need on East War Front," New York Times, May 22, 1916.

[256] Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen, 1914-1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1920), 233.

[257] Minnie Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak Vom Feldrabbiner zum politischen Engagement* (Jerusalem: Bulletin des Leo Baeck Institutes, 1988) (79), 7.

[258] Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak*, 3-17.

Powers' units on the Eastern Front had to beat a fast retreat. The biggest successes of the Brusilov Offensive came in the South. By August 1916 the Russians had taken Buczacz, Brody, Stanisławów, Kołomzja, Delatzn, and Nadwórna in Galicia and Czernowitz in Bukovina, all areas of dense Jewish population. Again abuse of Jewish civilians occurred simultaneously with the Russian advance. Russian soldiers and Cossacks resumed their familiar violence—burning synagogues and Jewish homes, robbing and raping in at least a dozen towns. Now the invaders made no pretense of Jewish spying as a pretext for their action; they simply pillaged and murdered. Entire Jewish communities had to flee the Russians, some of them running toward Austria, others wandering from place to place in search of safety. The entire Jewish population of some places disappeared. Kołomzja, which had a Jewish population of 19,000 before the war, had only 500 Jews left in the fall of 1916. During the ensuing occupation of the captured territory, the Russians rounded up Jews and crowded them into small spaces in Tarnopol before resuming their practice of shipping Jews to Siberia.[259]

The Brusilov Offensive would be Imperial Russia's last military victory of the war even as the Germans pulled troops from the Western Front to halt their drive in August and September. It did not feel like a victory to the Central Powers, because the cost of stopping the Russians was so large. The effort in the East came as the Battle of Verdun dragged on, and the Battle of the Somme had begun in July 1916. The early success of the Brusilov Offensive prompted Romania to enter the war on the side of the Entente, thus creating another potential battlefront in the East. By the fall of 1916, the German High Command felt a worsening

[259] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 59-60.

manpower shortage, and the German people a growing sense of pessimism about the war's outcome. Both of these worries would have a marked effect in occupied Poland and Lithuania.

There the first concern remained how to help those who suffered still from the fallout of battles fought in 1914 and 1915. Relief for the *Ostjuden* depended very heavily on American money and German organization to get help into the hands of the needy. About $3 million would be sent from the United States to relieve the Eastern Jews prior to American entry into the war in April 1917; this represented at least three-quarters of the money made available. It was hardly, however, a simple exchange of American dollars into bread and soup in Poland. The relief effort was complicated at every turn by divisions within the Jewish communities in the three crucial locations. In the United States they were bifurcated between recent Eastern European migrants, mostly from the Russian provinces, who were staunchly Zionist and more established German Jews who were mostly anti-Zionist; in Germany, Jews were separated by Assimilationist, Zionist, and Orthodox views, with an often bitter ongoing conflict between the Zionist *KfdO* and the Assimilationist *Hilfsverein*; and in Poland the division broke along the same lines but with splits also by class and among Zionists, so that the two-way division in the U.S. and the three-way split in Germany corresponded effectively to a five- or six-way fracture in Poland. It seemed that every faction in each country had strong views about how relief efforts should be organized for the *Ostjuden.*[260]

In the middle of this transnational fray stood the German government. It had ties to the wealthy German-oriented American Jews like Jacob Schiff who the *Kaiserreich* hoped would help to keep the Americans out of the war and to the German Assimilationists with whom it had

[260] Szajkowski, "Jewish Relief in Eastern Europe 1914-1917," 29-41.

historically sought council concerning economic issues. Government officials also saw German Zionists as strategically useful allies in the future German political domination of Poland. By late 1915 the German government viewed German Orthodox Jews as the key to influencing the majority Hasidim in the East. Many in the German government, including Bethmann-Hollweg, having enjoyed good relationships with leading German Jews, were in favor of developing close ties with the *Ostjuden,* who they believed could become valuable allies in the East. At the same time, anti-Semites within the German government were suspicious of ties to any Jews, especially those in Poland whose seemingly messy and obscure ways they could not, or would not, comprehend.

The immediate and pressing issue, however, was how American relief aid was to be distributed in Poland. From early 1915 both Jacob Schiff and Paul Nathan had doubts about whether American aid was actually reaching Jews in Poland. Nathan had originally taken the position that it should go to Polish nonsectarian committees. He thought it would be unwise to make decisions about relief in Berlin without consideration of the desires of the Polish people. But when Nathan had informed Max Bodenheimer that American money was going to general relief committees, the latter had strenuously objected, saying that exclusively Jewish groups in Poland should distribute it. Bodenheimer reported that little of the first $100,000 of relief given to strictly Polish committees in Częstochowa went to Jews. German occupation authorities, however, had told Bodenheimer's *KfdO* that the organization itself could not distribute relief. The best option for a local Polish committee was one in Warsaw dominated by a small minority of Jewish Assimilationists, an option that provoked criticism from Zionists in Poland, Germany, and the U.S. The fact was, however, that Jewish socialists in the Bund and the Yiddishist *Folkspartei* had refused to cooperate with the Assimilationists and had withdrawn from

participating.[261] Heschel Farbstein, the wealthy Warsaw merchant who was the most high-profile Zionist leader during the war, later claimed that "in every city and town, and in almost all the relief organizations, Zionists are in the lead," and that relief came on a massive scale only because the Zionists had taken it over.[262]

In early February 1916, the *Hilfsverein* president James Simon asked Arthur Zimmerman of the Foreign Office if he could meet with Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein*: "As you have heard, Mr. Max Warburg [the Hamburg banker and *Hilfsverein* member] is in the United States and the Americans are concerned about the attitude of the German authorities toward Jews in the occupied area." This concern threatened "to affect adversely the assistance that is coming from over there—which is quite abundant." The American concern focused on the question of food imports into Poland and Lithuania. "We would like to put forward these concerns as the food shortage is reaching a desperate level," Simon pleaded with Assistant Foreign Secretary. "We are looking forward to speaking with you."[263] Regardless of how prominent the Assimilationist Jews were in German society, they had to remain deferential to German authorities to have influence. Later in February 1916 Simon and Nathan visited Kovno and were alarmed by what they saw. The food supply was severely inadequate to the needs of the sufferers, and they wrote to Zimmerman that much more help was needed: "People are dying and there are not enough doctors. We need your help to save people. We are in very serious times. We need food and

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[261] Ibid.,39.

[262] Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 47.

[263] AA, *Der Weltkrieg-Unternehmungen und Aufwiegelungen gegen unsere Feinde - durch die Juden,* K714/K190217, R 10504, April 1915-August 1919, Bd. 11, James Simon to Zimmermann on 24 February 1916.

doctors. With these mounting issues, we need your Excellency's support." They urged Zimmermann to authorize sending aid through the official German administration of *Ober Ost*.[264]

German Jews remained deeply divided over who was to lead the effort to help the *Ostjuden*. In late 1915, the *KfdO* and the *Hilfsverein* noted the growing interest of the German government in Orthodox Jews. Moritz Sobernheim of the Zionist *KfdO* wrote privately that the "Prussian government . . . is always playing off one faction or the other against the rest and shows more consideration for the little hyper-Orthodox faction than is justified." Martin Buber, the theologian and *KfdO* member, reported that the German Orthodox leadership had told the German Foreign Ministry that "outside their own inner circle, no one was qualified for a position in Poland, since the Jewish population [in Poland] wanted only a gentleman of their own [Orthodox] persuasion" to work with Polish Jews.[265] In July 1916 the banker and *Hilfsverein* leader Max Warburg informed Arthur Zimmerman of the Foreign Office that his organization's relationship with the *KfdO* was not working and the tension was approaching the breaking point. He repeated: "I must ask you to write the *KfdO*. Dr. Friedemann spent a week in Chemnitz and has spoken with the local committees there. Through the efforts of Professor Sobernheim and Dr. Oppenheimer, the *KfdO* are trying to create a bridge between the German and Austrian regiments in helping the Jews without including the Poles. Now they have created an even greater conflict between the Poles and the Jews in the region." Warburg asked Zimmermann to step in.[266]

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[264] Ibid.

[265] Szajokowski, "Komitee für den Osten and Zionism," 223-224.

[266] AA, *Der Weltkrieg,* Max Warburg to Zimmermann, 5 Juli 1916.

The farther removed they were from the crisis in Poland, it seemed, the more vitriolic was the intramural conflict among Jews. American relief aid raised questions about American neutrality and the positions of American Jews on Zionist issues. When he visited the U.S. in late 1915 to encourage Americans to put pressure on the German government to expand civic rights to Jews in Eastern Europe, the German Zionist Isaac Straus was sharply critical of the influential banker Jacob Schiff for his isolationism. The bigger problem for Straus was Schiff's anti-Zionism, and Straus vigorously stirred criticism of the banker among American Zionists. Schiff did not take kindly to the visitor's censure, nor did Schiff's admirers in the U.S. and such longtime German friends as Max Warburg and Paul Nathan. Schiff had been the chief fundraiser for Polish relief from the war's beginning—and the leading American philanthropist for relief of Russian Jews for at least two decades prior to that—but during the war there had emerged a separate American relief committee among recently arrived Eastern European Jews, often called the Orthodox committee—as opposed to the Schiff-supported American Jewish Committee (AJC), led mostly by Reformed Jews. Otherwise, virtually all the AJC money sent for Polish relief went through the *Hilfsverein*.

A representative of American Zionists visited Poland in early 1916 and announced on his return that the *Hilfsverein* was misusing American funds. The organization advocated a "Germanization of Jews in the occupied territories," the American claimed, and had promised German authorities to achieve that end.[267] At the same time, Isaac Straus alleged that Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein* favored *Grenzsperre*, a damning accusation to the American Jews of East-European origin, virtually all of whom had made their way to the U.S. through Germany.

[267] Szajkowski, "Jewish Relief in Eastern Europe 1914-1917," 39.

The *Hilfsverein* "must not be allowed to have a voice either in the settlement of the question of Jewish rights or in the distribution of relief funds," *The Yiddish Tageblatt* of New York declared in May 1916. The Zionists repeatedly accused the *Hilfsverein* of detrimental directives concerning the downtrodden *Ostjuden*. According to the *Yiddish Tageblatt,* "They hold the martyred Jews of Poland in contempt."[268]

The attack on Paul Nathan was so vitriolic that German Zionists came to his defense at the German Foreign Office, where officials were often confused about the disputes among Jews.[269] Franz Oppenheimer, the Zionist linguist in Berlin, believed that Nathan was sincerely committed to helping his fellow Jews in the East, but American Jews still resented Nathan's opposition to the exclusive use of Hebrew at the Haifa Technical School that the *Hilfsverein* had supported in the years just prior to the war.[270] Many American Jews, but by no means all, believed Nathan was wrong in supporting Polonization of the *Ostjuden*, mainly the insistence that they be taught in the Polish language. The Americans believed Polonization went against the linguistic and cultural character of Polish Jews. In Oppenheimer's view, this was an honest disagreement between a Zionist and an assimilationist point of view, and the other American condemnations of Nathan were simply unwarranted. He did not believe that Nathan wanted to block the German borders to the *Ostjuden*. Oppenheimer said the Americans were entirely wrong in claiming that Nathan had withheld millions in American aid money while his people died of hunger in Warsaw. Oppenheimer himself had shared responsibility for the difficult decisions

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[268] *The Yiddish Tageblatt*, [English section], May 17, 1916.

[269] AA, *Der Weltkrieg*, Franz Oppenheimer to Baron von Bergen of the German Foreign Office, 17 Juli 1916.

[270] Ibid. Oppenheimer's following points about Nathan are in this document.

made about where and when to send relief money. He insisted that again the Americans were wrong in claiming that Nathan had willingly allowed American relief money to go to non-Jews. Oppenheimer wanted the Foreign Ministry to understand that the criticisms of Nathan had come from outside and not from German Jews.

Still, doubts about the work of the *Hilfsverein* caused Americans, including some of those in the American Jewish Committee, to conclude in June 1916 that they should organize their own distribution network for relief. Paul Nathan informed the AJC that if it was dissatisfied with his relief work, by all means it should handle relief distribution itself. He warned the Americans, however, that he doubted that the German government would be willing to work with them, and that they should consider that after the German victory in the war, which Nathan fully expected, any group interested in the *Ostjuden* would necessarily have to work with the Germans in the East European lands they expected to acquire.[271]

In response to the attacks made on him for being insufficiently supportive of Jewish interests, Jacob Schiff announced angrily in June 1916 that: "Zionism, nationalism, the [Zionist] Congress movement and Jewish politics in whatever form they may come up" would be a "sealed book" to him, though he vowed to continue to work toward "procuring full civic rights for our brethren in the war zone, especially in Poland, Russia, Rumania, and Palestine, for they are all flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone."[272] Having grown up amid Assimilationist Jews in Frankfurt am Main and now related by marriage to the Warburgs of Hamburg, Schiff understood the ambivalence of well-to-do German Jews about their relationship to the *Ostjuden*. The

[271] Szajkowski, "Jewish Relief in Eastern Europe 1914-1917," 38.

[272] *New York Times*, 5 June 1916.

Ostjuden created a two-fold problem for German Jews. First, the backwardness of the *Ostjuden* would reflect badly on the highly acculturated German Jews by reaffirming old stereotypes and inflaming anti-Semitism that they had worked so hard to counter. The second problem involved the increasing difficulty of immigration through Germany during the chaos of war. The majority of American Jews, however, viewed any reluctance to accept refugees from the East as incomprehensible and indefensible, Schiff wrote to Max Warburg in July 1916.

Politically astute men like Schiff also saw that the U.S. was becoming less amenable to receiving Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe. By 1916 there was frequent speculation about the likely influx of Russian Jews to the United States when the war was over. American nativists had been pushing for anti-immigration legislation since the 1880's, and xenophobes were using the war's disruptive and illiberal effects to demand an immediate and permanent closing of the American Golden Door. Schiff himself had organized a program to bring Jewish immigrants into the U.S. not through the traditional entry point at New York but at Galveston, Texas, with the plan to transport them quickly to farms in the Midwest. Though himself culturally removed from the *Ostjuden*, Schiff had believed long before the current crisis that Jews from Eastern Europe needed a place to go, that the U.S. had been the best destination for them, but that it might not be so in the future.

The transnational conflict among Jewish groups reflected the deep wartime frustrations about the difficulties in helping the suffering *Ostjuden*. The situation was not getting better as the war dragged on in 1916. German morale especially was sinking. Anxiety about the *Ostjuden*'s survival sharpened particularly with the conflict over Zionism, a key issue that embodied Jews' worries about their future. The war polarized positions, but it also forced many Jews in Germany, the U.S., and Poland to reevaluate their thinking on Jewish nationalism.

All the while, the Army rabbis continued to serve both the soldiers and the *Ostjuden* along the Eastern front. Leo Baeck had been one of the first Army rabbis to go into the field in the fall of 1914, serving part of his time on the Western Front. By then Baeck, age 41, was a distinguished reformed rabbi and scholar at the *Hochschule fur die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Higher Institute for Jewish Studies) in Berlin and author of a significant neo-Kantian interpretation of Jewish faith, *The Essence of Judaism*. Indeed, he was the most important personality in reformed Judaism in Germany in 1914. He had debated his friend and fellow Jewish theologian Martin Buber, a Zionist, about how to define a Jewish nation. Baeck rejected Zionism.[273] On the battlefield, Baeck had performed rabbinical duties, including High Holiday services, and he had arranged for the *Verband der Deutschen Juden* to print 17,000 prayer books for Jewish soldiers in the war. In a meeting with the *Ostjuden* in Lithuania, he saw that the situation for Jewish civilians was much worse than he had seen in France. "The villages were poor and consumed with typhus," he wrote. "The streets and roadways were impassable for an automobile."[274] At Nowo-Alexandrowsk in Kurland, Baeck served 1,200 German Jewish soldiers, and there he encountered Russian Jewish prisoners of war, for whom he felt sympathy.[275]

As with his fellow *Feldrabbiner*, Baeck soon developed keen appreciation for the the *Ostjuden.* "The knowledge and the wisdom that I found among the Hasidim was wonderful and

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[273] Ulrich Seig, "Empathie und Pflichterfüllung: Leo Baeck als Feldrabbiner im Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Leo Baeck*, 1873-1956, *Aus dem Stamme von Rabbinern, ed. Georg Heuberger und Fritz Backhaus (*Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001), 45.

[274] Article written by Baeck challenging Martin Buber over the definition of a Jewish Nation titled, „Lebensgrund und Lebensgehalt," in *Der Jude*, the Zionist paper on 6 June 1916.

[275] Seig, "Empathie und Pflichterfüllung," 44-59.

enlightening," he later wrote. "During these troubled times, I was learning new things all the time. I no longer felt that the German Jewish community was the higher culture." He began to think that "German Jews can provide a mild form of culture and the *Ostjuden* can provide Germans with a stronger sense of their faith."[276] Though Baeck never fully embraced the *Ostjuden* culture, his religious identity and awareness grew during his time on the Eastern Front.

By 1916, Baeck's sympathy for war had begun to wane as anti-Semitic rhetoric could be heard throughout the ranks. He thought the war had brought "dark times for our religion and dark times for the Jews." The encounter with the *Ostjuden* made Baeck skeptical about the Germans' ability to turn Eastern Jews into good Germans. The optimism of liberal Jews in 1914 had waned. "The times since then have changed our outlook and our will. The old views don't hold true, the new ones replace them." This war experience had persuaded him that "the influence of the German Jews is less than I once thought." The earlier naïveté had sadly been replaced by a more relevant realism. Morale among soldiers was declining. "German soldiers are questioning the authority of the state, including its paternalism toward them, and they are losing their blind obedience." Jews on the front increasingly felt a muted anti-Semitism.[277] When he returned to the Western Front in late 1916, Baeck went with a heavier burden of worry and less hope than the distinguished rabbinical scholar had arrived with in the East.[278]

At a conference of *Feldrabbiners* at Vilnius in early March 1916, six rabbis discussed the many issues they confronted on the Eastern Front. A primary concern was anti-Semitism, which

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[276] Ibid., 52.

[277] Seig, "Empathie und Pflichterfüllung," 55.

[278] Ibid., 55.

may have been on the rise in the Army. Arthur Levy, serving with the Second Army near Lvov, reported anti-Semitic pamphlets were being distributed in the trenches. He extracted a burned pamphlet from a fire and found it similar to the contents in a Vilnius German newspaper in late January. The rabbis all agreed to pay attention to any other expressions of Anti-Semitism. Jacob Sonderling, serving with the Nieman Army in Lithuania, believed that German officers were generally free from anti-Semitism. Sali Levi, stationed with the Tenth Army near Vilna, had testified in a court martial hearing where anti-Semitism was claimed by several of the Jewish soldiers' comrades. Leo Baeck, stationed at Nowo-Alexandrowsk on the border of Lithuania and Latvia, knew of an anti-Semitic claim made against a Jewish doctor.[279]

The rabbis in general were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the tasks they faced on the Eastern Front. Baeck insisted that the rabbis' time and strength were completely consumed by their military responsibilities. The Army needed to assign representatives to cooperate with and regulate the affairs of the Jewish civil population. Arthur Levy reported that such a request had already been made to the higher Army administration and had been rejected there. Jacob Sonderling recommended strongly against giving up the work among the civilian population, since the Eastern European Jewish problem had now moved into the center of public interest. He had created committees for the basic organizational work that was to be done. Sali Levi for the most part agreed with Baeck: he believed the *Feldrabbiner* should stay away from economic questions, i.e. looking for work for the civilian populations. He disagreed, though, with Baeck that the rabbis could turn away from the *Ostjuden* and concern themselves primarily with religious matters of the troops. Aron Tänzer, who was with the *Bugarmee* in Brest-Litovsk, was

[279] CJA, 1, 75 C Ra 1, Nr. 5, #12515 - Jan-June 1916 – *Feldrabbinerkonferenzen,* Konferenz der Feldrabbiner des Osten in Wilna.

sympathetic to Baeck's concerns. The rabbis of the East were working at full capacity as chaplains for the Jewish soldiers, so much so that their ever-widening Army responsibilities could hardly be done along with the urgent tasks of caring for the local Jews. Nevertheless Tänzer had serious reservations about Baeck's suggestion that they could not serve the civilian population. He noted that the rabbis had acquired special knowledge about the problems of the *Ostjuden*. Tänzer was particularly concerned about Jewish girls, who were falling into prostitution with German soldiers because they had no other economic opportunities available. The devastation among the *Ostjuden* left most of them without a means to earn a living. It was, however, a problem so serious and widespread that the rabbis did not see a ready solution in occupied areas. In the end the rabbis agreed to recommend again to the *Armeebehörde* [Army authority] that they be given assistance in the care of the Jewish community.[280]

The *Feldrabbiner* convened two months later to discuss their work further. Aron Tänzer reported that he had organized a Seder and Passover for his divisions, at which 400 Jewish soldiers had participated. He held services in Pinsk, Porjetschie, Ljubaschewo and Brest-Litovsk. The only disappointment was that Leopold Rosenak, attempting to secure Mazzos for all participants, had not been able to get enough for all because of the high price.[281] A similarly large troop participation in his Passover services in Kovno had encouraged Rosenak, though he too was sad to have had only half enough Mazzos. At Passover Rosenak was also able to distribute clothes to the poor civilian population.[282] Arthur Levy had special praise for the local

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[280] Ibid.

[281] CJA, 1, 75 C Ra 1, Nr. 5, #12515 - Jan-June 1916 *Feldrabbinerkonferenzen*, II Konferenz der Feldrabbiner des Osten in Warschau, am 3 & 4 Mai 1916, 1.

[282] Ibid.

Jewish civilians in his sector who had prepared "in a cordial and self-sacrificing manner a wonderful meal" for Seder. It was very agreeable to the soldiers, Levy said, and contributed greatly to the success of the Seder.[283]

To do their work, the rabbis had to deal with both the Army and the civilian groups interested in Jews in the war zone, which meant that at some level they served two masters. Tänzer noted that the German government had decreed that the *Verband der Juden*, the largest association of German Jews, would only contact the Foreign Ministry in matters of religion and pastoral care. Leo Baeck had reservations about continuing the intervention of the *Verband*'s Rabbinical Association, which had been helpful at the beginning of the war. The Rabbis were concerned about the perception among German soldiers that their Jewish comrades were being shown preferential treatment. The rabbis agreed to extend thanks to the Rabbinical Association at the same time they recognized that their first allegiance had to go to military authorities.[284]

Baeck reported that he had been asked by the military authorities to discuss the matter of ministering to the Russian Jewish prisoners, which in his view added a large burden of responsibility. Sali Levi simply wanted a determination from his commander about whether military chaplains in war had to minister to POWs. Tänzer recalled his positive experiences with Russian POWs in religious services. The POWs were easy to include in the ceremonies and services since they usually preferred the same ritual foods as the German soldiers. Jacob

[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid.

Sonderling had a similar experience to Tänzer's. The rabbis appeared not to be of one mind about what to do about the Russian prisoners.[285]

Ludendorff assigned Leopold Rosenak the responsibility of *Dezernent* [department head] for creating and maintaining a Jewish school system in the German occupation zone. Descended from a long line of rabbinical educators, Rosenak viewed Talmudic education as the foundation of spiritual strength for the Jewish people. In January 1916, he re-opened the *Slobodka Yeshiva* [rabbinical seminary] in Kovno for the purpose of high-level Talmudic study for boys. At the school's new opening, in front of several German military officers, Rosenak recounted the horrors that the war had wrought in Kovno. The war had "made itself felt in terrible ways . . . The schools were closed, the populations dispersed to the winds." The previous May all Jewish residents of Kovno had been forced to leave within 48 hours. Their houses were smashed, their belongings dragged away. Even the Yeshiva of Slobotka "was trashed and looted, the sacred books torn up and used as fuel," its halls left deserted.[286]

Since then, however, the German Eastern Armies had driven back the Russians, so that Kovno's Jews returned home to find that their belongings were missing and property destroyed. Severe food shortages worried them all. "Who had time for thoughts of the Yeshiva and Talmudic studies?" Rosenak asked.[287] The German commanders, including Major von Stuensee, as well as city officials, had told Rosenak and the local Kovno Rabbi Jablonski to let "these old

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[285] Ibid.

[286] Leopold Rosenak, Programm der Jeschiwah "Knesseth Jissroel" in Wiliampol-Slobodka bei Kowno. Mit einer Festrede des Armeerabbiners Dr. Leopold Rosenak über das Thema: "Die Tamudschulen in Wechsel der Zeiten und Zonen," (Kowno: Office of the Commander-in Chief *Ober Ost*, 1916), 4-6.

[287] Ibid., 8.

school Talmud scholars" inspire young men in the same building. Money was raised in Germany among the Orthodox organization *Agudas Israel* to restore the building back to a Yeshiva.[288] Monthly operating expenses came from the *Hilfsverein*—evidence that the two non-Zionist Jewish groups collaborated on important projects.[289] Rosenak called on his father-in-law, Salomon Carlebach, the chief Orthodox rabbi at Lübeck, to teach in the new school. After just two months, a group of twenty young scholars was assembled to attend its first classes.[290] In this time of war, Rosenak declared, "The world is called on both sides a struggle of higher culture versus barbarism."[291] The restoration of the yeshiva in Kovno represented a prophetic hope amid destruction and suffering for Leopold Rosenak. "In the seclusion and tranquility of a semi-rural location, day and night are thoughts about the source writings of Judaism."[292] There hundreds of youths "will receive their rabbinical training and then go out to the Jewish communities of Russia, America, and Africa as leaders who interpret the major treatises and make decisions on the religious laws of Israel throughout the wide world."[293] Rosenak pronounced the benediction with a paean of praise to the leadership of his Fatherland: "His majesty Kaiser Wilhelm will

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[288] Ibid., 10.

[289] Ibid., 11.

[290] Ibid., 12.

[291] Ibid., 17.

[292] Ibid., 18.

[293] Ibid., 17.

spread his strong arm" of protection over the Yeshiva. We rise and give thanks and offer an old Jewish prayer before God for our emperor."[294]

The Army supported the development of a secular school system to infuse the Jewish students with German culture, and at the same time to convince the *Ostjuden* that German authorities wanted them as part of their new regime in the East. The German High Command preferred that the gymnasiums surpass the Yeshiva in influence. They wanted the *Ostjuden* to have a fully secular education in which German was the main language of instruction. Instructed to organize such a school system, Rosenak asked military authorities to dispatch Joseph Carlebach, his wife's brother who was then serving as a telegrapher in the Army, to help him.[295] Carlebach had grown up in a family of rabbis—not just with his father the chief Orthodox rabbi of Lübeck, but also among four brothers who would join the rabbinate. At age thirty-three he had already achieved a remarkable career as a scholar. At the Friedrich-Wilhelms Universitat, he had studied natural science under the quantum physicist Max Planck and philosophy under Wilhelm Dilthey, the scholar of hermeneutics, while at the same time pursuing religious education at the Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin. Between 1905 and 1907 Carlebach interrupted his studies in Germany to teach at a school in Jerusalem. In his mid-twenties, he earned a Ph.D. at the University of Heidelberg with a dissertation on the Jewish mathematician Levi ben Gerson, soon published as a book along with another book at the same time on Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. His prodigious achievements established Carlebach as a widely respected scholar. Even with such scholarly virtuosity, though, he had begun a career as a rabbi when he entered

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[294] Ibid.

[295] Carlebach, *Joseph Carlebach*, 82.

the Army in 1914—becoming no doubt the best-educated telegrapher in the *Kaiserliche Armee*.[296]

Carlebach's extensive learning had impressed upon him the importance of a secular education, which instilled in Jewish children a sense of loyalty and patriotism to the Fatherland. It was also a central faith of the Neo-Orthodoxy he had absorbed in his upbringing: he embraced the German-Jewish ethos of systematic elementary and secondary education, for both boys and girls, which had been established in 1853 by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch at the Frankfurt *Realschule*. Hirsch taught the principle of *Torah im Derech Eretz* [Torah in the Way of the World], a central event in the creation of German Neo-Orthodoxy. Jews in Poland and the Baltic provinces had traditionally provided only an informal *cheder,* or Hebrew school, for the elementary years and only for boys. Only the very brightest boys from these advanced to yeshivas. Germans, both Jews and gentiles, viewed educational practices of the *Ostjuden* as hopelessly out of date for the modern world. Such limited education might suffice for the boy who would apprentice as a blacksmith, but for those who needed to make their way in the world of industry and commerce, far more was needed.[297]

Like almost all the highly-educated German rabbis who went East, however, Joseph Carlebach soon acquired deep admiration for the faith of the *Ostjuden*. In the East, he wrote, "young and old, rich and poor, everyone is learning, learning constantly, totally immersed, living and breathing the Torah, be it the written or oral one." Like their Yiddish, which sparkled with idioms from the Talmud, Carlebach wrote, "so is their very life pulsating and throbbing with the

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[296] Ibid.

[297] Scholom Carlebach, *Ish Yehudi: The Life and the Legacy of a Torah Giant, Rav Joseph Tzvi Carlebach* (Brooklyn: Shearith Joseph Publications, 2008), 71.

echo of sacred text." For Germans, Hebrew was a foreign tongue, but for the *Ostjuden* it was the mother tongue. "To them the Torah is not a lesson in religion but the very wisdom of life," he said, "the living spirit which penetrates every fiber of existence, and defines the structure of the soul, in which one thinks and forms concepts . . . [it] fills heart and mind, is guide and support for the whole spectrum of life, giving creative inspiration, and anchoring the soul."[298]

Carlebach was promoted to captain and reported in 1916 to *Ober Ost* in Kovno where he assumed the title of *Landesbeirat* [national advisor] of education to organize a system for high schools and beyond.[299] After consulting the local Torah scholars and the German administration, Carlebach laid the foundations for a Jewish Gymnasium based upon the principles of *Torah im Derech Eretz*, which combined Torah lessons with secular subjects. The Kovno Gymnasium, also known as the Carlebach Gymnasium, by the start of the third year enrolled 1,000 boys and girls who studied in classes separated by gender.[300] He also established close ties with Lithuanian Jewish scholars, including Rabbis Abraham Z. Perlmutter and Moses E. Halpern. Carlebach brought in Dr. Shmuel Leo Deutschlander, an Orthodox Berliner and teacher with a Ph.D. in literature who assisted him in establishing a network of schools in Lithuania and Poland that became known as *Yavneh*. During the war years, *Yavneh* encompassed teachers' seminaries for both men and women at Kovno and gymnasiums in Telshe and Ponovezh in addition to the one in Kovno. *Yavneh* also would include one hundred elementary schools, which would be staffed mainly with young Orthodox members of the *Agudas Israel* movement.

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[298] Ibid., 117-118.

[299] Ibid., 71.

[300] Ibid., 73.

Lithuanian students excelled in their new schools, and most were able within five years to complete eight years of schooling. Lithuanian Jews widely hailed the rabbi and teacher from Germany. Sammy Gronemann, the writer and Army press officer, observed that to his students Carlebach was not a strict rule-maker but rather like "an old friend and comrade, loving his duties and his young friends." He was never given to "any haughtiness, so easily adopted, even by many of the orthodox Jews from the west," Gronemann wrote.

Leo Deutschlander helped in the development of a system of schools for Jewish girls, though the crucial person in establishing it was Sarah Schenirer, the daughter of a prominent Hasidic rebbe in Kraków. When her father's business fell on hard times, Schenirer had become a seamstress, and her engagement with the secular world persuaded her that the absence of institutionalized religious education for Jewish girls amounted to a serious problem. She saw that secularization of girls, caused in part by the wartime disruption, was undermining traditional Orthodox family life. Prostitution among Jewish girls had become a source of great concern among Polish Jews—and among German Jews serving in the occupied East. The *Feldrabbiner* worried about the moral decline that resulted from the inability of the *Ostjuden* to earn a living in the devastated economy. The German-Jewish journalist Robert Weltsch wrote in November 1916, that "the education of our girls is one of our most important national tasks." The Jewish women of the East, in contrast to those in the West, were unspoiled by materialism and secular culture in Weltsch's view, but wartime prostitution among Jewish women "in a sad way" had "begun a work of destruction, whose limits we do not see."[301]

[301] Robert Weltsch, "Ein Feldpostbrief aus dem Osten," *Der Jude*, Jg 1 (Nov. 1916) Nr 8, 533.

As an unmarried, independent businesswoman, Schenirer had acquired fluency in both the Polish and German languages, learned to admire the classical works of Polish and German writers, and attended lectures at Polish universities. "When I was in Vienna shopping for fabrics for my sewing trade," she later wrote, "I enjoyed listening to reviews of classic German authors' works in the great auditorium of the Bayerisches Hoff." Yet she saw the dangers of the secular world: "I was happy to have my Jewish education with which I could censor what I heard. But what about the other girls? If only I could communicate the subjects they were so eager to know and, at the same time, inspire them with Torah wisdom and the beauty of the Jewish heritage." [302]

The rapid changes in wartime Poland inspired and enabled Schenirer to take action. In 1914 her family fled Kraków in the face of the Russian invasion and settled in Vienna, along with 200,000 other Galician Jews. There Schenirer discovered Samson Hirsch's educational structure for Jewish girls in Germany. She decided to use Hirsch's *Realschule* as a model for her own effort. At age 34 in 1917, she formed the first school for girls, Beis Yaakov [House of Jacob], in Kraków. The original *Beis Yaakov* was a seminary to train female teachers. Deutschlander provided Schenirer with administrative advice, which became especially valuable as she promoted the creation of *Beis Yaakov* schools throughout Poland. Schenirer trained a cadre of students, some of them girls as young as fourteen, whom she sent to Jewish communities throughout Poland. Once she had trained a girl sufficiently to conduct a school, Schenirer would escort her to a town and hold a public meeting to introduce the new teacher to the mothers in that place, who often believed that the best method of educating girls remained

[302] Schenirer quoted in Pearl Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart: The Life and Legacy of Sarah Schenirer* (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1991), 9.

entirely within the home. Schenirer then persuaded them that they needed a school and presented them with a teacher.[303]

During the war, a whole new system of education for Polish Jews was established under the direction of Rosenak, Carlebach, Deutschlander, and Schenirer, with funding from the *Hilfsverein* and *Agudas Israel* and the support of the German government.[304] According to Sammy Gronemann, the German writer serving in as a public-relations officer in Poland, "The result was a labor of love and joy, and soon the educational authorities of *OberOst* admitted that the achievements of this school were greater than those of similar schools in Germany."[305] The Kovno gymnasium was administered by Lithuanian officials after the war and retained the name Carlebach Gymnasium until 1935.[306] After the war, Schenirer continued to spread the *Beis Yaakov* movement throughout Poland until her death at age 52 in 1935, by which time she had established an estimated 300 schools.[307]

German occupiers and local Jews well understood the importance of Jewish periodicals. The German Army sought to control the Jewish press to promote a successful German occupation. Polish Jews saw the newspapers as vital conduits for pushing specific Jewish political agendas both during the war and afterward. By 1910, as Jews became politicized, more newspapers went into circulation. At the outbreak of the war, there had been as many as 164

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[303] Ibid., 21-22.

[304] Carlebach, *Joseph Carlebach and his Generation*, 86.

[305] Gronemann, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich*, 211.

[306] Carlebach, *Joseph Carlebach and his Generation*, 85.

[307] Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart*, 15-30.

Jewish affiliated newspapers in circulation, most of them published in Yiddish.[308] In 1914 the Russians had shut down all periodicals but the *Haynt* [Today], a Zionist publication, but that newspaper's content was restricted to publishing official notices of the Russian military and news reports of which the Russian army approved. The *Haynt*, which previously had a circulation of 100,000, now printed far fewer papers, and reached readers mainly in Warsaw because of the severe disruptions of shipping and mail caused by the war.[309]

When the Germans occupied the region, they allowed *The Haynt* to continue publication and the Folkist *Waschaur Tageblatt* to reopen. Both were published in Yiddish. The Jewish newspapers were essential for disseminating information about relief efforts, work initiatives, religious events, and political events and strategies, though the German Army propaganda department strictly controlled what went in the newspapers. The Germans often were perplexed at the content of the newspapers and sometimes thought it dangerous. Their knowledge of the newspapers' positions was imperfect, and they typically relied on their Jewish soldiers to assist in interpreting the current news. Instead of information about the war's real effects on Poland, *Waschaur Tageblatt* headlines often spoke only about the losses incurred by enemy. For example, on Sunday 3 October 1915 a headline read, "96,000 Russians were captured in the month of September and the German Army is continuing to gather more."[310] A few weeks later, the *Tageblatt* reported, "Massive strikes against Serbia causing panic both in the civil community

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[308] Marian Fuks, *Prasa zydowska w Warszawie*, 137.

[309] Finkelstein, Chaim, *Haynt: a tsaytung bay yidn 1908-1939* (Tel-Aviv: I.L. Perets Publishing House, 1978), 61.

[310] *Warschauer Tageblatt*, 29 September 1915, 1.

but also in Russia."[311] When local news did appear in the *Tageblatt*, it dwelt on Russian atrocities: "Enemy bombing of a suburb of Warsaw harmed 115 civilians and killed 161."[312] As the Germans and Austro-Hungarians were meeting the Brusilov Offensive in June 1916, no mention was made in the *Tageblatt* of the nearby battles though a main headline read: "The war turns catastrophic for the English as Germans push the British back to the channel."[313]

The importance of newspapers was reflected in the opening of an official department within the German High command in the East, Press Office *Ober Ost*, under the direction of a German officer, Friedrich Bertkau. As part of his expansive activity in the occupied areas, Ludendorff created an "academy of intellectuals," employed by the press section by late December 1915, of seventy staff members.[314] Besides promoting the propaganda images of the *Ober Ost,* this academy of intellectuals supported relief agencies and schools and facilitated communication between the German Army and local Jews. In his postwar memoir Ludendorff wrote that the region east of Warsaw contained a widely scattered population of "such a low standard of civilization that much time would be required before we could do anything for them." The Polish Jew, Ludendorff said, "did not know what attitude to adopt, but he gave us no trouble, and we were at least able to converse with him, which was hardly ever possible with the Poles, Lithuanians, and the Letts." Yiddish was the only language comprehensible to the

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[311] Ibid., 24 October 1915, 1.

[312] Ibid., 5 March 1916, 1.

[313] Ibid., 4 June 1916, 1.

[314] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 115.

occupying Germans, and the Polish Jews were "born translators."[315] The desire for communication among the various ethnic groups demonstrated the degree to which the German government strove to incorporate these groups into its newly acquired transnational community, even if not on equal footing with the Germans themselves.

Several German Jews did the hard work of the propaganda effort. Nahum Goldmann, the young Foreign Office expert on the *Ostjuden*, lent his expertise during numerous visits to the East from his headquarters in Berlin. Two German-Jewish soldiers, Sammy Gronemann and novelist Arnold Zweig, labored on the scene in Poland and Lithuania in influencing local public opinion. Gronemann's task, among other responsibilities, was to compile a seven-language dictionary that bridged the communication gap and management conundrum generated by the language barrier facing the German administration as it interacted with multilingual populations.[316] Zweig, born in Silesia, the son of Jewish saddler, had been educated in history and philosophy at various German universities and, influenced heavily by Nietzsche, had already written two well-received novels before he entered the Army at age 27 in 1914. After the war he would write a trilogy of highly acclaimed anti-war novels. His 1927 novel *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* [The Case of Sergeant Grischa] offered a harsh satire of the German occupation of Lithuania.[317] His official work in 1916 was focused on shaping the editorial practices of Polish newspapers to support a successful German occupation of Poland. Goldmann,

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[315] Erich Ludendorff, *Ludendorffs' Own Story, August 1914-November 1918* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 221-2.

[316] Gronemann, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich*, 121.

[317] Arnold Zweig, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1927).

Gronemann, and Zweig all played central roles in maintaining both the German and Jewish agendas throughout the war and in disseminating information throughout the various Jewish communities scattered along the Eastern Front.

German authorities had the most trouble with *The Haynt*, which already had a long history as the main Zionist voice in Poland. The founders of *Haynt*—Shmuel Yaakov Yatskan, Aaron Gavze, and Abraham Goldberg—held dual roles as leaders of the Zionist party in Warsaw and as newspaper editors. The paper first appeared in 1908 and was only shut down on 18 July 1915 when the Russians evacuated Warsaw.[318] It reappeared on 6 August 1915, the day the Germans took the city. From the beginning, the editors were leery of the Germans. The paper was again shut down when the German censor refused to allow the publication of an article that spoke of "the catastrophic hunger and epidemic diseases from which the population was still suffering under the 'liberating' German occupation."[319] The editors of the *Haynt* continued to publish without approval and faced dire consequences. Though the writers relied on private funds in order to continue publishing, the high fines imposed drained the paper's finances, and it stopped publication in December 1915.[320]

The *Haynt* ultimately developed a working relationship with the Germans through the influence of Nahum Goldmann, both a committed Zionist and a staunch German patriot, and the newspaper resumed publication in 1916.[321] Goldman had authority as a mediator, in that he was

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[318] Finkelstein, *Haynt*, 64.

[319] Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland,* 62.

[320] Finkelstein, *Haynt*, 63.

[321] Ibid., 66.

not only influential in German relations with Poles but also in shaping German policy about relations between Poles and Jews. In Warsaw, Goldmann kept the editors of the *Haynt* informed about the political situation in Berlin, including German plans for Poland.[322]

The *Waschauer Tageblatt* was set up in Warsaw to provide a platform for the *Folkspartei*, established by the Russian-Jewish historian S.M. Dubnov and Israel Efrojkin, who argued that "the Jews are a nation spiritually and intellectually only; hence what they require for their emancipation is a national-cultural (not a political or territorial) autonomy based on unrestricted use of Yiddish language."[323] *Waschauer Tageblatt*'s editors, Lazar Kahan, Noyakh Prilutski, and H.D. Nomberg, were also the leaders of the *Folkspartei*. They planned to contend for the municipal seats in the Warsaw-directed Polish government. Though a political agenda was advanced within the newly burgeoning government in Warsaw, the *Folkists* were unsuccessful in communicating policies to the satisfaction of the German administration. As a result, monetary support for the *Waschauer Tageblatt* was discontinued in December 1916.[324]

Zionism grew in Poland in 1916 in cities and small towns alike, with the establishment of cultural centers that taught Hebrew, Jewish history, and the Bible, and its growth was at least partly a reaction to rising anti-Semitism. As the war encouraged Polish nationalism, Poles began to express their anti-Jewish feelings more aggressively. "One often hears talk that the time for the extermination [*Vernichtung*] of the Jews will come when the new Poland [is] established" came the report from a small town. In May 1916 the German Zionist Julius Berger, who spent

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[322] Ibid., 63.

[323] Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland,* 287.

[324] Finkelstein, *Haynt*, 64.

much time in Poland, wrote to a colleague "you can have no idea of the fundamental hatred of the Poles for the Jews." Relations were "in fact so terrible that the greatest tact and wisdom are required to make possible some sort of co-existence."[325] In September 1916 Berger wrote that "antisemitism is growing, growing against Eastern Jews, growing against Western Jews, growing enormously and preparing for a real orgy which will be celebrated after the war."[326]

For the strategic purposes of German authorities in the midst of the war, the most important group among the divided Jews of Poland was the Hasidim. "These broad yet politically undeveloped Jewish masses are the real issue of truly serious Jewish politics in Poland," Nahum Goldmann wrote. "Their politicization and, synonymously, their activation is the internal core problem of the Polish-Jewish question, since only the politicized Jewish masses are able to lay a permanent and safe basis on which Jewish policy can be promoted."[327] In order to organize the Hasidim for the *Kaiserreich*'s political purposes, German authorities sent two Orthodox rabbis to Warsaw in February 1916--49-year-old Pinchas Kohn of Ansbach and Emanuel Carlebach of Cologne, Joseph's older brother. Both men were well known among German Orthodoxy and trusted to be able to influence the Hasidim.[328] Like his brother, Emanuel Carlebach's mission was to establish schools for local Jews. Kohn's assignment was to assist Ludwig Haas, the director of the Jewish Office of the General Government of Warsaw, in

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[325] Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 41-43.

[326] Aschheim, "Eastern Jews, German Jews and Germany's Ostpolitik," 363.

[327] Quoted in Tobias Grill, "The Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry: Orthodox German Rabbis and the Founding of *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* and *Dos yidishe vort* in Gouvernement-General Warsaw, 1916-1918," *East European Jewish Affairs* 39 (August 2009), 230.

[328] Matthias Morgenstern, *From Frankfurt to Jerusalem: Isaac Breuer and the History of the Secession Movement in Modern Jewish Orthodoxy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 65-68.

cultivating relations with the local Hasidim. Jacob Rosenheim, the politically influential Orthodox leader in Frankfurt, was suspicious of Haas' reformed Jewish persuasion, calling him a "tinok shenishba bein ha-nochrim" [a child kidnapped by non-Jews and raised without the Torah]. Kohn, a close ally of Rosenheim, brought a "Torah-true" voice to the German administration.[329]

Prior to the war, the Polish Hasidim were divided among many small groups, each led by its *rebbe* or *tzadik.* For the most part, the Hasidim were not engaged in politics. Rosenheim wrote that Kohn and Carlebach were to awaken and politicize the Jewish masses by cultivating "the consciousness of the religious specificity of the Jewish people and the necessity of their independent representation in political life."[330] Both men were active in *Agudah Israel*, the Frankfurt am Main-based organization created in 1912 to defend Orthodox Judaism from the challenge to its values by the Zionist movement.[331] *Agudah Israel* intended to unify the various strands of Orthodoxy throughout Europe to forestall the influence of the Zionists, but in fact it mainly represented a German Orthodox point of view. The Hasidim viewed the organization as fostering politicization that betrayed the religious traditions its founders claimed to defend. They feared that *Agudah Israel* might bring east the neo-Orthodox German Judaism that they believed injected too much secular culture to maintain traditional Orthodoxy. Many traditional Polish Jews believed, according to the historian Gershon Bacon, that the "rabbi and the community possessed adequate means to curb undesirable manifestations without requiring the modern tools

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[329] Szajokowski, "Komitee für den Osten and Zionism," 222-223.

[330] Grill, "The Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry," 228.

[331] H.H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, 902.

of organizations, press, and political parties." Nearly all German Jews and, more importantly, the occupying German Army believed that Polish Jews needed more modern understandings of society in order to cope with the horrors of total war and the reordering of Poland that the Great War promised to bring.[332]

Kohn and Carlebach were up to the formidable challenge, though like most German Jews they were startled, if not appalled, at the behavior and living conditions of the *Ostjuden*. By their standards, *Hasidic* society by Western standards was disorderly and often unclean. *Hasidim* had poor table manners and a bad sense of time. They denied social equality to their women. They were superstitious and too often obscure in their meanings.[333] The two Germans listened patiently to the concerns of the "Torah-true" leaders of Polish Orthodoxy. They won the support of the Gerrer rebbe, Avraham Mordechai Alter, leader of a *Hasidic* dynasty that claimed to have 200,000 followers. Alter was the most influential *Hasidic* voice in Poland. Together with the Gerrer rebbe and other converts to the cause, Kohn and Carlebach organized *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim.* Some *Hasidim* objected strenuously to the term Orthodox in the organization's name, and it may have been chosen to signify to German authorities, not Polish Jews, what the organization was. In fact, among Jews in Poland the organization was often called *Agudas Shlome Emmey Yisrael* (Union of Faithful Jewry). Because the *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* believed that Jews should remain in Poland, as opposed to the many Zionists who promoted emigration to

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[332] Gershon C. Bacon, "Prolonged Erosion, Organization and Reinforcement: Reflections on Orthodox Jewry in Congress Poland (up to 1914)", in *Major Changes within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust. Proceedings of the Ninth Yad Vashem International Histrionical Conference*, ed. Yisrael Gutmand Avital Saf), 82, as cited in Grill, "Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry," 229.

[333] Carlebach, "A German Rabbi Goes East," 67.

Palestine, the German rabbis were able to elicit Jewish cooperation and foster acceptance of German occupation.[334]

Kohn and Carlebach extended their influence in other directions as well. They worked with the Polish rabbis Abraham Z. Perlmutter and Moses E. Halpern of Warsaw and Aron Lewin of Rzeszów to establish the newspaper *Dos Yiddisher Vort* [The Jewish Word]. In addition to promoting political activism among the *Hasidim*, *Dos Yiddisher Vort* was meant to bolster the opposition of the *Hasidic* masses against the Zionist movement that gained popularity following the suffering of the Russian occupation of 1914-15. On the other hand, Carlebach and Kohn intended to consolidate support in other directions. They helped forge an alliance with the urban, middle-class assimilationist Jews. Like the poorer *shtetl Hasidim*, the assimilationists wanted to remain in Poland. Kohn and Carlebach maintained good relations with German Zionists, especially the leaders of the *KfdO*—Bodenheimer, Adolf Friedemann, and Franz Oppenheimer.[335]

The particularly German political agenda of Carlebach and Kohn—to acquire a pro-German influence in Polish politics—alarmed the Zionists and the Folkists, who were skeptical of the intentions of the Germans and the Orthodox rabbis, especially with the establishment of *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* and *Dos Yidische Vort.* Up to this time, the Zionists had created the impression that they represented all Jews in Poland. The Zionists' first goal was obtaining for Polish Jews officially recognized rights as a national minority. They wanted Yiddish or Hebrew to be declared the official language of Jewish life, especially in schools. Nationalist Poles,

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[334] Grill, "Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry," 231-32.

[335] Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*, 284.

regardless of whether they were in the Dmowski or Piłsudski camp, violently opposed such an outcome, because it threatened their ability to dominate Poland by continuing the divisive effects of minority nationalism, especially by privileging the rights of those they deemed the upstart Jews. Kohn, Carlebach, and their Polish Orthodox allies were devoted first to friendly relations with Germans who they thought would have a permanent role in governing Poland. If the Germans did not hold on to power over Poland, the Orthodox leaders believed, the second best option for Polish Jews was the creation of a *modus vivendi* with the nationalist Poles. Insistence on national minority rights, they assumed, would perpetuate and intensify the antipathies of Catholic Poles toward Jews that were increasing during the war. Full political rights for Jews individually, along with recognition of Judaism as a tolerated faith, were the wisest goal, they believed. This was, after all, approximately what Jews in Germany and other Western countries had achieved.[336]

In July 1916 Kohn and Carlebach faced the initial test of their ability to organize Polish Jews politically in the Warsaw city council elections. They held many meetings with various Jewish groups to try to achieve a united front. They also met with Catholic Poles in the hopes of getting an advance guarantee for a certain number of Jewish seats on the council. They encountered opposition from Zionists who did not want the Orthodox to win influence and fought fiercely against the *Hasidim*'s willingness to ally with Assimilationists and with Poles. In a letter home Carlebach recorded his intense frustration at dealing with the Zionists, who, he said, "can be compared to a gang of robbers; this clique of nationalists and Zionists whose lies, deceit, and fraud have deceived as much as humanly possible, in particular toward the Orthodox

[336] Grill, "Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry," 236-38.

who held to their proper position." His tactical approach was for peace with Catholic Poles in a joint pro-democratic unified front. "The assimilationists and *Hasidim* have often come together in different situations to understand this. If you were to give us 10 million rubles," he wrote to his wife, "you could never accomplish what can be achieved by a Polish-Jewish front. In a unified community the Jew will be seen for the first time again as a human." This unity was accomplished in the face of "nationalistic Yiddishists" who acted indecently, he thought, in pursuit of "their so-called ideals—insisting that Yiddish be spoken in Hebrew schools, and for Yiddish to be spoken in the City Council and to be allowed to plead in Yiddish before court etc., which is crazy and despicable at the same time!"[337]

The city council election tested the strength of the other factions among Jews. The older Polish Zionists led by Heschel Farbstein established a Jewish election committee, an attempt to create a united Jewish front. They reached an agreement with gentile Polish parties to reserve 20 percent of the seats for Jews, though the Jewish portion of the population of Warsaw was at least twice that, to demonstrate both sides' desire for political cooperation across confessions. Noyakh Prilutski, a Warsaw lawyer who led the Folkists, organized a vigorous challenge to the Farbstein faction on the basis of a pro-Yiddish position and criticism of the twenty-percent compromise with the Poles. The Folkists fired the enthusiasm of the masses and swept the Jewish vote.[338]

The main problem for Kohn and Carlebach lay with the *Hasidim*'s deep skepticism about political action. All their newspaper appeals and pre-election meetings had failed to stir interest and commitment among the *Hasidim*. Faced with a "new and unknown thing," a participatory

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[337] Carlebach, "A Rabbi Goes East," 96.

[338] Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 49-50.

election, "the simple people at first reacted reservedly" because under Russian control "one did not like to have contact with the authorities," the two rabbis later explained. The July city council elections showed how much the traditional Hasidic leaders "still have the Jewish masses in their grip." Then what appeared to the Germans to be a miracle happened: "The rebbes spoke only a few simple words and the masses were mobilized." Yesterday's indifference was swept away, and "overnight an army of 40,000 Jewish voters was created."[339]

German authorities inadvertently advanced *Hasidic* politicization, through the exercise of rebbes' powers, when they declared Sunday a legal day of rest in Warsaw, an effort to curry favor with Catholic Poles. Kohn and Carlebach used Jewish outrage to organize a protest effort in which 23,000 Orthodox Jews signed petitions. The Sunday law was abrogated, and Polish Orthodoxy learned an object lesson in the efficacy of political action. Soon the meetings of *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* had many more attendees than in earlier meetings. By the end of 1916, the politicization of the *Hasidic* majority had advanced a long way toward success.

In December 1916 there were more city council elections in Warsaw, and the *Hasidic* leaders joined with the Poles to form a provisional government under German authority. These municipal elections suggested the path Poland would take in the future. They reflected the Polish nationalist agenda that Germans had to consider as likely after the war was over.[340] With Polish autonomy on the horizon, Orthodox leaders continued to believe that supporting Polish aspirations would ease growing anti-Semitism. The Assimilationists joined them in that hope.[341]

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[339] Quoted in Grill, "The Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry," 231.

[340] Ibid., 231.

[341] Ibid., 64.

On the other hand, Nojech Pryłucki of the *Folkspartei* party decided to remain apart from any Jewish alliance and run a separate Jewish party for seats in the Warsaw council. The Folkists won only three seats but fanned the flames of anti-Semitism in Warsaw. The Folkists' action created a double-edged sword: it angered the Polish council and it fractured the Jewish communities, allowing the Jews to become easy prey for growing Polish nationalism.

By the time that *Hasidic* Jews in Poland found their way to political organization at the end of 1916, external forces were mounting that would threaten the good works of the past year. For the Germans, the war was going badly, and as it dragged on, they would begin to look for someone to blame for their hard times. To be sure, the expansion of educational opportunities for Jews in Poland would continue and mature in the future. But the suffering among hundreds of thousands of *Ostjuden* remained high, and the relief efforts, often foundering on division and conflict, hardly matched the level of want. Catholic Poles struggled almost as much as Jews, and their terrible predicament compelled them to demand nationalist political solutions. As the Catholic Poles succeeded in being heard, the Jews were likely to suffer. Now in its third year, the war had prompted high hopes and elicited great sacrifices, but it was no clearer now than it had been two years earlier whether the hopes would be fulfilled and the sacrifices rewarded.

Chapter 6: The Blood at Ohel Yaakov, November 1916 to October 1917

In 1917 fractures among the various actors on the Eastern Front weakened the German national resolve to shape the future of Poland to the *Kaiserreich*'s war aims. The strain of the two-front war in 1916 resulted in both civil and military crises that convinced the German High Command that the only way to win the conflict was to force Russia out of the war. The Central Powers' military success in stopping the Brusilov Offensive in the East had come, however, at a high cost in lives and morale. In late 1916 and 1917 rising anti-Semitism among German soldiers toward the *Ostjuden* undermined plans for German-Jewish collaboration in the occupied East. Anti-Semitism, which had increased within German society throughout the war, surged with the military's Jewish count in late 1916. It further intensified in 1917 with the identification of Jews with Bolshevism.

By early 1917 the various German-Jewish organizations began to lose favor and influence in the Foreign Office. Although the Jewish relief agencies in Germany continued to rely heavily on the *Feldrabbiner* and Jewish soldiers, the work of assimilating Poland's Jews into the German empire began to falter. The suffering and the social problems among the *Ostjuden* that arose from the war's devastation remained as deeply perplexing in 1917 as they had been in 1915, and they seemed resistant to the best efforts of German rabbis and the relief organizations to address them. Jews in Germany began in 1916 to unite in the face of rising anti-Semitism, but the centrifugal force among Polish Jews persisted, especially as the prospects of an independent Polish seemed to rise. The originally deep divisions among German Jews over Zionism began to close in 1917, whereas the debate over Jewish nationalism became at the same time more intense in Poland. The fate of the *Ostjuden* pressed more immediately on the minds of

Jews throughout the world with the February and October Revolutions in Russia. By the end of 1917 the fate of the *Ostjuden* seemed no clearer than it had in the first three years of the war.

Over the course of 1916 a sense grew among many Germans that the war was not going well. In February 1916, Erich von Falkenhayn, Germany's Chief of General Staff, had attempted to end the stalemate in the West by "bleeding France white" at the Battle of Verdun. During this battle, Germany began depleting the East of troops in support of the war in the West. Though the losses were greater for the French, the Germans were unable to break through. The German Navy, after having been bottled up in port for almost two years, finally engaged the Royal Navy at the Battle of Jutland in the North Sea on 31 May and 1 June 1916. Although the outcome was not a clear-cut victory for either side, the Battle of Jutland was generally counted a strategic win for Great Britain in that the German Navy returned to port without success, essentially never to venture out again. In July the British then began the coordinated offensive on the Western Front at the Somme, far to the north of Verdun, which in effect meant that the Germans were fighting on two fronts in the West. The Somme, simultaneously with Verdun, would likewise be long, astonishingly costly in human lives, and inconclusive.[342]

The Russians' Brusilov Offensive in Galicia in the summer of 1916 dealt a severe blow to the Central Powers and effectively put the Austrians on the defensive for the rest of the war. It also required that more German troops be moved back East away from the battle of Verdun. When Romania entered the war on the side of the Entente in late August 1916, the Kaiser's order removed Falkenhayn as Chief of the General Staff and replaced him with Hindenburg. Erich

[342] Robert B. Asprey, *The German High Command at War: Hindenburg and Ludendorff Conduct World War I* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 121-160; John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 138-256.

Ludendorff became First Quartermaster General and for all practical purposes was the real commander of the German war effort from that point on. Ludendorff immediately implemented the Hindenburg Program, a command to pull all manpower and every available resource into war production. His authority was virtually complete: when the War Minister Adolf Wild von Hohenborn resisted some of Ludendorff's interventions in the domestic economy as destructive for civilian morale, Ludendorff had him removed from the war ministry. Before long, Ludendorff, acting in Hindenburg's name, usurped the power of the Chancellery and even the Kaiser in running wartime Germany.[343]

Hindenburg left the administration of *Ober Ost* in the hands of Prince Leopold of Bavaria. Because of Leopold's strong dislike for the occupied territories—which he once termed *Sauland* (pig-land or filth land)—he allowed his Chief of Staff, General Max Hoffman, full control over *Ober Ost*. Hoffman was an ultra-conservative Prussian general. During Hoffman's administration, policies turned from verbal disdain for the Jews to physical threats by some officials toward the Jewish population. Theodor von Heppe, the Bialystok-Grodno district administrator, directly threatened the *Feldrabbiners* saying, "I will ruthlessly let you, and your people starve," if smuggling was not contained.[344] Such overt hatred escalated throughout the remainder of the war. *Oberstleutnant* Max Bauer was made chief of operations. A bitter conservative foe of Bethmann Hollweg and a well-known anti-Semite, Bauer blamed Jewish liberalism for many of the current ills in Germany, and he strongly opposed the policy of

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[343] John Lee, *The War Lords: Hindenburg and Ludendorff* (London: Wiedenfield & Nicholson, 2005), 102-3.

[344] As quoted in Liulevicius' *War Land on the Eastern Front,* 182: BAMA N 196/1, Heppe, vol. V, 97.

promising the *Ostjuden* self-determination. "Greater Germany's global politics would be better off without the Jews in the East," Bauer insisted.[345] Bauer's attitude represented a radical departure from the earlier prevailing assumptions of the German High Command that the *Ostjuden* were their crucial, and perhaps only, allies in the East. If Bauer's position prevailed, the future of Jews in the East would have become even more precarious.

As 1916 came to a close, Germany's war effort was nearly exhausted. That year the German Army had fought three of the biggest battles of the Great War and it had suffered in those three engagements almost 1.5 million casualties.[346] The Austro-Hungarian Army lost a million men in meeting Brusilov, even surpassing the toll of 800,000 Habsburg soldiers who had fallen to the Russians in 1915.[347] Death on that scale came at a high price to German morale, both at home and on multiple battlefronts. Its manpower shortage, which by some estimates had been eight corps (about 250,000 men) short at the war's inception, now was acute. The Prussian military tradition had handicapped the war effort from the beginning: the presumption that only conservative Prussians were fit to lead the army limited the pool of talented leadership from the outset of the war. This fear of ideological pollution of the military, entrenched in the Prussian mindset well prior to the war, was based in part on the presumption that the Army would probably be needed to put down leftist groups. The fear of left-wing radicalism grew during the war, and right-wing responses undermined national morale. By late 1916 conservative Germans,

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[345] Egmont Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 530.

[346] Stone, *World War One*, 80, 96, 105.

[347] Lee, *War Lords,* 81.

in the military and outside, were looking for scapegoats on whom to blame manpower problems.[348]

The Brusilov Offensive so severely strained military manpower that the German and Austro-Hungarian armies considered ways to acquire the military services of Poles. The Polish Legion had fought well against the Russians in the summer of 1916. "The Pole is a good soldier," Ludendorff said.[349] In July 1916 General von Beseler reported to the High Command that the creation of a Polish nation would enable the raising of three divisions of Polish volunteers for the German Army. Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg doubted that such an outcome was assured and he thought it would alienate the Russians, closing off a possible separate peace.[350] Indeed, Beseler's guidance was inconsistent; at another time he had insisted that the Poles were fundamentally anti-German and that it would be impossible to change their feelings.[351] Ludendorff, however, liked the idea, and his opinion had become the one that really mattered in the fall of 1916. The Beseler plan went forward. Now instead of planning for German annexation of Polish and Baltic lands and Austrian appropriation of Galicia, the two emperors of Germany and Austro-Hungary announced on 5 November 1916 their intention to create a Polish state under a close protectorate of the Central Powers when the war was over.[352]

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[348] V.R. Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 38-44.

[349] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 350.

[350] Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 313-14.

[351] Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 237.

[352] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 350.

The Two Emperors' manifesto had far-reaching effects. It was taken in Poland, at least at first, as a change in policy toward the creation of an independent Polish state. That impression went much farther: President Woodrow Wilson, just then embracing the role of international peacemaker, soon announced that "statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland." Wilson held to this assumption through the Versailles conference in 1919 and made it a fundamental goal of the peace treaty. The Emperors' Proclamation promised an independent Polish army. But almost immediately the Germans appealed for Polish enlistment in the German Army, which left the clear impression among Poles that the Emperor's Proclamation was a ruse to raise troops for the Central Powers.[353] The enlistment effort attracted only 370 Polish volunteers, 350 of whom were Jews.[354] Still, in December General von Beseler welcomed 20,000 men of the Polish Legion into Warsaw, only to witness the soldiers put up posters saying, "No Army without a Government." In January 1917 German authorities created a Provisional Council of State, a Polish advisory body with limited powers. Ludendorff hoped that this suggestion of local control would spur Poles to join the German army. The Polish Legion immediately put itself under the authority of the Provisional Council, which Beseler said was entirely unacceptable. Józef Piłsudski, head of the Legion, pushed Beseler to allow some rudiments of Polish autonomy. Beseler thought Poles were

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[353] Eldon Ray Burke, *Polish Policy of the Central Powers During the World War* (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1936), 26-41; Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland,* 350-52.

[354] Fischer, *Germany's Aims,* 245.

"political children" and Piłsudski a "military dilettante and demogogue." Polish independence from Germany was going to be hard to win, and the Poles knew it well.[355]

The Germans learned immediately that the Two Emperors' Proclamation also created problems for their best allies in Poland, the Jews. In October 1916 Beseler had heard from the German Zionist and *KfdO* member Adolf Friedemann about the bad effects that Polish independence would have on Jews. "It is true that the Jewish population is met with little favor by the Poles," Beseler, or one of his aides, wrote to the Foreign Office in Berlin.[356] Jews did not want the Germans to intervene in the movement toward self-government. "The Jews, whose fears are probably correct, believe a German intervention will only compound the differences" between Poles and Jews, the General Government reported. "By our intervention we are running the risk of injury and massively affecting the agenda" of local politics, the General Government official warned. The Orthodox in particular wanted the German administration to remain impartial.[357]

Few German Jews had been more committed to advancing the Kaiserreich's influence in the East than Max Bodenheimer, and thus hardly anyone felt more betrayed by the Two Emperors' Declaration than he did. He blamed his old ally in the Foreign Office, Count Hutten-Czapski, for "breaking through the ring around the Kaiser" and selling out to the Poles for the promise of a volunteer army that never materialized. Bodenheimer resigned from the *KfdO*, which he thought had accomplished broad acceptance of the idea that the distinctive language

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[355] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland,* 353.

[356] AA, *Der Weltkrieg*, Nr. 149, K203645-6, Letter from Executive Chief of the General Government of Warsaw to Foreign Ministry, sent 20.11.16, written 25.10.16.

[357] Ibid., The signature on the document is not legible, but it clearly came from Beseler's office.

and culture of the *Ostjuden* constituted them as "a nationality of their own, which had a right to preserve its specific character." But the work of the *KfdO* led to a great disappointment. "When the war broke out we had put ourselves wholeheartedly at the disposal of the Reich," Bodenheimer later wrote. He and others in the *KfdO* had sincerely believed that the interests of Eastern Jews and the Reich were entirely compatible, and "the chief motivation behind the enthusiasm with which we put our time and energy at its disposal was the wish to be of service to the Reich." Over time, however, what the *KfdO* received for their efforts was "increasing coolness." At the same time, the attitude of the German authorities of occupation toward Polish Jews became ever more oppressive and the *KfdO*'s complaints about the treatment of Jews merely embarrassing. In late 1916 Bodenheimer resigned from the *KfdO* and returned to the service of the world-wide Zionist movement.[358]

Ludwig Haas, the head of the Jewish section in the General Government of Warsaw, called the Two Emperors' proclamation a "gleich Null" (a nullity). Haas thought it undermined all that had been done to create sympathy among Polish Jews for Germany, which was high when the German Army entered Warsaw in August 1915. After it, German lower administrative authorities repeatedly ignored the principle of treating all people equally, and anti-Semitic prejudices became more apparent. A liberal, mostly secular, Assimilationist Jew, Haas at this point converted to a Zionist point of view. "I did not begin as a Zionist," he wrote, but the betrayal that the Two Emperors' Proclamation represented to him was sufficient for him to see that Polish Jews had no real future in Poland, that they had no hope of protection from the

[358] Bodenheimer, *Prelude to Israel*, 273-74.

German government.[359] They should prepare for a separate Jewish state. The events of the war had begun what would become a mass conversion of previously anti-Zionist, and non-Zionist, Jews to that cause.

The proclamation had a similar strong effect on other German Jews committed to helping the *Ostjuden*. In response to it, Emanuel Carlebach wrote to Paul Nathan that the two of them, one Orthodox and the other Assimilationist, needed to start cooperating with the Zionists of the *Komitee für den Osten*. Carlebach wrote that the proclamation had resulted in "harassment . . . that the Jews are exposed to here and in the whole province." German officials explained the mistreatment as "not of the German system but of mistakes of individual officials," Carlebach said.[360] Gerhard von Matius of the German Foreign Ministry office in Warsaw acknowledged the legitimacy of the Jewish claims of mistreatment but explained it is as reflecting mainly a lack of understanding among German soldiers for the Eastern Jewish world and its peculiarities. A harsh word or occasional outburst by a German official or soldier was often attributed to anti-Semitism but was really a manifestation of his ignorance of the peculiar nature of Eastern European Jews. Matius required German military policemen, before starting duties in Poland, to attend a lecture "about the historical reason of the low cultural level of the east Jews and their characteristics."[361] Such condescension explained the weak official response to German abuse of Polish Jews.

In the aftermath of the Two Emperors' Proclamation, German authorities began to withdraw their commitment to advancing the interests of the *Ostjuden*. In mid-1917 German

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[359] Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik,* 200.

[360] Ibid.

[361] Ibid., 527.

military administrators handed control of schools to local authorities, therefore thwarting the hopes that Jewish students might be taught in Hebrew or Yiddish. They began to ignore claims of social discrimination and economic deprivation from Jews.[362]

The Two Emperors' Proposal persuaded Ludwig Haas, Max Bodenheimer, and Emanuel Carlebach, men of quite different backgrounds but each with a high level of German patriotism, that there was in fact little hope for Jews in Poland. Neither Haas nor Carlebach had shown much sympathy for the creation of a Jewish national homeland. Zionists' proposal for *Eretz Israel* now seemed to them far more practical than it had prior to November 1916, and perhaps a Jewish state in Palestine had become imperative.

In spite of the apparent promise of Polish independence, the *Kaiserreich* in late 1916 internally, and in effect secretly, renewed its commitment to taking all of Poland. This represented in part the Germans' decision to disregard the Habsburgs' longstanding aim to acquire Congress Poland. The failure of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the Brusilov Offensive had undermined their claim to future territorial gains. With the Entente's rejection of a peace proposal in December, and the decision to resume U-boat warfare in the Atlantic, the Germans renewed their commitment to acquiring vast territories in the East, including Lithuania, Kurland, and Congress Poland.[363] The Habsburgs would have to settle for what they could acquire in the Balkans or Rumania. This meant continued need for successful occupation of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. All during the period of occupation, resentment had mounted among most Poles—and for that matter, among most Lithuanians and Ukrainians—toward Germans. The *Ostjuden*

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[362] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 70-71.

[363] Fischer, *Germany's Aims,* 313-22.

remained the Germans' best potential allies, but the harsh circumstances amid war-weary peoples made it ever harder to achieve cooperation, much less genuine support from Eastern Jews. Still, the other groups tended to view the Jews as pawns of the Germans, and in the ugly circumstances of 1917, the *Ostjuden* suffered accordingly.

As the war went on, Germans grew increasingly polarized on the home front. The German military and Prussian *Junkers*, the dominant interest groups in the Empire, sought to defend their antidemocratic power over the Empire; they feared ideological dilution by Liberals and socialists. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) reciprocated with deep suspicions of the Rightist influence in the government and on the war effort. During the war years, the SPD steadily gained followers. As the war demanded more and more of the populace, Germans moved toward opposite political poles. Germany's manpower shortage on the battlefield resulted in expanding conscription to cover all men up to age 50. The Hindenburg Program sent many civilians to jobs in places not of their choosing. As raw materials and manpower were directed toward the maximum production of military hardware, the supply of domestic goods shrank drastically. No one in Germany had been prepared for, or even anticipated, a war as long as they had coped with by the winter of 1916-17.[364]

Beyond the shortages of consumer goods, the German economy experienced terrible disruptions as a result of the war effort. Prior to the war, economic growth had been based heavily on the export and import of goods, the vast majority of which had been cut off with the British blockade of German ports. Mismanagement and lack of prewar planning contributed to

[364] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 44-5.

the chaos and limited the national food supply.[365] The shortage of consumer goods caused a sustained inflation, felt most acutely in food. In 1914 the German bureaucracy had decreed a mass slaughter or pigs to preserve grain supplies, but the *Schweinemord* resulted in a waste of meat and a reduction of future grain crops because the massacre of nine million pigs cut off the main supply of fertilizer.[366] The full effects of this misguided policy were felt in 1916. Poor grain harvests in 1916 and 1917 made the situation worse. Food shortages resulted in strikes and riots in many places during the summer of 1916. The suffering was worst among the lower classes, who had less ability to acquire scarce goods on the black market. During the unusually hard winter of 1916-17, often called the "the turnip winter," food and fuel shortages created desperate want, during which an estimated 700,000 died of starvation and hypothermia.[367]

As suffering on the home front worsened, and while the German military was struggling in long, bloody, and inconclusive battles on both fronts, anti-Semitism steadily rose in Germany. Notwithstanding the promise of *Burgfrieden* made by the Kaiser in 1914, the right-wing, *völkisch* press had always expressed hostility to Jews and their various roles in the war. Anti-Semitism had surged just prior to the war, reflected in the creation in 1912 of the League against Jewish Arrogance. With this group, Jews were the main issue, whereas earlier right-wing groups had been anti-Semitic but had not made opposition to Jews their first concern. At the same time that the *Kaiserreich* was proclaiming a civil truce, the war intensified anti-Jewish feeling among those already disposed in that direction. Among the leading German anti-Semites were Theodor

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[365] Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918* (London: Arnold, Hodder Headlone Group, 1997), 285-301.

[366] Richard Walther Darré, *Der Schweinemord* (Munich: F. Eher Nachf, 1937).

[367] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 49-50.

Fritsch, compiler of the *Antisemiten-Katechismus;* Count Ernst zu Reventlow of the Pan-German League; and Alfred Roth of Commercial Employees' Union, later the founder of a right-wing terrorist group, the *Deutschvölkischer Schutz-und Trutzbund.* Anti-Semites focused heavily on the role of leading Jewish businessmen—Walther Rathenau, Albert Ballin, Carl Melchior—in organizing the German war effort and accused them of war profiteering. Anti-Semites also dwelt on the so-called "Jewish Press" in Germany, referring to the newspapers owned by the Mosse, Ullstein and Sonemann familes, especially the *Frankfurter Zeitung,* and *Berliner Tageblatt, Berliner Volkszeitung,* and *Berliner Morgenzeitung*. All these newspapers essentially advocated the Liberal Party agenda of the urban bourgeoisie, favoring trade and industry over agriculture, parliamentary power over executive power, and free trade over protection. Although they all had gentile reporters and took positions embraced by many Christians, the anti-Semites designated them as Jewish publications.[368]

In 1915 the racist Pan-German League and the *Bund der Landwirte* [Agricultural League] joined with Fritsch and Roth in claiming that Jews were shirking their military duties and profiteering from the war. In 1916 anti-Semitism became more open as economic conditions grew worse. Hostility to Jews provided a means for conservative political interests in Germany to attack Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, who was viewed by the Right as a waffler, political reformer, and a compromiser on war tactics, including, for example his unwillingness in mid-1916 to risk resumption of submarine warfare. The Right attributed these failings to Bethmann's deference to Jewish influences like Walter Rathenau and Albert Ballin.[369]

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[368] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 170-71.

[369] Ibid., 199-200.

Early in the war Max Warburg had called on Arthur Zimmerman at the Foreign Ministry and told him that German Jews expected fair treatment in the Army and in government service during the war. In the spirit of *Burgfrieden*, the *Kaiserreich* had committed itself to fairness toward Jews. But as the war went on, Warburg and other influential Jews were bothered by the resurgence of anti-Semitism and the failure of the government and the Army to live up to the promises of the *Burgfrieden.* Walther Rathenau, after doing what by all reports was a masterful job in organizing the German economy to maximize military production in the *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*, had suddenly resigned in 1915 in the face of anti-Semitic criticism that he was profiteering from the war. In the summer of 1916, Max Warburg had published privately *Die Judenfrage in Rahmen der deutschen Gesamtpolitik* (The Jewish Question in Relation to Overall German Policy) in which he detailed at length the failures of the German government and Army to live up to its "civic truce."[370]

On 11 October 1916 the War Minister Adolf Wild von Hohenborn sent an *Erlass* (order) to all German military commands, both those at home and on the fronts, to conduct a census in November on the service of Jews in the Army. "The War Ministry is continually receiving complaints from the population," Wild's order began, "that large numbers of men of the Israelitic faith who are fit for military service are either exempt from military duties or are evading their obligation to serve under every conceivable pretext." Wild said that these reports claimed that "large numbers of Jews in military service are also said to have obtained assignments in administrative or clerical posts far away from the front lines, either with the rear echelon or in the homeland." The questionnaire asked "wieviel davon nicht mit der Waffe in der Hand?" (How

[370] Werner T. Angress, "The German Army's '*Judenzählung*' of 1916: Genesis—Consequences—Significance," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 23 (1978), 129-30.

many [Jewish soldiers] do not carry a weapon?)[371] It asked for the number of Jewish officers, administrative officials, and enlisted men in service, as well as how many had died or been decorated.

The *Judenzählung* was a response to many anonymous complaints about alleged Jewish shirkers that arrived at the War Ministry throughout the first two years of the war. The protests originated from the right-wing groups that had been promoting anti-Semitic attitudes since late 1914. Theodor Fritsch of the *Reichshammerbund* had kept statistics on Jewish military participation.[372] The accusations of Jewish malingering were only acted on with the arrival of Wild von Hohenborn in the War Ministry in Berlin. The man who previously held the position had studiously avoided making any response to the accusations, in the belief that any official encouragement of anti-Semitism would injure the nation's morale. In October 1916, however, Wild displayed more sensitivity to the military command's defensiveness about their recent failures and to their need to find a scapegoat for the ongoing stalemate of the war. Wild was a protégé of Erich von Falkenhayn, the deposed Chief of Army Staff, who was known to be an anti-Semite.[373]

The announcement of the *Judenzählung* demonstrated that in the *Kaiserreich* the left hand sometimes did not know what the right was doing: Wild acted without the approval, and probably without the knowledge, of the Foreign Office or the Chancellery.[374] It was indeed

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[371] Ibid., 117.

[372] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State,* 205.

[373] Angress, "Judenzählung' of 1916," 124; Martin Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps, 1890-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 45.

[374] Angress, "'Judenzählung' of 1916," 127-33.

characteristic of Wilhelmine Germany by the fall of 1916 that the military right hand behaved exactly as it preferred without care or concern for non-military considerations. The *Judenzählung* also reflected the serious decline of German morale by the fall of 1916. It occurred after a long summer of strikes and food riots and as the economic and population disruptions of the Hindenburg Program were being felt. It came amid a climate of bad war news—the stalemates at Verdun and the Somme and the resurgence of the Russians in the East with the Brusilov Offensive.

Wild's order was leaked to politicians, and in mid-October 1916 Matthias Erzberger, a *Reichstag* representative from the *Zentrum*, the Catholic Centre Party, demanded that Jews in the *Kriegsgesellschaften*, the war agencies, be counted as well. The War Ministry quickly disavowed any anti-Semitic intent in the *Judenzählung*. Wild von Hohenborn, having gotten at odds with Hindenburg over his *Arbeitspflicht programm* (forced labor program), was removed as head of the War Ministry within days of ordering the *Judenzählung* and replaced by General Hermann von Stein, an administrator known to be civil and reasonable toward Jews.[375] Whether the *Judenzählung* was a cause of Wild's departure is not clear. Up to this time Ludendorff had been consistently receptive to Jewish concerns, though after the war he would be become notorious for his anti-Semitism, support for the National Socialism, and association for a time with Adolf Hitler. Apparently, however, he made no attempt to stop the *Judenzählung* or undo its ill effects.

Jews were immediately and deeply outraged. The *Judenzählung* represented to them a reversal of the *Burgfrieden* and the "Spirit of 1914." The promise of equal rights in government and military service now seemed mere hypocrisy. Ludwig Haas, who still held his seat in the

[375] Ibid.,126.

Reichstag while he served as head of the Jewish section of the General Government in Warsaw, insisted that anti-Semitism was indeed the cause of the *Judenzählung*. Speaking for the *Verband der Deutschen Juden*, the Prussian Jewish lawyer and politician Oskar Cassel made ineffectual overtures to the War Ministry to try to thwart the *Judenzählung*'s implementation. The count went forward, but the War Ministry did not release the actual findings of the count until 1922. Carl Melchior, who had been running the *Zentraleinkaufsgesellschaft,* the central purchasing agency, after returning injured from the war front, quit his post in response to the *Judenzählung*. Long after the war was over, Jewish organizations would prove that Jews had in fact contributed at least their fair share to the war effort.[376]

In the meantime, Jewish soldiers felt strong resentments about being singled out for examination. "I feel as if I had received a terrible box on the ears," one soldier wrote—just before he was killed in action.[377] The General Governments of Warsaw and Brussels were ordered to participate and therefore every one of the more than 100,000 German Jewish soldiers had to participate. Outrage came from Army chaplains—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish.[378] They reported that the count was especially bad for morale in the East. The *Verband* released statements from the Army *Feldrabbiner* that gave evidence of the anger and bitter feelings that the count provoked among Jewish soldiers. "From the soul of our Jewish war veterans" read the headline in a German newspaper in article written by the Bamberg rabbi Adolf Eckstein, who served on the Western Front. "Our counted combatants have the sensation," Eckstein said, "as if

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[376] Ibid.,127-33.

[377] Werner T. Angress, "Das deutsche Militär und die Juden im ersten Weltkrieg," in *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* (January 1976), 99.

[378] Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik*, 527.

the ancient yellow stigma had been attached to them again, in spite of the baptism by fire and the blood they have spilled."[379]

The Zionist theologian Martin Buber responded with more anger. People had said to him: "'We' Jews must protest,'" but Buber disagreed. "All the upright Germans should be protesting: then all of their non-German spirit should be counted also, which announces itself with these requests and procedures." It was a sad commentary indeed if "a need for such statistics exists concerning the upright Jew," Buber concluded. The truth about the situation was simple, he wrote in despair. "They determined! You count! One counts! We are accustomed to being counted. . . . Count!"[380] Buber's exasperation reflected the betrayal that most German Jews felt about the *Judenzählung*.

The Jewish feminist journalist and poet Henrietta Fürth, the mother of two soldiers who had been badly maimed in the war, expressed similar outrage. A socialist, Fürth had taught her children that Jews had a high responsibility to protect the weak, fight for truth and justice, and to be "clever as a snake and harmless as a dove." Her sense of betrayal by the *Judenzählung* was acute. She wrote in verse:

> Go and count them. Count the buried
> and the crippled of this ghastly war, as well.
> Go there and count. You'll have our help
> in counting the Jews' acts of charity
> and the Jewish fighters for spiritual victory. …"
>
> Now we do not want to go on.
> What else did you want us to do?
> Why now demand us to confess our allegiance?

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[379] Dr. A. Eckstein, "Aus der Seele unserer jüdischen Kriegsteilnehmer," *Im deutschen Reich*, Jg 23 (1917) Nr 2, S. 65-69.

[380] "Judenzählung," *Der Jude* (November 1916), 564.

> We were not asked in the early days of the war.
> We served the Fatherland without being asked.[381]

A more restrained, but also more sustained, protest came from Max Warburg, the highly influential Hamburg banker. Warburg had been instrumental in financing the German war effort and was connected directly to powerful circles in the United States through his brother Paul, who then sat on the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank. High-ranking Germans considered Paul Warburg a possible voice against American entry into the war. In the weeks after the *Judenzählung* became known, Max Warburg pressured the German government to issue a statement that German Jews were living up to their civic duty. The *Judenzählung*, having proceeded without his approval, embarrassed Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg and he wanted to appease Warburg. The Jewish count occurred, however, while the Chancellor was preoccupied with the proposed creation of a Kingdom of Poland, the peace initiative promoted by President Woodrow Wilson in December 1916, and the decision on whether to resume U-boat warfare. In early January 1917 Warburg informed Bethmann's chief aide that "we are doing whatever can be done to assuage the embittered feelings of the Jews," but that the government needed to make a strong conciliatory statement soon. A while later he sent the aide excerpts from a letter from a Jewish soldier, a personal acquaintance of Warburg, whose promotion had been blocked by an anti-Semitic officer. "I simply cannot grasp how it is possible that at a moment when we need very badly the utmost exertion from every individual, no supreme effort is being made, in the interest of state, to spur on that individual to do his utmost," Warburg wrote.[382] Still seeing no positive response,

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[381] Furth quoted in Angress, "'Judenzählung' of 1916," 117.

[382] Warburg quoted in Angress, "'Judenzählung' of 1916," 130.

he let it be known that the *Judenzählung* would prevent Jewish bankers from helping with the forthcoming war-loan drive that the government desperately needed to go well. Such threats fell on the deaf ears of the military men who had initiated the *Judenzählung*, and no effort toward reconciliation with German Jews was forthcoming.

The Jewish count took six months to collect, and when its numbers were tallied up a year later, the military did not release the report, perhaps because it showed full Jewish participation. Alternatively, the government may not have wanted to fuel further controversy with new information. Instead the War Ministry claimed the findings were inconclusive.[383] In 1922 Franz Oppenheimer published a pamphlet, probably based in part on a study sponsored by the German-Jewish war veterans organization, which found that more than 100,000 Jews had served in the Army, 12,000 had died, and 35,000 had been decorated for bravery. Jews participated at the rate of seventeen percent of their population, which was higher than the levels for either Catholics or Protestants.[384]

The *Judenzählung* shattered the patriotism of Arnold Zweig, the Zionist writer and German soldier then serving on the Western Front. "The *Judenzählung* was a reflection of unheard sadness for Germany's sin and our agony," Zweig wrote to Martin Buber. "If there was no anti-Semitism in the army, the unbearable call to duty would be almost easy," he declared, but now he regarded himself "personally as a captured civilian and stateless foreigner." Zweig wrote

[383] Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik*, 528.

[384]Franz Oppenheimer, *Die Judenstatistik des preußischen Kriegsministeriums* (München: erlag für Kulturpolitik, 1922).

a short story in the *Jüdische Rundschau* in November 1916, "*Judenzählung vor Verdun*," in which Jewish soldiers were raised from the grave to be counted.[385]

Amid the tensions provoked by the *Judenzählung* in late 1916 and early 1917, the *Feldrabbiner* continued to work for the improvement of conditions among soldiers in the field and the *Ostjuden* they met in their areas of occupation. Leopold Rosenak developed mobile field libraries, for which he raised funds and selected books. He made sure that the field libraries contained works that were ecumenical, of interest to Jews and Gentiles alike.[386] At the same time, the rabbis responded to German Jews who wanted information about the experience of the men at war. Aron Tänzer received a request from a library in Berlin for photographs of Jewish soldiers on the warfront. "I would be honored, "Benas Levy of Berlin wrote to Tänzer, "if you allowed me to use your own photograph as a field chaplain. . . . I hope you are well and your living arrangements are satisfactory for a man of your position and we are thankful for your continued blessed work for the good of our brave troops."[387]

By March 1917, the *Feldrabbiner* were confronting the difficulties of a war, which had lasted much longer than they expected and a harder attitude toward Jewish concerns than the German War Department had originally held. Their work was still complicated by the difficulties of travel in the East and the overburden of the work assigned them. At times rabbis could not even get to their semi-monthly meetings to discuss their work. When seven of them met in Vilna

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[385] Noah Isenberg, *Between Redemption and Doom: The Strains of German-Jewish Modernism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 59-60.

[386] CJA, 1, 75 C Ra 1, Nr. 6, #12516 – July-Dec 1916 *Feldrabbinerkonferenzen*. 6-7 Marz, 1916 First Conference of the Feldrabbiners des Osten, Wilna.

[387] CJA, 1, 75 D Ta 1, Nr. 1- 14, #13364-#13377 (Nachlass Aron Tänzer), Benas Levy on 27.12.1916 from Berlin to Rabbi dr. Tänzer, *Bugarmee*, 191 Feldpoststation (Osten).

in March, Jacob Sonderling reported on the progress for a new edition of field prayer books on which they all had collaborated; a new edition was needed because the old field prayer book was created for a short-term war, not one of almost three-year's duration. The rabbis discussed the difficult conditions in the field and recognized that preparations for a worthy celebration of Passover for Jewish soldiers were going badly. They all took as an indication of official indifference the War Department's failure to respond to the requests of the leading organization of German Orthodoxy to address the issues surrounding the observation of Jewish High Holidays. The rabbis themselves had prompted the organization to make the requests to the War Ministry.[388]

In late 1916 and 1917 Jewish soldiers confronted rising anti-Semitism in the ranks. The problem was most acute in the reserve officer corps, in which 1,200 Jews served. A German magazine reported that 4,000 Jewish troops, and especially the ten recipients of the Iron Cross among them, felt deceived by the German Army for having been promised at the beginning of the war an end to anti-Semitic rhetoric. Julius Marx, one holder of the Iron Cross, wrote that in order to serve as an officer he had to change regiments and then get elected from the ranks. Marx recounted how he had shared a house with other, non-Jewish officers while billeted in France. "They did not know that I was a Jew," Marx wrote. "What I heard from them about the Jews in Germany, I do not want to repeat because it would offend." He did say that "a nation that has so little tolerance, in which there is so little consensus, where men ask first to ask about status and money and faith, and then only after that about love of country, a people like that can not win

[388] CJA, 1, 75 D Ta 1, Nr. 1- 14, #13364- #13377, *Konfernez der Feldrabbiner des Osten* in Bialystock, am 15 Marz 1917.

with this war." Marx noted German officers' intolerance was not only between Jews and Christians but also between officers and subordinates, between workers and industrialists.[389]

The growing anti-Semitism felt by the Jewish soldiers was only one of many concerns the rabbis addressed. Besides military issues, the *Feldrabbiner* constantly worried about the practice of prostitution among *Ostjuden* women, which they attributed to the destruction of most means of livelihood among Jewish men. As the war dragged on, the problem was getting worse. Robert Weltsch, a 25-year-old Jewish journalist born in Prague of German parents, was serving in the Army in late 1916 when he wrote a long and penetrating analysis of the terrible effects of the war on Jewish women in the East.[390] "This war has thrown the Jewish masses into chaos more than any event in the last few centuries," Weltsch wrote. "Jews are flattened, deprived of their existence, made into wandering vagrants." No one could know in November 1916 what the outcome of the war would be, but the young journalist did know that "Jewish women have suffered repeated and irreversible damage." He did not mean just the repeated violence and rape of the Russian Army, but "quite beyond this abomination is the sad fact of prostitution created by the war conditions."[391]

"Pretty girls were always a special attraction for the soldier, and this war has led to the relaxation of customs," Weltsch wrote for the German publication *Der Jude*. Jewish prostitution

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[389] Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt. *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten, 1914-1918* (Bonn: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1983), 24-26.

[390] Robert Weltsch, „Ein Feldpostbrief aus Dem Osten" *Der Jude*, Jg 1 (Nov. 1916) Nr 8, S. 529-534.

[391] Ibid.

was "providing a constant supply of comic material for our humor magazines."[392] Weltsch saw prostitution in Lublin, just a day after Germans occupied the city. *Krakauer* Street and *Friedrichstrasse* were swarming with officers and Jewish girls.[393] The main business of the Jews in the war zone was selling items to the military, whose good will they dared not lose. Officers were often quartered with Jewish families, they were the only regulars in the many Jewish restaurants and wine bars, "and everywhere are Jewish daughters."[394]

Weltsch knew of one town where before the war there had been a five-year Hebrew school. The city had paid for about 4,000 inhabitants to attend, and nearly all the children learned Hebrew, including the girls. There had been a Hebrew club with a large library in which they could learn. "Now everything is blown up, most people have fled, the library was destroyed by the Russians," Weltsch explained. "Now everyone only thinks of making money," one man told Weltsch sadly, "it is worse than ever."[395]

Weltsch had keen empathy not just for the young women but also for their fathers. When confronting the occupying soldiers, he wrote, "the *Ostjude* needs to prove his loyalty," an understandable feeling "considering that the Jews of the East have lost their homes through brute force and intimidation by those in power." To avoid trouble, a Jewish father dared not contradict the wishes of an occupying soldier, though he trembled knowing that his family's welfare is threatened. "The Jew has lost his traditional livelihood and has never before been so desperate

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[392] Ibid.

[393] Ibid.

[394] Ibid.

[395] Ibid.

for money," Weltsch wrote. "He is a refugee, has lost all his property, and has retreated to a sub-human condition, and how can he be denied the one source of income available?"[396]

Weltsch called for a broad recognition of the problem among the Jewish women of the East and urged for a response: "Why has this terrible national disaster been discussed so little? Why do Jewish advocates use energy toward useless sorts of anti-Semitic nonsense and not care about the sore which was eating at the most delicate point of our community body?" Jewish institutions—rabbis, teachers, and the press—needed to exert all their influence to create "a revival of our people." Not even socialist organizations like *Poale Zion* had addressed the evil of prostitution. And yet changing peoples' thinking, Weltsch wrote, "is the only salvation I see."[397]

Weltsch, a committed Zionist, did find groups of young people awakened to the pride of being Jewish. Using Hebrew created "a passionate dedication to life and they see the degeneration of their people as a deep humiliation," he wrote. The war had provoked among these Jews "the deep sense of a national will to live and the regenerated spiritual energy which combined make the only true weapon of our people," Weltsch believed. It was a consolation of the war that "this youth is ready for our people."[398]

A few months later Weltsch published an emotional lament on the suffering of Jewish children in occupied areas. In a local market he had seen a group of starving children among a collection of stolen goods for sale. "They cry, and they have no comforter," Weltsch wrote in Martin Buber's new Zionist intellectual journal concerned mainly with the *Ostjuden*. "The small

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[396] Ibid.

[397] Ibid.

[398] Ibid.

children die before their time," he lamented. "They were a sacrifice for the sins of their fathers. They are the shame of the fathers." Weltsch offered what amounted to jeremiad, complete with Torah teachings, against the failure of Jews and Germans to prevent the children's tragedy. German men had enjoyed Jewish women for sex, but the child "had enjoyed nothing, and therefore why should he suffer the bad?" Weltsch asked. "Little children die for the sins of sex." Who would pay the debt for the loss of these children "who died before they could fulfill their promise?" Weltsch's answer placed responsibility on the whole Jewish community: those who survived must "stand as one for the dead," accept collectively the guilt for the loss without comfort, and perform as a sacred obligation redemptive deeds for "the great family of the dead who have left work undone."[399]

It was therefore obvious in early 1917 Jews in Germany and the West still were unable to solve the problems of how to help the *Ostjuden.* Severe conflicts among relief agencies persisted. American Zionists remained suspicious of the *Hilfsverein*, and even some of the German organization's old friends on the American Jewish Committee had grown skeptical—or at least weary of all the in-fighting among German Jews. In January 1917 the main American relief committee notified the *Hilfsverein* it would no longer funnel relief funds through their organization but would set its own mechanism for distribution. This plan had hardly been enacted when the U.S. entered the war in April 1917. Thereafter, U.S. aid to Eastern Europe was effectively cut off. Up to that time, Americans had sent about $5 million (21 million marks) to

[399] Robert Weltsch, "Wenn Kinder sterben," *Der Jude* Heft 11- February 1917, pg. 778-779.

Poland and Lithuania through the *Hilfsverein*. After the U.S. entered the war, the *Hilfsverein* was able to gather only 250,000 marks in Germany for *Ostjuden* relief.[400]

The politicization of the Hasidim remained the overriding issue of Jewish involvement in Polish civic life. Although most Hasidim had deep reservations about political activity, the war had persuaded some of their members that the group needed to adapt to the changing circumstances. Since their arrival in Warsaw in early 1916, the German Orthodox rabbis Pinchas Kohn and Emanuel Carlebach had made a large impact on the Hasidim. After much early indifference to their efforts, the two received the support of powerful *rebbes* and broad support from the Hasidic masses soon followed. They created a strong organization to advance Orthodox interests, *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim*. They maintained their firm commitment that the Orthodox should cooperate with Catholic Poles in the new Polish government that most people expected to emerge, especially after the Two Emperors' Proclamation.[401]

In January 1917 Carlebach and Kohn wrote a statement asserting the connection between their faith in Judaism and their potential loyalty to a Polish state. To the High Council of State, they announced that "Almighty God has willed, God Almighty has ordained that the first fruit of this terrible war, the hundred-year dream of all Poland is coming to realization," and the State Council was "the first visible sign of this world-historical turn.[402] *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* intended to preserve Jewish religious law in all situations, while at the same time recognizing

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[400] Sjazkowski, "Jewish Relief in Eastern Europe," 49.

[401] Grill, "Politicization of Traditional Polish Jewry," 227-30.

[402]Carlebach, "A German Rabbi Goes East," 107-8.

that it was God's will that the State Council embody Polish independence.[403] Orthodox Jews anticipated that Poles would use the best models from the Polish past for justice and political wisdom, which would allow them and their children to serve the "sacred forms of the God of our fathers" and also "the Polish state as loyal citizens with equal rights."[404] The rabbis were clearly asserting their hopes. Current realities, some of them visible at the time, made realization of that optimism doubtful.

A generational divide clearly was emerging among Polish Orthodoxy, and Kohn and Carlebach addressed the split. They founded Orthodox youth organizations, *Tevunah* (Understanding) and *Tzeirei Yehudah* (Beginning Union), which gave direction to the growing political and secular engagement of Orthodox youth.[405] Hassid Meshulem Kaminer, a young Orthodox leader, said in March 1917 that it was time for Orthodoxy to adopt "modern social forms and create a uniform organization which should be the true representation of all of orthodoxy in Poland and should alone speak in the name of the pious Jews."[406]

One way to meet modern needs was to create an Orthodox newspaper. *Dos Yidische Vort*, founded in early 1917, did that, but its establishment was controversial. Suspicious of its inclusion of secular news as being too worldly, some Orthodox opposed *Dos Yidische Vort*. But younger Orthodox Jews received the newspaper very favorably, and it would be successful for

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[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid.

[405] Grill, "Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry," 234.

[406] Quoted in Grill, "Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry," 232.

many years. Indeed, *Dos Yidische Vort* would be a major legacy of Kohn and Carlebach's work in Poland.[407]

In the face of dire warnings of suffering and moral decay among the *Ostjuden*, and the recognition that the German Government had become less interested in their fate, Jews in Poland remained divided on how to address the pressing social problems in their midst. Public discussion tended to focus on political matters, not social problems. The Two Emperors' Proclamation in November 1916 infused all Polish politics with high expectations of self-rule. As real political power seemed more nearly at hand, Polish Jews became even more contentious among themselves. In early 1917 the main divide continued to be between Hasidim and Assimilationists in one camp and Zionists and Folkists in the other over the issue of Jewish ethnic autonomy in an emerging Polish state. The Zionist-Folkist alliance was itself hardly a strong union because the groups divided over whether the official Jewish language should be Hebrew (Zionists) or Yiddish (Folkists). They remained apart over *Eretz Israel*, the Jewish homeland in Palestine, with the Zionists viewing it as the ultimate solution and the Folkists remaining committed to Poland as their true, permanent home.[408]

Even with the growing politicization of the Hasidim, the main development among Polish Jews in the spring of 1917 may have been the growth of Zionism. In April 1917 Julius Berger wrote that the streets of Warsaw were "full of reports on Palestine," and in July he observed that Poland was in a "mighty pro-Palestine mood." Berger told Ludwig Haas in the General

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[407] Ibid., 234.

[408] Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin: Mouton, 1983), 261-292; Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 37-87.

Government office that Zionism was now a "great and powerful mass movement." Though he was hardly disinterested—Berger worked for the World Zionist Organization—he had evidence for what he believed. In 1917 26,000 Jews in Congress Poland paid the *shekel* to join the World Zionist Organization. Almost ten times that many Polish Jews signed a petition calling for the Great Powers to affirm Jewish rights to Palestine, a sign that many more Jews embraced the idea of a homeland in Palestine than were willing to enlist in the Zionist political movement.[409]

Despite the apparent rise of Zionism, the success of Pinchas Kohn and Emanuel Carlebach among the Hasidim provoked strong criticism from Polish Zionists and Nationalists. *Der Moment*, the voice of the Yiddishist Folkists, published statements condemning the two German rabbis as "unwelcome guests." Nahum Goldmann, the young Zionist official in the German Foreign Ministry, in March 1917 described the political landscape among his fellow Jews in Poland. "In addition to the already politicized and activated group," he wrote in reference to the Assimilationists and the Zionists, "which forms only a relatively thin upper class, there is the great mass of Polish Jewry with their very strong Jewish instincts, with its unprecedented vitality, with its admirable loyalty to Judaism, but without the ability to implement all these latent energies into active, willing conscious national policy." Still, the *Hasidim*, "these broad yet politically undeveloped Jewish masses" were the real issue of "truly serious Jewish politics in Poland." Their position was, Goldmann declared, "the internal core problem of the Polish-Jewish question, since only the politicized Jewish masses are able to lay a permanent and safe basis on which Jewish policy can be promoted."[410]

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[409] Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland,* 44

[410] Nahum Goldmann, "Die innere Lage des polnischen Judentums," *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, March 25, 1917, 339.

A reporter for an Austrian Orthodox newspaper explained that the smaller groups of Assimilationists, Zionists, and Folkists, while well-organized earlier, were much less significant than the Orthodox. "The Orthodox, who form the bulk of the Jews of Poland, are gaining more and more of an advantage," the report concluded, though originally they "possessed no organization whatsoever, employed no press and virtually played the role of a mute bystander." The Zionists were well organized, the Orthodox reporter declared, and they "employed a widely disseminated press and knew how to create the impression, with the help of some Jewish circles in German, that they indeed represented the whole of Jewry in Poland."[411]

Zionists roundly criticized *Dos Yidische Vort* as an alien influence. "The systematic fight against the national-cultural aspirations of Polish Jewry is mainly carried out by the Yiddish newspaper which was founded an organ of the *Agudat Ha-Ortodoksim* in Warsaw by the two German rabbis," the Zionist newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau* reported in March 1917.[412] *Dos Yidische Vort* did not acknowledge a Jewish nation, only a Jewish religious community, the Zionist organ declared. *Jüdische Rundschau* insisted that all Polish-Jewish politicians, journalists, and authors were boycotting *Dos Yidische Vort*. "Except for a few unknown Hasidic writers there is not one Polish-Jewish employee," but *Dos Yidische Vort* contained "an abundance of articles and admonishing speeches by German rabbis, all of which are written in the style of Shabbat sermons."[413] *Jüdische Rundschau* was itself published in Berlin, a fact that its reporter neglected to mention. "One could have thought that at least in the pure religious area

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[411]"Die Orthodoxie kommt zur Geltung. (Brief aus Warschau), "*Jüdische Korrespondenz*, No. 6, Wien, 15 Februar 1917, 1.

[412] "Im Namen der Tora," *Jüdische Rundschau*, Nummer 13, Berlin 30 March 1917, 107.

[413] Ibid.

Polish Jewry would speak for itself," continued the critique. "But also here we meet exclusively the German-Orthodox assimilationist import." *Dos Yidische Vort* "propagates a missionary view of Judaism all too familiar in Germany, which acknowledges neither a Jewish nation nor a Jewish land, and which in reality is the comfortable formula of assimilation." Polish Jews, the *Rundschau* predicted, "will realize very soon that these tendencies only lead down one path, namely that of de-Judaizing."[414]

In April 1917 the German General Government of Warsaw shut down the remaining four Jewish newspapers in Poland. This action may have been due to the constant intramural fighting among Jews, but more likely it resulted from persistent conflicts between the German civil administration and the increasingly disgruntled Polish-Jewish community. Because of Nahum Goldmann's support of the Zionist paper, the *Haynt*, he was immediately sent back to Germany.[415]

The language used in schools was hotly contested terrain among Polish and German Jews working with the *Ostjuden*—indeed, language use in education became a proxy for deep-seated cultural and ideological disagreements among Jews. The Folkists were adamant that Yiddish should be the sole language of Polish education—and of *Ostjuden* life in general. For them, Yiddish was the essence of Jewish life in the East. The German Orthodox typically took the position that Hebrew should be the language of the *cheders* and German should be taught in secular schools; Yiddish was not a language but jargon. Polish Zionists did not approve of the use of Yiddish and wanted Hebrew instead; Bible and Jewish history, they insisted, had to be

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[414] Ibid.

[415] Finkelstein, *Haynt*, 61-63.

taught in Hebrew. German Zionists disagreed with Polish Zionists: Max Bodenheimer argued that Hebrew should be part of the program but that schools should be taught in Polish since Jews would be living in a Polish state. The vernacular Yiddish would be confined to home and social life. Indeed, German authorities did hand authority over schools to local Poles in the summer of 1917. "Hebrew will replace Yiddish in the program after 1916," Bodenheimer stated. "In order to be loyal citizens of the Polish state, they must also be taught Polish."[416]

The debate over language in school took place in the context of rising Polish nationalism in 1917, which represented a threat to Jews. The two competing nationalist factions, the *Endeks* led by Roman Dmowksi and the Socialists headed by Józef Piłsudski of the Polish Legion, vied to dominate the projected independent Polish state. Dmowski was particularly insistent that none of the other ethnic groups—Lithuanians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and especially Jews—was sufficiently civilized to take part in governing the forthcoming Polish state. Jews would have to leave Poland, Dmowski said. Piłsudski envisioned a more pluralistic new Poland, but his faction also made clear that Jews would not be treated in the same way as other non-Poles were expected to be. In July 1917, when a Constitutional Committee of Provisional Polish Council of State was established with the promise of civil rights to national minorities, members of the committee made clear that Jews would not be extended equal citizenship.[417]

Anti-Semitism partly reflected the growing disappointments of Polish nationalists in early 1917. The Germans refused to extend real control to Poles. The Provisional Polish Council of State, which German authorities created to placate Poles, was only an advisory body with limited

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[416] Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik,* 184-88.

[417] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 70-71.

powers. It was given control over education and the courts, a change that worried many Jews. Under the Provisional Council, Polish soldiers were required to take an oath of loyalty to German authority; German authorities insisted that they would maintain authority over all military force in Poland after the war, regardless of what form the Polish state finally took. The plan to keep the postwar military forces subject to German command provoked Piłsudski and his followers to resign from the Provisional Council in July 1917. Most Polish soldiers refused to take the oath of loyalty to Germany. The Germans then arrested Piłsudski and imprisoned him in Germany. In another attempt to mollify the Poles in September, the two Emperors proclaimed the creation of a Regency Council, including the future coronation of a "Polish King, wearer of the venerable and glorious Crown of the Piasts and Jagellons." Again few Poles felt conciliated: the Germans appointed the members of regents and had veto power over the council's actions, which were limited to the highly circumscribed powers of the Provisional Council. By late 1917 Poles were unhappier than ever with the Germans and more likely than ever than to blame their frustrations on Jews.[418]

Over the course of 1917, some German Jews grew frustrated with both the persistent divisions among Polish Jews and the German failure to achieve improvements in the lives of the *Ostjuden*. Like his fellow journalist and Zionist Robert Weltsch, Nahum Goldmann had begun to have serious doubts about whether there was reason for hope about the Polish situation. Goldmann wrote in the liberal, intellectual journal *Neue jüdische Monatshefte* that German Jews were preoccupied with the political situation, which was occasioned by the conquest of Poland by the Central Powers—a purely external influence on the *Ostjuden*. Like Weltsch, Goldmann

[418] Fischer, *Germany's Aims,* 453-55.

thought Germans were too absorbed with Polish anti-Semitism, which, while important, was less crucial than the internal realities within the Polish community.[419] German Jews needed to own up to the errors in their thinking about the Eastern Jews and recognize that the *Ostjuden*'s political behavior expressed their distinctive "inner spiritual and moral strength."[420]

What should be more important for future political goals to Germans than any individual wrong of Polish anti-Semitism, Goldmann thought, were the "various currents and powers within Polish Jewry."[421] The Polish-Jewish situation was too complicated to explain in a brief journal article, Goldmann wrote, but there was one fundamental idea to get across: Polish Jews were politically underdeveloped, especially when compared with German Jews, the result of denial of political rights during the Diaspora's 2000 years of history.[422] The *Ostjuden* had been forcibly confined to the ghetto, where they had to struggle just to survive, and where passivity, not action and group purpose, were rewarded. Unlike Germany where many Jews had been assimilated, Polish Jews had developed few leaders with political skill. The recent politicization of Polish Jews, especially the organization of the masses of Orthodox Jews, was sudden, but their lack of experience and under-developed leadership had resulted in contentious politics with the other factions—Assimilationists, Zionists, and Folkists.[423]

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[419] Nahum Goldmann, „Die innere Lage des polnischen Judentums," *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, March 25, 1917, 335-342.

[420] Ibid.

[421] Ibid.

[422] Ibid.

[423] Ibid.

Goldmann suggested that the Germans had arrived with too many preconceptions about what should happen among the *Ostjuden* and that the rush of war had not allowed them time to adjust sufficiently to provide good guidance. The Eastern Jews, for their part, were ill-prepared—and too preoccupied with survival—to adapt soon enough on their own. It seemed to Goldmann that a dual tragedy loomed among Jews, East and West.

The fate of the *Ostjuden* took a critical turn when the outbreak of strikes, riots, and anti-war protests in Russia in early 1917 brought about the fall of the Romanov dynasty. The February Revolution caused an increasingly volatile situation across Eastern Europe. The new liberal government constituted in March 1917 declared emancipation of Russian Jews and abolished the Pale of Settlement, which meant that Russian Jews were free for the first time to live where they pleased. The revolution encouraged new demands for self-determination among Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and other peoples of the Baltic region. By July an autonomous Ukraine accepted a large number of Jewish members in its new legislative body. The optimism spurred by the Revolution was tempered, however, when the Provisional government chose to stay in the war. German authorities secretly supported the exiled Marxist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin's return to Russia, and in the October Revolution his Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional government. The new Bolshevik government decreed a withdrawal of Russian troops and the creation of provisional governments in its border regions. At that point each national group sought recognition on ethnic lines. Nationalists now not only began to strike out against the German administration but some also began lashing out at their Jewish neighbors.[424] For the

[424] *Haynt* (v. 213) reported on pogroms in Galicia. The news was not issued directly, as the Polish information services kept it quiet. Information was released by wire from Berlin, dated November 12, reporting that "according to sources in western Galicia, monitored in Vienna, pogroms have broken out against Jews in several towns across western Galicia. A large number

Germans now, "visions of outright annexation in the East had to make way for more complicated political arrangements," one scholar has explained.[425]

The revolution provoked a similar surge of new hope for the future among Jews around the world. For a century, Jews had no worse enemy than the Tsar, and now he was gone. Franz Oppenheimer, the Berlin sociologist and leading Zionist, expressed what no doubt many Jews were feeling when word of the Russian events reached him. "The clay feet of the colossus" had been exposed, Oppenheimer rejoiced, its army and police were broken, and "ingloriously he has collapsed." What exactly was happening was not clear, he wrote, but "one thing is certain: we are witnessing one of the most tremendous events of world history, an event that even in this terrible struggle of nations, even in the breathless anticipation of Hindenburg-Ludendorff's next move, wholly occupies the whole foreground of our attention." Oppenheimer had to wonder: what does this gigantic upheaval mean to us as Germans and as Jews?[426] More important, what would it mean to Russian Jews? Surely it would bring, Oppenheimer thought, liberation from the confines of the Pale of Settlement and improvement of the *Ostjuden*'s financial situation as urban Jewish merchants served the expected increase in purchasing power among now-freed Russian peasants.[427]

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of Jews have been killed, many wounded. The damage is on the order of 15 to 20 million (Austrian) Crowns," 67.

[425] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 144.

[426] Franz Oppenheimer, "Die Revolution in Rußland und die Judenfrage," *Neue judische Monatshefte* (25.3.1917), 331-334.

[427] Ibid.

Still, Oppenheimer knew too much of Russian history to be entirely optimistic. "Whenever something significant happens in Russia," he cautioned, "first, the poor Jews, the historical scapegoats, are the victims." They were the "first lightning rod to discharge the ethnic tensions that got inflamed." He remembered that after the revolution of 1905 came pogroms that afflicted 690 cities, killed 1,000 and left another 2,000 wounded. It was "not impossible that similar atrocities perhaps even on a bigger scale, will be repeated now," the German academic warned. "Beware of the sea as the Russian storm surge is growing!"[428] But he hoped the current war was the last time the Jewish people would run the gauntlet of oppression. All the nations of Europe had sacrificed much life to the horrors of war, under "the old reign of anger and hatred," in the hope for a better future. Those bad memories now were easier to bear, Oppenheimer thought, because "the overthrow of the tsarist regime opens up for the Jewish people new, brighter horizons."[429]

In June 1917 Oppenheimer came to the defense of German occupation of the lands taken against claims that the new Russian government would liberate Jews in Lithuania, Kurland, Belorussia, and Ukraine. Army officials met with representatives of the *Komitee für den Osten* to get their help in countering the propaganda coming from Russia, a similar request to the one the Kaiserriech had made of German Jews in 1914. The Ober Ost command insisted that the various nationalities were now being treated fairly by all German authorities, Oppenheimer wrote.[430] All commands and regulations of the German government in the occupied areas were translated into

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[428] Ibid.

[429] Ibid.

[430] Franz Oppenheimer, „National Gleichstellung der Juden in Ober-Ost, "*Neue jüdische Monatshefte* 25.6.1917 pg. 520-21.

local languages, including Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Belarusian, and Yiddish (published in Hebrew script).[431] Ober Ost had created advisory boards of local residents to get opinions on medical and veterinary care, road construction, street cleaning and clearing work, caring for the poor, and the schools. Each ethnic group, including Jews, was represented proportionally. Thus, Oppenheimer declared, "the equality of Jews with the other nationalities is already set by regulation," because Jews in Ober Ost "have always been seen as a nationality, not just as a confession."[432]

If Germans were protecting Jewish rights in Ober Ost, however, the situation was more worrisome in Warsaw, where Germans in 1917 were attempting to win the loyalty of Poles by giving them a semblance of control. Oppenheimer declared that the German position taken in Ober Ost should be applied by the German General Government of Warsaw, especially with the creation of the Temporary State Council dominated by local Poles, "to ensure that the equality of Jews is recognized." Still the patriot of the Fatherland, Oppenheimer reflected the growing doubts among German Jews by mid-1917 about his government's sincerity about protecting the *Ostjuden*.[433]

Oppenheimer clearly saw that the Russian revolution fired anti-Semitism. In England, where the public was angry about the clamor in Russia to withdraw from the war, the right-wing press portrayed the revolution as a Jewish-inspired movement.[434] Right-wing elements in

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[431] Ibid.

[432] Ibid.

[433] Ibid.

[434] Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 22-29, 52-53.

Germany came to precisely the same conclusion. *Oberstleutnant* Max Bauer, chief of operations in *Ober Ost,* shut down the Social Democratic Press in the spring of 1917 because it was in his view a radical Jewish publication. Then Bauer banned the Red International Press—for the same reason. "The Jew Trotsky has huge influence in Brest-Litovsk," Bauer announced.[435]

However any one German viewed the Russian revolution, most agreed by late 1917 that they were deeply weary of the war. The revolution inspired hope among soldiers in the East that the war's end was near. Samuel Jacobowitz, a Galician Jewish infantryman in the Austrian Army, believed in April 1917 that the February Revolution had changed the course of the war. He had never been an optimist about a short war—a hope that seemed foolhardy from the current perspective—but he now expected it to end soon. The revolution would be "the great Grim Reaper" that would kill the war by October 1917, Jacobowitz wrote, and then he would get home. "The Russian revolution has interjected a strong hand in the war," he concluded, "and mankind has learned once again that the power of the idea often speaks a language stronger than the heaviest weapons."[436]

Over the summer of 1917, pessimism grew among German Jews about the treatment of Jews in the East and at home in Germany. The impact of the *Judenzählung* weighed heavily on their spirit, as did the other evidence of rising anti-Semitism in the Army and on the homefront. In October 1917 Franz Oppenheimer wrote bitterly that *Burgfrieden*, the civil truce among ethnic groups and religions that the Kaiser had declared in 1914, had not been kept. "Those whose

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[435] Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik,* 530-31.

[436] Samuel Jacobowitz, Armierungssoldat, Ab Mitte Juli 1915 diente einem K. u. K. Infantrie-Regiment, Karpathen, den 23. April 1917, in Hank and Simon (ed.), *Feldpostbriefe Jüdischer Soldaten 1914-1918*, 285.

privileges were taken away by the truce, the right wing," Oppenheimer said, "could not be kept quiet if Jews were to become the spirit of the new Germany." Jews were appreciated at the start of the war, but now as the situation worsened, those in charge of domestic politics "are thinking again." The anti-Semitic Prussians were "going mostly unchecked through all the alleys." The anti-Semitic press condemned Oppenheimer and all Jews: "Do not hope," they had said, "you are and will remain the Pariahs of Germany." Oppenheimer's alienation was also based on what had happened in the East. Germany's treatment of the Ostjuden, he now believed, was "totally lacking in goodwill, justice, and humanity." Germany would carry a great burden after the war for its treatment of the Ostjuden, he predicted. Oppenheimer, a devoted German patriot for most of the first three years of the war, had lost faith in the Fatherland.[437]

Another who had felt betrayed by his country had made even larger sacrifices for Germany. On September 15, 1917, the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah, Joseph Carlebach preached at the great synagogue *Ohel Yaakov* (Jacob's Tent) in Kovno. His brother-in-law Leopold Rosenak had often held prayers in *Ohel Yaakov* for German-Jewish soldiers. The commanders of Ober Ost had insisted that German-Jewish soldiers sit on one flank of the synagogue, Russian-Jewish prisoners on the other flank, with the local Kovno Jews in the middle. Carlebach began his sermon with these words: "We did not want this war." ("Wir haben diesen Krieg nicht gewollt!") German writers during the war had often used this statement to mean that its enemies had forced the *Kaiserreich* into the Great War. Carlebach's intended meaning was different: Jews had not wanted the war, but fate had brought German Jews together with the *Ostjuden,* toward whom they decidedly felt superior at the beginning of the war.

[437] Franz Oppenheimer, "Antisemitismus," *Neue jüdische Monatshefte* 10. 10. 1917.

German Jews had learned that they were wrong to think they had nothing to learn from Eastern Jews. Indeed, German Jews serving in the East had been taught *Gemoroh,* the part of the Talmud that contained rabbinical commentaries on the ancient teachings of *Mishnah*, by the *Ostjuden.* Contact with the East had made the Germans better Jews, Carlebach believed.[438]

Carlebach preached critically, however, of the imposition by official Germans of the separation of Jews, as symbolized by the seating that night in *Ohel Yaakov.* The Germans had brought war on the Jews, and the Jews had suffered. They had been unnaturally divided, but even so, the war brought a new sense of unity among Jews. Indeed, that was the only good that came from war. The German Army, including some Jewish soldiers, did not like Carlebach's criticism of the Fatherland. As punishment, the Army sent the rabbi for a month of service at the war's front.[439] But Carlebach was surely expressing a resentment felt by many under the burden of three years of violent, debilitating warfare. Much blood had been shed at Jacob's tent—the East, the home of most of the world's Jews—and the Germans had been among the instigators of the destruction. The Jews of the East were innocent sacrifices to that destruction. It was a bitter irony of the Great War that so few realized later how much was lost there. But Joseph Carlebach, the great teacher of the *Ostjuden,* had learned that sad lesson. He also knew that he was going home to a hostile and embittered country.

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[438] Rivka Horwitz, "Voices of Opposition to the First World War among Jewish Thinkers," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988), 253-254.

[439] Ibid.

Chapter 7: The Ignominious Collapse of All Moral Foundations, November 1917 to November 1918

By late 1917 German leaders viewed the war with more optimism than they had a year earlier. Although the lines remained at a stalemate on the Western Front, the military situation in the East made prospects for victory look good. The October Revolution made the withdrawal of Russia from the war imminent. The leaders of the Entente felt a heavy burden of military reverses in many quarters of the war. Britain had lost some 250,000 men at Passchendaele, though the German casualties were higher. France and Italy were at the point of collapse. German submarine warfare was taking a heavy toll on ships and supplies in the Atlantic, especially those coming from the United States. Peace overtures to the Habsburgs and the Ottomans had failed. In Germany, conditions among the population remained precarious, and desperate in many ways, but the likelihood seemed greater for a successful outcome to the war. In late 1917 few Germans would have predicted that in less than a year the *Kaiserreich* would concede defeat on the battlefield, Wilhelm II would abdicate, and the soldiers would go home. Within a year's time, both Germany and Poland would be in a state of social and political chaos that surpassed anything that Germans had expected.

With the Russian collapse on the Eastern Front in December 1917 and its military departure from the war, the Bolsheviks demanded complete withdrawal of the Central Powers' armies from Western lands of the Russian Empire. The Germans hardly entertained that suggestion a moment. In December the German government declared the establishment of the independent nation of Lithuania, though in fact there was little about it that was free of German control. General Max Hoffman announced that Lithuania was henceforth a German ally against the Poles. Germany barred Poland from the peace negotiations with Russia that had begun at

Brest-Litovsk. Frustrated with continued German demands for cessions of territory, the Bolshevist leader Leon Trotsky on 10 February 1918 announced Russia's abandonment of the negotiations. Other Bolsheviks denounced him for exceeding his instructions and opening Russia to further invasion. Trotsky replied that he was exposing their enemies. The consequences for the Bolsheviks were worse, however, than anything they had feared the previous December. On 18 February the Central Powers repudiated the peace agreement and seized most of Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic countries. On 3 March the Bolsheviks agreed to terms worse than those they had previously rejected.[440]

The final Treaty of Brest-Litovsk put much of Tsarist Russia under the protection of Germany, including the Baltic provinces, Ukraine, and even Georgia. Germans and Austrians fully expected to extract food for their hungry people; in their view, acquiring new territory was a matter of life and death. Lenin persuaded the Bolsheviks to accept the huge surrender of territory.[441] Brest-Litovsk marked Russia's final withdrawal from World War I, and they went out on unexpectedly humiliating terms. The peace terms took away a quarter of the Russian Empire's population and about that portion of its industry but nine-tenths of its coalmines. In Ukraine, where the Bolsheviks had quashed an independence movement, the Germans now restored the Ukrainian Rada to power under German domination. The Germans ceded the Chełm province to Ukraine, considered by Poles as historically and rightfully their territory, for grain. Galicia was partitioned, some of it going to Ukraine.[442]

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[440] Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 90-96.

[441] Stone, *World War One*, 158.

[442] Ibid.

Suffering among Poles remained acute in late 1917. Hunger was the most severe problem; military requisitions left food scarce among the civilian population, and the economy was in such shambles that most Poles were unable to pay the inflated prices for what was available. By 1917 the Central Powers had captured two-thirds of Romanian territory. Romania, traditionally a main supplier of agricultural products to Poland and Galicia, was now being forced to sell to Germany and Austria. The occupying armies had forced thousands of Poles to move into Warsaw, Krakow, Łódź, and Poznan, where social problems worsened and political unrest festered. To the increasingly exploitative attitudes of Germans, Catholic Poles responded with ever more hostility to Germans—and to their Jewish neighbors whom they saw as the cat's paw of the Germans. By late 1917 Poles were unhappier than ever with the Germans. The Two Emperors Proclamation of November 1916 had spurred Polish nationalism, but the high hopes were dashed over the course of 1917 by German refusal to give real power to Poles. The Provisional Polish Council of State was viewed as merely a puppet for German control, as was the Council of Regency.[443]

At that point it escaped the understanding of few Poles that the Germans' first priority in their country was to exploit its resources and manpower and its second was to acquire Polish territory for *Lebensraum*. Poles, on the other hand, were thrilled by the strong Western demands for an independent Poland. In January 1918 Woodrow Wilson, in initially announcing his Fourteen Points, made explicit his expectation of an independent Polish nation. At the same time the British Prime Minister Lloyd George said that an independent Poland was "an urgent

[443] Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, 453-55.

necessity for the stability of Western Europe."[444] Poles became even more outraged at the terms of Brest-Litovsk, because the actions of first the Bolsheviks and then the Germans in the bordering territories of Lithuania, Galicia, and Ukraine reduced drastically the potential—and in their view rightful—size of the forthcoming new nation.

Even if the war seemed to be going well overall for their countrymen, the morale among Germans in Poland worsened over the course of 1917, regardless of vantage point. Many German soldiers, fatigued by the long war, held an increasingly vicious view of the East. German Jews were overwhelmed with how intransigent the problems of relief and social health were among the *Ostjuden*. The events of 1917 did propel German Jews toward a more unified effort on behalf of the *Ostjuden* than they had been able to achieve in the first three years of the war. Their accord owed much to the widespread belief that the German government had become, since the Two Emperors' Proclamation, largely indifferent to the fate of the *Ostjuden*—the same feelings that had led to Max Bodenheimer's withdrawal from the *KfdO* in late 1916. German Jews' deep pre-war divisions over Zionism had been mooted to a large degree by the growing popular acceptance of Jewish nationalism. There was also a sense among many German Jews that their persistent internal divisions had contributed to the inability to do more for the *Ostjuden*. Paul Nathan of the *Hilfsverein* wrote that their disunity had been harmful both to Jews and the German nation. German Jews, he believed, had to follow the example of Jews in Russia, the United States, and Great Britain in seeking a consensus on how to relieve war sufferers.[445]

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[444] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 361.

[445] Szajkowski, "Komitee für den Ost," 234-40.

Therefore, in a typical German-Jewish response, they created yet another organization. In early December 1917 James Simon of the *Hilfsverein* invited representatives of many organizations to a meeting to form a central body for defense of the *Ostjuden,* and soon the assembled groups formed *Vereinigung jüdischer Organisation Deutschlands zur Wahrung der Rechte der juden des Ostens* (*VJOD)*—Association of Jewish Organizations in Germany for the Protection of the Rights of the Jews in the East. Only the Orthodox stayed out of the organization. Assimilationists and Zionists shared in the *VJOD* leadership and agreed on a platform of equal rights for Jews in Eastern Europe, religious and cultural freedom, and the right to migrate to Palestine. Zionists believed that the commitment to Jewish autonomy and a Jewish state was inadequate in *VJOD*, but out of fear of an organizational break-up, they accepted the limited commitments of the platform. Most important, the newly unified Jewish community was now in a position to speak as one on behalf of the *Ostjuden*.[446]

The problem for *VJOD* lay in where the newly-unified influence would be heard. Few if any policymakers in the German government appeared interested in what it had to say. Jews in Poland were too preoccupied with their own agendas, and too alienated by the treatment in the German occupation to listen much more to German Jews. The events of 1917 had put circumstances in the East beyond the influence of the most well-meaning German Jews. Born of desperation about the intransigence of problems in the East, the *VJOD* proved to be mostly impotent. Soon the organization would address problems that were more nearly matters of protecting Jews in Germany.

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[446] Ibid., Isaiah Friedman, "The Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, the German Foreign Ministry and the Controversy with the Zionists, 1901-1918," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 24 (1979), 318-19.

The German Army rabbis remained tightly engaged with the problems of the East. In February 1918 ten *Feldrabbiner* gathered in Riga for what they thought might be their last conference on the Eastern Front. They were preparing to leave. The rabbis contemplated how to mark the graves of fallen Jewish soldiers. Sali Levi said he expected to do that himself for the Tenth Army.[447] Discussing the upcoming celebration of Passover, the rabbis thought a third day of holiday was necessary and that the Army should provide matzos.[448] They were working on a new prayer book, but it was not likely to be finished, and they lacked the money, despite Leo Baeck's fundraising, to have it bound. "The rabbis at the conference agree that the prayer book should be printed without cover," the meeting notes reported, "and they can use Lieutenant Struck's drawing instead" of a formal cover. Hermann Struck's sketches of *Ostjuden* life were becoming widely appreciated. Arthur Levy requested that a vocal part be added to the Passover service, with the rabbi leading and the soldiers then repeating the lyrics. He also wants some German songs, like "We come to pray," to be added. This addition requires that, in conjunction to the prayer book that a simple musical supplement was to be given out. Sali Levi rejects the musical supplement and demands for a Rabbi Kantor, because not every rabbi is musically gifted. Levi responded, "that those *Feldrabbiner* less vocally gifted than Arthur Levy would need a cantor.[449]

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[447] CJA, 1, 75 C Ra 1, Nr. 9, #12519 - Jan-June 1918, Feldrabbinerkonferenzen. *IV Konfernez der Feldrabbiner des Osten* in Riga, am 12 und 10 Februar 1918.

[448] Ibid.

[449] Ibid. "Er wünscht auch einige deutsche Gesänge, wie z. B. „ Wir treten zum Beten" und ähnle. Er verlangt, dass in Verbindung mit Fachleuten eine einfache musikalische Beilage zum Gebetsbuch heraus gegeben werden solle. Levy lehnt die musikalische Beilage ab und verlangt für den Rabbiner einen Kantor, weil nicht jeder Rabbiner musikalisch begabt sie."

The rabbis were all worried about their ability to return to their duties in civilian life, and they agreed that they needed a respite of six months to cope with the re-entry. Leo Baeck offered to make the request of time off to military authorities.[450] The *Feldrabbiner* decided that they constituted an organized community which they wished to continue after the war. They wanted to work among Jewish soldiers in a new and expanded way. Baeck offered to chair the postwar group with Arthur Levy as his deputy. Baeck said that the community of German Jews needed to get stronger, and he would do everything necessary to spur his people into action.[451]

Noting that this was perhaps the last rabbi conference, Baeck offered a valediction for their gathering. With the years of fighting and suffering had come a more unified religious life among Jews. "Rationalism had dominated the last decades" before the war, but "it has now been overcome and in its place is a sense of depth and history about one's ancestors," Baeck observed. German Jews had reentered a mystic world of religion in the East, Baeck said, and this journey had created new needs that the rabbis had met. "All the great intellectual revolutions have started from Judaism," Baeck asserted. "Perhaps today is a time when faith and hope have reentered the Jewish people and the Jewish religion." Their responsibility as rabbis was to understand that only through Jewish faith would severe wounds of the world heal. Beack wished his colleagues peace and health from this time forward. The meeting, he declared at the end, had left him happy and thankful for his good fortune in serving in the war.[452]

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[450] Ibid.

[451] Ibid.

[452] Ibid.

Baeck's valedictory remarks echoed a constant theme throughout the war. German Jews' encounter with the *Ostjuden* had been a humbling spiritual experience. Having arrived with considerable German condescension based on their presumed enlightenment, German Jews had been awed by the Eastern Jews' knowledge and faith in Judaism. Virtually all the rabbis, journalists, educators, and administrators who went east during the war knew that feeling at some point in their stay. At some level, most were changed as Jews—and certainly as Germans—because of their experience.

The rabbis understood that they had entered into a time when Jews' notions of their future as a people had been altered with one political act. On 2 November 1917 the new British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour had made a momentous statement to Baron Walter Rothschild, the English banker and leader of the British Zionist movement: "His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." Balfour had developed an extraordinary friendship with Chaim Weizmann, the Russian-born and German-educated chemist and Zionist who was now a resident of England and engaged in the manufacture of synthetic acetone for making explosives in the British war effort. Weizmann had persuaded the Foreign Secretary of the justification for a Jewish homeland. Both Balfour and Lloyd George, the new British Prime Minister, were sympathetic to a Jewish state and optimistic about the usefulness of Jews in advancing British imperial goals in the Middle East. They also believed that British commitment to *Eretz Israel* would encourage American Jews to accelerate the United States support for the war effort, and at

the same time convince Russian Jewish revolutionaries to quit fighting. When British troops under General Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem on 9 December, the Zionist dream seemed an imminent reality.[453]

The British decision thrilled Zionists across the world. The Balfour Declaration precipitated a greater degree of unity among Zionists than had existed either before or during the war. It converted many Jews who were either opposed or indifferent to the cause. German Jews of non-Zionist, even anti-Zionist, persuasions were coming to accept that the *Ostjuden* needed a safe haven and to believe that Poland might never be that place. Orthodox and Assimilationist Jews, generally opposed to the Zionist agenda, displayed mostly pleasure about the development, though they knew that Balfour made the challenges greater for Jews in the East and in Germany.[454]

Many Jews in other parts of the world now began to accept Zionism as they had not before—especially in the United States. Jacob Schiff, often called "the greatest Jew in America" and well known as the single strongest force for relieving Jewish suffering in Eastern Europe, had been a staunch and open opponent of most forms of Jewish nationalism until 1917. That year he was thrilled with the fall of the Tsar, but he interpreted the emancipation of Jews in Russia as resulting in the likely disintegration of Judaism from the tendency toward assimilation. Russia had been the "reservoir of Jewish culture," he said, and now momentous political events had broken the confining walls and allowed Russian Jews to engage with the freer, secular world outside. Zionism, on the other hand, had "proven to the Gentile world that the Jew has not lost

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[453] Walter Laquer, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1972), 178-80.

[454] Ibid.

his self-respect" and had shown the Jew "the value of his own heritage." Schiff's closest American Jewish allies—the lawyer Louis Marshall and the philosopher Horace Kallen, both formerly strong anti-Zionists—made a similar transition toward Zionism at the same time. Even the militantly anti-Zionist *American Israelite*, the voice of Reformed Judaism in the United States, softened its position in 1917.[455]

It is significant that Schiff's conversion to Zionism came before the Balfour Declaration, though that watershed event solidified his support of Jewish nationalism and that of many like-minded Americans. Perhaps more crucial in changing Schiff's position was the growing sense of futility during the war about his, or any Jewish group's, ability to ameliorate the plight of Jews while they remained in Eastern Europe. Such well-informed men as he could see that the war had unleashed ethnic-nationalist feeling that would be dangerous to Jews when the war was over.

Schiff's change was also in part a response to the emerging power of the pro-Zionist American Jewish Congress, led by the celebrated lawyer and Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, who had converted to Zionism just prior to the war. The Congress had successfully challenged Schiff's large influence over the American Jewish community. But like-minded wealthy and influential Jews elsewhere—including the most influential skeptics of Zionism in Great Britain—had gone through similar conversions in 1917. Lucien Wolf, leader of the National Union for Jewish Rights in England, now announced his support for Jewish colonies in Palestine. Schiff began openly to support the establishment of a Jewish cultural and educational center in Palestine. Like Wolf, Schiff stopped short of endorsing a separate Jewish state, and he

[455] Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff*, 224-37.

still did not do so after the Balfour Declaration in November 1917.[456] A fundamental alteration had, however, occurred among the most assimilated Jews in the Western world.

The German government worried that the Balfour Declaration created sympathy for the Entente in the neutral countries, especially because of worldwide concern for East European Jews. Woodrow Wilson was deferring to American Zionists' opinion to get their support for his policies. The immediate effect of Balfour on German policy was to bolster the original commitment to an alliance with the *Ostjuden* in ruling Eastern lands. In December 1917 the German Foreign Minister Richard von Kühlmann proposed a plan for how Germany should respond to Erich Ludendorff, now the most powerful man in the German government. It was vital for Germany and the Habsburgs "to come up with a plan that encompassed territory including the largest *Ostjuden* community" in order to counter the promises of the Entente, Kühlmann told the general. "We need to provide a path of development that not only will encourage the *Ostjuden*'s continued sympathy, but also promote their substantial influence in the future." Such a program would improve relations with Russia, where the Jewish concerns were great.[457] Jews in the East should be given constitutional protection of religious rights and their own school system that respected Jewish culture and provided practical as well as professional education.[458] "Civic equality for all Jews will be granted and the recognition of the Jewish religious community will be publicly recognized," the Foreign Minister suggested to Ludendorff.

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[456] Zosa Szajkowski, "Paul Nathan, Lucien Wolf, Jacob H. Schiff and the Jewish Revolutionary Movement in Eastern Europe 1903-1917," *Jewish Social Studies* 29 (April 1967), 75-91.

[457] AA, K204225, Letter written to Ludendorff from Foreign Minister Richard von Kühlmann Berlin, 12. Dezember 1917.

[458] Ibid.

He even proposed state support for rabbis, though Jews would be expected to pay a church tax.[459] Having set forth his own views, Kühlmann asked what the general thought.

The Balfour Declaration in fact had negative repercussions for German official attitudes toward Jews in the East. Jews' loyalty both to Germany and to Poland was now allegedly questionable. In Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, where Jews were trying to find a *modus vivendi* with their gentile neighbors, the possibility of the mass removal of Jews hardened the resistance of gentiles to allowing the *Ostjuden* civic rights, and in many cases even a peaceful coexistence. The Balfour promise encouraged the hope for a Jew-free Poland held by the nationalist Roman Dmowski. Balfour seemed to confirm the persistent wartime accusation of gentiles that Jews were not loyal to the Polish nation. It undermined the claims of some Polish Zionists and Folkists for broad cultural and political autonomy for Jews in a future Polish state. Zionism generally presumed the permanence of anti-Semitism, which weakened the position in Poland of assimilationists and the Hasidim who were planning to collaborate with gentile Poles in an independent Polish nation.[460]

Jews' fears of German reprisals in the aftermath of Balfour were soon realized. Notwithstanding Foreign Minister Kühlmann's views, the Balfour Declaration in many ways closed the book on German commitment to working with Jews, German and Polish, in the East. The more freedom and power the German administration gave to the Poles, the less sympathetic the German government became toward Jews. They turned the administration of schools over to Poles. They shut down Jewish newspapers and refused pleas to let them begin publishing again.

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[459] Ibid.

[460] Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others*, 88-89.

The withdrawal of involvement in Jewish affairs was a conscious decision. In distinct contradiction to the views of Kühlmann, others in the Foreign Ministry had consulted with the German Orthodox leader Jacob Rosenheim of Frankfurt am Main and with Ludwig Haas in the department of Jewish Affairs in the Warsaw General Government and decided that it was "necessary that German authorities claim complete neutrality in the struggles between the various Jewish political factions." The question of whether Jews should be recognized in Poland as a nation themselves, and the means by which Jews had tried to solve their internal conflicts, "had created more conflict between Poles and Jews." It was the recommendation therefore of some offices in the Foreign Ministry "to remain neutral and allow the new Polish authorities to make all the decisions necessary concerning the Jewish question."[461]

Such a policy, which did not seek to cultivate the Jews, could only be implemented with the consent of Erich Ludendorff. From his command post on the Western Front, he seconded the decision to turn domestic authority over to the Poles. The general knew from experience that "Jews continue to want further concessions," and he found disquieting the demand for a separate constitution enumerating their rights, though he favored the free exercise of religion and the recognition of the Jewish religious community. "Many Jews do not want [separate national status] and we must expect a strong counter from the Poles," Ludendorff said. The Jewish educational system had led to complete isolation of Jews, which was why he had supported the establishment of secular gymnasiums in Ober Ost. Ludendorff used Romania as a negative example: when the Germans captured control of that country in late 1917, it supported fair

[461] AA, *Abschrift I A O* 6919 - Letter written from Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin – gez. Graf Posadowsky to Verwaltungschef die dem General-Gouvernement Warschau, Die Behandlung der Judenfrage im Generalgouvernement Warschau betreffend. Warschau, 23. November 1917.

treatment for Jews, which nationalist Romanians understood as Jews' getting the German administration to give them equality. The Romanians responded with intense anti-Semitism. Jews in Germany were "naturally in great solidarity with all Israelites," the General said, but the German military government should withdraw support for Jews in order not to create the kind of nationalist resentment now occurring in Poland. "The Jew is hated bitterly in Romania as in Poland," Ludendorff said.[462]

Ludendorff had begun the war as the leading official advocate for a German alliance with the *Ostjuden*. He had understood from the outset of the war that such an alliance depended on active, demonstrable support for the rights and interests of Eastern Jews. As the major influence on policy in Ober Ost, he had acted accordingly toward Jews, and the German Jews working in the East, soldier and civilian alike, believed he had the best interest of the *Ostjuden* at heart. Either that had been a mistaken judgment or the general had changed over the course of the war.

In the immediate aftermath of the Balfour Declaration, Julius Berger, the young German secretary of the World Zionist Organization who in 1917 viewed world events mainly from the perspective of Poland, expressed the soaring hopes of his people. Berger suggested how he thought Balfour would shape the history of Jews. It would determine how Jews moved forward after the war in the countries where the Jewish masses were concentrated. Balfour had given Zionism a much larger audience, and with the Russian Revolution, its potential following in Russia had vastly increased, whereas under the Tsarist rule Zionism had been stifled. It was mushrooming in the United States. "Not only is Zionism growing, but Jewish life is growing,

[462] AA, *Abschrift A42584*, 19. Dez. 1917 – 8 Uhr 20mn. Gr. Hauptquartier to Der K. Legationssekretär an Auswärtiges Amt. Und General Ludendorff.

because Jews feel they are able and must take a stand politically," Berger wrote.[463] Zionism was the most agile theory: it was able to accommodate the reality of the "Jews on the ground," Berger said, and to see what was necessary for nation building. German Jews had learned during the war, Berger said, that "we need to be members of the Jewish masses, taken out of our isolation, and in turn we must contribute our political and intellectual development." In the future, German Jews would monitor the needs and aspirations of the Jewish masses in Russia, Galicia, Romania, America, England, and Palestine. They would do so, according to Berger, "no longer from the 'objective' point of view of German Jews but as active, suffering parts of this mass." Or, he warned, "we will no longer be Jews."[464]

Berger observed the joy with which Polish Zionists celebrated Balfour. Over the course of 1916 and 1917, well before the Balfour Declaration, the *Ostjuden* had made a stronger embrace of Zionism. In Poland during the war, he wrote, "Zionism became an official Jewish people's movement which grew out of the shadowy outlines of a theory by asking questions and then providing answers."[465] The Russian government had prohibited a real Zionist organization to exist openly in Poland, so only a secret Zionist movement was maintained. The German occupation of Poland, which allowed Jews a freer atmosphere for political expression, gave Polish Zionists their first real opportunity to build up organizations. Things that had been prohibited by the Russians were now allowed: clubs were established everywhere, conferences were held, and the Zionist Association for Poland was legalized. In Poland in late 1917, "Jewish

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[463] Julius Berger, "Zionismus in Polen," *Der Jude*, November 1917, 291-99.

[464] Ibid.

[465] Ibid.

life has become free from the fetters of a disgraceful oppression," even amid "the enormous test imposed by the war," Berger wrote. The Jewish people had a tremendous opportunity before it—to make real what previously had only been a theoretical existence. "Yesterday's agitation is today's necessity," he declared.[466]

The proposed new Polish state raised questions about the role of the Jews, especially the matter of Jewish national autonomy at issue in city council elections. The conflicts between Poles and the Jews, Berger wrote, "is especially sharp now and makes practical considerations a primary consideration." The internal politics of Poland necessitated that Jews be more active. The municipal elections and the issue of school control required a Zionist perspective. Polish Jews were not, however, united: *Agudath Ha-Orhodoxim* continued its struggle against Zionism. Still, the main question remained "the unspeakable misery of the masses" and the social disruptions under which the greater part of the Jewish people in Poland lived, problems more difficult than those faced by all other countries involved in this war.[467]

As Berger mused about what was in store for the Jews of the East, he reflected the profound pessimism that had taken over the spirits of many German Jews who had committed heavily to helping the *Ostjuden*. Western Europeans, including Germans, believed they were the last strongholds of civilization, but "we have yet again smashed the world." The young, mostly secular Zionist echoed the jeremiad that the much older Orthodox rabbi Joseph Carlebach had recently preached at Rosh Hashanah in Vilnius. Berger wrote that "when we stand before a Jew of the East, as poor as he may be, he can be simple, dirty, he may be all these things, but he has an inner superiority when he faces this whole group of Western Jews, of the highest technology

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[466] Ibid.

[467] Ibid.

but also the highest depravity." The O*stjuden*, Berger thought, "are secretly smiling at the Westerners, who are rich, and clean, and only of the world." Western European Jews believed they were bringing civilization to the East and preserving Judaism when they established a French or German high school with Hebrew language instruction. But in fact "we have now run this civilization into an ignominious collapse of all human and all moral foundations," Berger declared. "This war has shaken our social structure in a way as never before," and it would be "easy to turn this weakened nation in a dangerous direction." Jews must beware of that, he said, and "dedicate ourselves with all the power of love, with all the devotion of the heart, with everything we are and what we have, to serve our brother, to listen to the inner voices, which show us the path to true fulfillment of the Jewish being, in faithfulness to Jewish thought."[468]

In late 1917, as suggested by Julius Berger, the growth of Zionism in Poland accelerated, partly from the Balfour Declaration and but also because of heightened expectations of Polish independence. As more Jews joined in Zionist activities, the deeper and wider became the divisions among Jewish nationalists. Younger and more radical Zionists attacked the older leaders like Heschel Farbstein and rejected his Hebraist policies. Traditional Zionists attacked Folkists for their lack of commitment to *Eretz Israel.* Young Zionists divided between those who expected to rebuild an autonomous Jewish community in Poland and those who intended to pioneer in the development of agricultural communities in Palestine. Paole Zion, the socialist-labor national movement, had gained many adherents in 1916 and 1917; believing the Palestine

[468] Ibid.

pioneers far too romantic, Paole Zion called for class-based action on behalf of Jews in Poland. By early 1918 Zionism could mean many different things in Poland.[469]

From their arrival in Warsaw in early 1916, Pinchas Kohn and Emanuel Carlebach had tried to avoid all discussions of Jewish nationalism as they organized the *Hasidim* politically. They represented *Agudah Yisrael*, the Orthodox organization that had come into being prior to the war for the purpose of resisting the influence of Zionism. As the historian Gershon Bacon has noted, however, their pursuit of political organization among the *Hasidim* through *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* in Warsaw led Kohn and Carlebach to replicate the organizational style and tactics of Zionists. Once committed to political action, the Orthodoxy had let the genie out of the bottle: young *Hasidim* began to embrace Zionism.[470]

In the spring of 1917, *Hasidim* in Łódź founded *Knesset Israel* to promote *aliyah*, Jewish settlement in Palestine. Founders of the new organization made clear that they were in no way interfering with the activities of *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim*, but instead *Knesset Israel* intended only to provide the Orthodox with a means to support *Eretz Israel.* Avraham Mordechai Alter, the Gerer rebbe and the most influential man among the *Hasidim*, staunchly opposed Zionism but held no hostility to settlement in Palestine. As contradictory as it seemed, the Gerer rebbe's position represented one held by non-Zionist Jews in many parts of the world and increasingly by *Hasidim* in Poland. Perhaps just as relevant to Kohn and Carlebach, who had worked hard to encourage activism among Orthodox youth, the students in their new youth organization

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[469] Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 53-57.

[470] Gershon Bacon, "Imitation, Rejection, Cooperation: Agudat Yisrael and the Zionist Movement in Interwar Poland," in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 85-94.

Tevunah supported *Eretz Israel* and had begun studying Arabic and Palestinian geography in preparation for *aliyah*. In the summer of 1917 in Nowy-Dwor, an industrial town near Warsaw, Rabbi Judah Neufeld, a respected senior Orthodox leader, founded an organization for colonizing in Palestine. Amid the turmoil emanating from Russia in 1917, Orthodox Jews there had created organizations to support activities in *Eretz Israel*.[471]

A big uproar developed among Jews in both Poland and Germany in December 1917 when Pinchas Kohn's private analysis of the conflicts among Polish Jews was made public. Kohn wrote that, in contrast to the Hasidic portion of Polish Jews (75 percent of the total by his estimate) who wanted to be a part of the forthcoming Polish state, a small group of obstructionist Folkists and an equally insignificant number of intransigent Zionists—led by difficult, immature men—were antagonizing gentile Poles. Kohn characterized the Folkists, or Yiddishists, as Russian-oriented Lithuanian Jews, who held Catholic Poles in contempt and were natural enemies to the group who would be dominant in the new Polish nation. Historically, Poles viewed the Lithuanians as Russian spies, and Kohn said Litwaks had sparked Polish anti-Semitism prior to the war.[472] When the Germans entered Warsaw, Kohn wrote, Jews and Germans found common interest, but the Poles were hateful toward Jews and insisted that Jews could not live in Poland. Germany's plans for a new Poland assumed that the German policy of fair treatment to Jews would prevail but also that, Kohn claimed, if the Jewish question was to reach a happy conclusion it had to be solved independently by Poles. Kohn believed the

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[471] Grill, "Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry," 236-7; *Dos yidishe vort* (January 2, 1918), 4.

[472] „Ein Memorandum von Rabbiner Dr. Pinchas Kohn über der jüdischen-polnische Frage," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 4.1.1918, 2-4.

Romanian example taught that Orthodox Jews, not Zionists, would work successfully with Poles. When Germany allowed a State Council to be established, Jews were promised full equality and the right to maintain their religious practices. The Assimilationist response was not as warm as the Orthodox's but still positive. Both the *Hasidim* and the Assmilationist intended to combat anti-Semitic excesses with gradual tactics, Kohn claimed, but the Folkists and Zionists alienated Poles with their aggressive pursuit of a Jewish-dominated Poland. Even the Poles who wanted a pluralistic state saw Jewish nationalists as antagonistic to their national dreams. Various nationalisms had historically been imposed on Poles—from Germany, Russia, Lithuania, Austria, and Ukraine—and most Poles objected to perpetuating nationalism internally, especially by Jews who they disliked anyway.[473] Zionists and Folkists had forced the Jewish question onto Poles, Kohn wrote, in disregard of the German administration's efforts to provide Jews all that was possible under occupation circumstances.[474]

Kohn was immediately summoned to meet with Josef Wohlgemuth, the leading Orthodox theologian in Germany, and other influential men of the German *Agudah Yisrael*. Rabbi Wohlgemuth censured Kohn for claiming that Zionists in Poland were mainly responsible for anti-Semitism and for condemning Lithuanians in general. Their colleagues from Germany suggested to Kohn and Emanuel Carlebach that they take a more tolerant attitude toward Zionism and a firmer position with gentile Poles about constitutional protections of Jews in the

[473] Ibid.

[474] Ibid.

evolving Polish state. Kohn listened to the criticism but held to his hard line. He apparently raised the question of whether *Eretz Israel* was really a religious imperative, a *mitzvah*.[475]

German Zionists responded to the Kohn memorandum in *Jüdische Rundschau*, the leading German Zionist newspaper, by saying it contained "so many errors that one must repeatedly ask whether the memorandum was written by an enemy of the Jews rather than by a rabbi whose loyalty is upholding the Torah."[476] Zionists in Poland were not politically immature, the *Rundschau* writer insisted, and noted that Emanuel Carlebach had recently said as much. Kohn was simply insulting Zionists when he said that there was no place for them in the struggle for national existence in Poland. He was in effect telling Zionists to stop being Zionists.[477] There was no doubt that gentile Poles embraced the "mind program of Dr. Kohn—i.e., be a Jew only within your own head—with great alacrity." All the Jews should want, as *Jüdische Rundschau* angrily interpreted Kohn, was civil equality and religious tolerance with formal concessions. "But the Jewish people in Poland soon understood the consequences of that was a self-surrender equal to nothing," the *Rundschau* editors insisted.[478] Kohn's memorandum "raises the question whether the Polish Jews will have to continue to watch so-called German-Jewish politicians who spread lies about them and interfere in their internal affairs and who are viewed as their spokesmen too." Can the two German rabbis, *Rundschau* finally demanded, "who are engaged in

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[475] Grill, "Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry," 236-7; *Jüdische Monatshefte* (Dezember 1917), 358-9; *Jüdische Rundschau* (4 Januar 1918); *Die Jüdische Presse* (18 Januar 1918), 22-24.

[476] Ibid.

[477] Ibid.

[478] Ibid.

the protection of the German government, be effective when that government is going directly against the express will of Polish Jews?"[479]

Kohn may not have relented, but *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* did. In January 1918 the organization announced that in light of the Balfour Declaration and other events—probably the revolution in Russia—*Agudas* would henceforth encourage Orthodox work in Palestine. The big events outside Poland had changed the thinking of Orthodox youth who might be lost to the Zionist movement if Orthodoxy did not support Jewish settlement in Palestine. Older Orthodox leaders could envision younger *Hasidim* abandoning their allegiance and joining the *Mizrachi*, the organization of religious Zionists. Indeed, the difference between Orthodox youth in Poland in 1918 and the *Mizrachi* was imperceptible. Shlomo Diner, a leader of *Tevunah,* noted that *Agudat Yisrael* in countries outside Poland were cooperating with Zionists on political matters. He reported that *Tevunah* was organizing immigrants to go to Palestine. Soon *Tevunah* published its plan for a *Yishuv* (settlement) in Palestine.[480]

To a great extent, Pinchas Kohn was a victim of the rapidly changing world of 1917 and 1918. He was only adhering to the staunch anti-Zionist position that had been the *raison d'etre* for *Agudas Yisrael*'s founding in 1912, barely five years earlier. Kohn and Carlebach had eschewed engagement with the question of *Eretz Israel* to set their new Polish Orthodox organization apart from the irreligious Zionists. It had been a perfectly justifiable position in 1916 but a doubtful one by late 1917, and an unacceptably reactionary stance by mid-1918.

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[479] Ibid.

[480] Grill, "Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry," 237.

Polish nationalists were as angry about the Brest-Litovsk treaty as Jewish nationalists were joyful about the Balfour Declaration. Brest-Litovsk left Poland encircled by German-dominated vassal states. Big demonstrations and strikes took place throughout Poland against the treaty. It caused the final alienation of Poles from Germany and Austria. With virtual unanimity Catholic Poles agreed that the Central Powers had betrayed them. In January 1918 popular protests broke out in Krakow. Remnants of Piłsudski's Polish armies attacked Germans in Ukraine in the spring of 1918 but were defeated. Much Polish anger about Brest-Litovsk was displaced on Jews, who themselves had protested against the treaty. To gentile Poles, Jews' longstanding pro-German and pro-Habsburg attitudes were sufficient basis for blaming them for the betrayal of Brest-Litovsk. Some Poles shared the intense Western anger against the Russians for withdrawing from the war, which was expressed in anti-Semitic attacks. The London *Times*, which consistently portrayed the Russian Revolution as a Jewish conspiracy, called the Bolsheviks "adventurers of German-Jewish blood and in German pay, whose sole object is to exploit the ignorant masses in the interest of their own employers in Berlin."[481]

Nationalistic Poles saw themselves as standing alone, once again, against external oppressors—and amid internal Jewish enemies. Polish Nationalists warned that a violent reckoning was due Polish Jews. Anti-Semitic Polish politicians activated anti-Jewish sentiments of the masses. They scapegoated Jews for the economic suffering of 1918. Reminiscent of what they had done just prior to the war, the *Endeks* organized a boycott of Jewish businesses in Warsaw, and anti-Semitic violence occurred throughout Congress Poland. Polish peasants and former soldiers populated mobs that attacked Jews in more than 90 places. Disorder in Poland

[481] Quoted in Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others,* 89.

during the summer of 1918 was made worse by an influx of Russian Army deserters and prisoners of war. The disorder spread to Galicia. Riots against Jews occurred in Krakow and Lwów.[482]

Polish nationalists heard good news when in June 1918 the Entente reiterated its determination to create an independent Polish state. The announcement was promising because it came in the aftermath of the German Army's failure in its big push on the Western Front in the spring. Roman Dmowski and his colleagues Ignacy Paderewski had succeeded in pushing the nationalist cause among the British and Americans, and Jozef Haller had formed an army in France to fight soon for that cause.[483]

Elections in the spring of 1918 provided an outlet for the growing Polish nationalist expectations in Poland. Warsaw city elections, on the other hand, were especially trying for Jews. On 1 May Emanuel Carlebach wrote home to Germany that "today there were strong threats of secret agitations for a pogrom." The German commander had summoned him to ask for his help in protecting Jews. "Urban areas are being heavily patrolled and machine guns have been placed on trucks and put on standby," he told his wife, and the tension in Warsaw was enormous. "May God grant that the day proceeds quietly."[484] Carlebach had worked relentlessly in the heated election, in which "all parties have conspired against the Agudah." He had written letters, raised money, and given speeches—at the same time he attended to his responsibilities with schools, relief of the poor, and the Orthodox newspaper *Dos yidische vort.* The duties would

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[482] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 71-72.

[483] Lukowski and Zawadzki, *Concise History of Poland*, 221.

[484] Carlebach, "A German Rabbi goes East," 118.

"not let me come to rest," he told his wife. "If not for my Soldier visits and the new relationships with new communities" of Jews, he said, "I would be fed up."[485]

Much of the tension for Carlebach about the election stemmed from the criticisms about his and Kohn's position on Zionism. They accepted, apparently under pressure, an election platform that supported immigration to Eretz Israel and the *Yishuv*. In preparation for the election, *Agudas Ho-Ortodoksim* appointed three representatives of its youth groups to the 12-person election commission. By the time of the vote, a growing number of Orthodox Jews in Germany and Poland were explicitly supporting nationalist goals for Palestine, while remaining hostile to the Zionist political groups in Poland. "The Orthodoxy has its Palestine programme," the German Orthodox newspaper *Der Israelit* declared, "and nobody who is unaffected by the intellectual terrorism of the all-dominant nationalistic press can comprehend how rabbinic leaders of the 'German rabbis' [Kohn and Carlebach] are supposed to be 'adversaries' of the longing for Eretz Israel which is vital to the masses." Integrating the desire for Eretz Israel with the hope for fair treatment and political power in Poland within the Jewish *Weltanschauung* [world view] was not a simple undertaking, *Der Israelit* insisted, and not one "to be resolved through slogans" thrown about by Zionists and Folkists. Despite their willingness to compromise for political gain, however, the Orthodox still struggled to win power in the rough-and-tumble of wartime Polish politics. Their mastery of political actions enabled the Zionists to hold a disproportionately large share of seats in the Warsaw council.[486]

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[485] Ibid.

[486] Grill, "Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry," 238.

With Germany's military defeat in the West becoming apparent in the summer of 1918, the relationship between the German Army and local populations in the East quickly deteriorated. Disorder grew in *Ober Ost* and Congress Poland with the departure of troops. Now less willing to work with the populations of the East, some of the remaining German soldiers began to take out their frustrations on the natives while others began walking home. The defeat of the German Army was unfathomable to the Eastern Front soldiers, after having "saved" the local population in the *Ober Ost*. Shock, anger, and rage emerged, as did the rejection of the East and its people. As the German administration became more suffocating, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Poles resisted more. Growing opposition toward the Germans led to increased monitoring and additional punishment of Jews, whom the German commander Max Hoffman blamed for the resistance to his authority. In Lithuania and eastern Poland, German officers directed their anger toward Jews in villages. As embittered troops returned to Germany, many of the soldiers rejected the East and communicated what they considered the dangers and filth of the Jewish East.[487]

In April 1918 the German government announced its policy of *Grenzschluss*, which closed the Prussian border to Jewish emigration into Germany. Virtually all German Jews, and certainly the activist and well-informed members of VJOD, understood the action as yet another sign that the war had unleashed dangerous resurgence of anti-Semitism inside Germany. Since the German occupation of the East, anti-Semites had been warning Germans of the dangers of hordes of *Ostjuden* flooding Germany—a specter raised habitually since the nineteenth century.[488] German Jews themselves historically held deep reservations about a mass migration

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[487] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front,* 215-220.

[488] Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 174.

of Eastern Jews out of concern it would fuel anti-Semitism. The controversy over *Grenzschluss* in 1915 and 1916, on the other hand, had brought intense criticism of Paul Nathan and left many German Jews under attack for insufficient commitment to helping Eastern Jews. But the German economy desperately needed workers in war industries, and as the Germans occupied the East in 1915, the Army had begun rounding up Poles, both Jews and gentiles, and shipped them to German factories. The terrible experience of forced labor was known widely enough that when recruited to go voluntarily to Germany, most Polish Jews chose to stay in Poland. The German government then turned to Jewish organizations to try to get help in recruiting. In 1917 Julius Berger of the World Zionist Organization went to Warsaw as a labor recruiter. Hermann Struck, the Army propaganda specialist among the *Ostjuden*, set up recruiting offices in many places. About 17,000 Polish Jews did go voluntarily to work in Germany, and that many more found their way on their own.[489]

The cooperating German Jews soon regretted what they had done. Berger reported that even though Jews were the only labor available, the Germans still treated them badly. By October 1917 the Zionist leader Arthur Hantke, Struck, and Berger had all turned against Jewish recruitment. German Jews by then had created an organization to help Polish Jewish workers. By late 1917, as anti-Semitism continued to rise in Germany, the government started sending Jewish workers back to Poland, whether they wanted to go or not.[490]

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[489] Zosa Szajkowski, "East European Jewish Workers in Germany during World War I," *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1974), 907-909.

[490] Ibid., 909.

By the spring of 1918, massive migration of *Ostjuden* into Germany seemed more likely. The Polish economy was in shambles. Hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews were now free to migrate eastward. On 23 April 1918 the German government closed Prussia's borders specifically to Jews. Jews were told that *Grenzschluss* was necessary for health reasons. Anti-Semites believed Jews were carriers of typhus, which was epidemic in Poland. There had not been a single case of typhus in Germany, despite the importation of thousands of Poles, Jews, and gentiles over the course of the war. Disinfecting procedures at the borders had been completely effective. It made no sense to close the border just to Jews; lice made no distinction among confessions, Jewish critics immediately noted. German Ministry of the Interior Otto Lewald, of Jewish heritage himself, said that Jewish workers were "unwilling, unclean, morally unreliable." Lewald said Jews used the pretense of industrial work to gain entry into German society and then to crowd into cities, where they turned to crime.[491]

Demonstrating their new ethos of unity and cooperation, all Jewish organizations protested *Grenzschluss*. Hermann Struck, Franz Oppenheimer, and Paul Nathan all condemned the anti-immigration policy of the German government they had worked so hard to support. *Jüdische Rundschau*, the Zionist newspaper, appears to have spoken for all German Jews when it condemned the policy. "In these days in Germany the final frontier against Jews has been introduced," the editor bitterly reported. "At the same time that restrictions have been lifted against the Jews in Russia . . . orders have handed down in Germany to place Jews under special laws because they are Jews."[492] Early in the war there had been calls to close the Eastern frontier

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[491] Ibid., Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik,* 275-77; Aschheim, *Brothers and Stangers*,177-78.

[492] "Grenzschluss gegen Juden in Deutschland," *Jüdische Rundschau*, Nummer 30, 26. Juli 1918.

to Eastern Jews, but various laws had been contrived to create legally "acceptable" barriers that allowed in 10,000 to 15,000 much-needed workers with little protest. "But now Germans have an excuse for not allowing a large Jewish emigration from the occupied Russian provinces," *Jüdische Rundschau* reported.[493] The ban was causing a grotesque injustice: Jewish workers who returned East on a holiday given by their employers to visit their relatives were now often unable to return to Germany. Workers were required to make a high deposit of between 100 and 200 marks before leaving Germany. When they tried to reenter Germany, they were not allowed back in and their deposit was not returned, which injustice was enforced by threats of violence. "The emigrant Jews lose their security deposit and their belongings, and even are unable to come retrieve their families," the newspaper reported.[494]

Grenzschluss was a secret policy, the editor said, but there was no doubt that the Prussian Ministry of Home Affairs was behind it. "For many years German Jews have been very familiar with the secret anti-Semitism of the state and have demanded that it stop," *Jüdische Rundschau* reported. It was easy to make the average German believe in the necessity for suppressing Jewish immigration in the interest of the health. Quarantine was the only absolutely reliable means for stopping the spread of the disease, but it had to be provided indiscriminately to Jews and Gentiles alike. German soldiers themselves had dealt with lice during the war. "It has been popular to treat the immigrant Eastern Jews from Poland as the scapegoat and as the guilty one," the newspaper reported, but in fact the policy was a symbol of "the ever-spreading general

[493] Ibid.

[494] Ibid.

dissatisfaction of the German population."[495] The government had offered a half a dozen reasons for policy, each more dishonest than the other. "There is a single substantive reason that justifies that Jews are treated differently than other people," the newspaper concluded: "Hatred of Jews and there is only one explanation: medieval narrow-mindedness."[496]

If it was true that in Germany Jewish people were under special laws just because they are Jews, "we need to as German Jews consider Germany's declaration of war against us." It had to be understood that in Germany, "the Jews, no matter their origin" were under attack. "We are Jews, we are all Jews, not just East European Jews—we are not dangerous for the country or for his health or his morals," *Jüdische Rundschau* insisted. "We are committed to the utmost not to allow this insult." German Jews would fight the Prussian Ministry, the editor pledged, "with the same determination as we always showed against the Russian Tsar."[497] Throughout the world Jewish people were expressing their Zionist aspirations, and they had gained the sympathy of the Entente. "We Jews during these years of the war have emerged as the ones who represent the oppressed nations, and we want no more restrictions," the editor declared, and they would "not allow it and the world will no longer permit it." The western press had reported the *Grenzschluss* policy. "We demand that this shame on us be eliminated immediately and that this scandal be immediately stopped," the editor concluded.[498]

German Jews felt another betrayal when the German government turned its back on the tens of thousands of *Ostjuden* whom the Russians had forcibly removed in 1914 and 1915. Polish

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[495] Ibid.

[496] Ibid.

[497] Ibid.

[498] Ibid.

authorities permitted the return from Russia of only those Jewish refugees who previously had had permanent residence in Poland and spoke the Polish language. In the Warsaw newspaper, *Der Moment* recalled bitterly that under Russian rule Jews were discouraged from use of Polish. The German occupying authorities apparently did nothing to help Jewish evacuees to get home to Poland or Lithuania. As with Jewish rights in politics and Jewish interests in education, the German government had washed its hands of Polish internal affairs. In August 1918, Arthur Hantke wrote privately to Hermann Struck that "the Poles do not permit the Jews to return to the area under military rule in the East," and that the Germans also refused to let them and only allowed in those whom they deemed productive. "I am also under the impression," Hantke wrote, "that what is happening is a systematic blockade against a substantial part of the Jewish population in Lithuania, Kurland, etc. who had been evacuated or had emigrated to Russia." An order of the German Repatriation Commission in June 1918 said "no Jews and Russians must be permitted to return to the districts of Grodno, Vilnius, Suwalki." Another order declared that "criminals, Prostitutes, and also Jews are not entitled to return to Poland."[499]

Official German anti-Semitism in the summer of 1918 reflected growing defeatism in the Army and the civilian population. Large numbers of German troops were transferred to the Western Front; only twenty-six divisions remained in the East. Many left with bitterness going from the relatively quiet surroundings on the Eastern Front to the living hell of the trenches on the Western Front. A significant number of them quietly slipped off their troop trains as they passed through Germany, thus ending their military service absent without leave. The ones delivered to the Western Front did not fight for very long or very well. On 8 August British

[499] Szajkowski, "East European Jewish Workers," 914-15; "Verhinderung der juedischen Rueckwanderung," *Jüdische Rundschau*, August 23, 1918.

troops and tanks overran German forces at Amiens, and 16,000 troops surrendered. Ludendorff reported that Eastern troops performed poorly, the result of the radical ideas they had acquired in the East.[500] He began to plan for a cessation of fighting, even with his huge troop levels deep within enemy territory. On 4 October he and his staff called for a cease-fire. Ludendorff apparently planned to withdraw his forces westward and regroup for a defense of Germany near the Rhine. Soon he reversed his decision and ordered the troops back on the battlefield, but it was too late for him to maintain control. On 26 October the Kaiser dismissed Ludendorff just days before he abdicated his throne.[501]

In the view of some at the time, and many afterward, the German government had badly botched the end of the war. Walther Rathenau publicly advocated a mass popular defense of Germany, a *levée en masse*, rather than the ceasefire that Ludendorff was implementing. Many postwar analysts projected that such tactics might in fact have yielded far better terms for peace than Germany ultimately received. The banker Max Warburg made the same argument and noted with frustration that "it seems strange to me that I, a civilian, have to encourage today's military—fight on!" The two prominent Jews were not alone; the new (and last) German Chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, strongly opposed unconditional surrender. A popular uprising, however, requires popular support, and far too many Germans were simply worn out with war. On 6 October a segment of the Germany Army mutinied, refusing to fight further. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), which was seen as the likely governing party of Germany when the war ended, demonstrated no support for continuing the fight. Most Germans

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[500] Ludendorff, *Ludendorff's Own Story*, 409.

[501] Ibid., 421.

in the fall of 1918 looked to Woodrow Wilson as the man who could improve their lives by ending the war. "The masses would likely have risen," Prince von Baden later wrote, "but not against the enemy." Instead they would have attacked "the war itself and the 'military oppressors' and 'monarchic aristocrats,' on whose behalf, in their opinion, it had been waged."[502] Baden sent Matthew Erzburger, the Catholic Center Party leader and anti-Semite who had promoted the *Judenzählung* in 1916, had become the leading peace advocate in the Reichstag, to sign the Armistice in France on 11 November.

During October in Warsaw, Emanuel Carlebach felt the tremors of great change. "The times are so laden with significance that one reverses the words of the psalmist," he noted in his notebook. "One day is like a thousand years." He believed peace was near, that "by January, with the help of God, and without fanfare, I shall be home."[503] Carlebach's homecoming would in fact come sooner. He witnessed the chaos of the war's end in Warsaw. "How terrible at this moment is the military-political situation here in Poland," the rabbi reported to his wife in mid-October 1918. "There is a pogrom mood," he admitted soberly. "*Haschem jerachem* (May G'd have mercy!)." Para-military groups of Polish nationalists were forming in Polish cities, filling the vacuum of authority created by the abandonment of the country by the occupying armies of Germany and Austro-Hungary. The threat came not from the intelligentsia or the government but from "the common people, who are afraid of Bolshevism and growing inflation, which they

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[502] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Picador, 2001), 195-200.

[503] Isaac Lewin, *The Jewish Community in Poland: Historical Essays* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1985), 196.

believe the Jews have caused because they are incited by wild anti-Semites!"[504] Ten days later Carlebach was meeting with the German Foreign Office. "Now that the sympathies of Poles for the Jews have been forfeited, they (Jews) now look to me and Kohn for help," he reported home. They picked up the daily newspapers with fear, he said, and among the most depressing was the Mosse family's *Berliner Tageblatt*. "You will believe me," he told his wife, "that I have made a whole-hearted investment in this democratization of the empire but not with undivided joy." Still, he was not without hope. "Who knows what else *haschomajim* (from heaven) is going to be decided for us."[505] Carlebach insisted that newspapers report about the riots and pogroms in Poland were "greatly exaggerated and politically colored." For the sake of influencing President Wilson, "the Poles want to make everyone think that the riots were provoked by German agents." (To avoid German censors, Carlebach wrote the last passage in Hebrew.) "Nevertheless, Jews actually live in great fear of real violence and disorder," but he did not have time to describe his work to prevent pogroms.[506] As far as he was concerned on November 1, "right now Poland looks better than anywhere else in the world."[507]

On 4 November, a week before the Armistice, Carlebach told his wife she had misjudged Woodrow Wilson. The rabbi was among that growing contingent of Germans who saw the American president as the savior of their country. "We know the situation here and he has been lied to about the Poles' aspirations." Carlebach was convinced that Wilson was a "sincere

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[504] Carlebach, "A German Rabbi goes East," 120.

[505] Ibid.

[506] Ibid.

[507] Ibid.

pacifist," and at the previous night's Shabbos, Ludwig Haas had given the same view of the American president. But, as the war came to a rapid close, Emanuel Carlebach had no time for politics.[508] After almost three intense years in the East, he was going home to Cologne. On 8 November, he wrote: "I travel! My first vacation comes only after the liquidation of the General-Gouvernement." Then he added, as an afterthought: "I have received the Iron Cross, 2nd Class."[509]

On 8 November 1918, three days before the Armistice, Józef Piłsudski was released from prison by the Germans and placed on a private train bound for the Polish capital. The collapsing Germans hoped that Piłsudski would create a military force to help defend German positions. On 11 November in Warsaw, Piłsudski was appointed Commander in Chief of Polish forces by the Regency Council and assigned the responsibility of creating a national government for Poland. He was given virtually dictatorial power. Piłsudski negotiated the evacuation of the German garrison from Warsaw and of other German troops from *Ober Ost*. Fifty-five thousand Germans peacefully left Congress Poland and Western Galicia, though German troops remained in the borderlands and the Baltic region.[510]

On 12 November, the first full day of his national leadership, Piłsudski met with the leaders of *Agudat Ha-Ortodoksim* at Kronenberg Palace in Warsaw to ask what kind of government the *Hasidim* wanted for Poland and what requests as Jews they had of the new government. The absence of the two German rabbis, Carlebach and Kohn, apparently was no

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[508] Ibid.

[509] Ibid.

[510] Jerzy Lukoweski and Hubert Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland*, 221.

handicap on the assertiveness of the formerly apolitical Polish Orthodoxy. *Agudat* leaders expressed the same desires to Piłsudski that they enumerated at the beginning of their politicization almost three years earlier: they wanted full legal equality, including the right to hold office, that Christians enjoyed, as well as freedom to develop whatever cultural institutions they desired; Jewish institutions should be subsidized to the same extent Christian organizations were; and the Orthodox should be represented in government commensurate with their strength in the population.[511]

Emanuel Carlebach's premonition of a "pogrom mood" proved to be sadly prescient. On the same day, 12 November, 130 kilometers to the south of Warsaw at Kielce in Galicia, Polish peasants beat Jews at market day and then marauded Jewish neighborhoods. Four Jews were killed and 250 were injured. The world was shocked, and Zionists called it a "veritable war of extermination." Polish nationalists responded with intense defensiveness and heightened anti-Semitism. Even worse violence occurred a few days later in Lvóv, a city in Eastern Galicia that had been occupied on 1 November by Ukrainian nationalists. Jews in Lvóv, caught between the occupying Ukrainians and Poles furious at the usurpation of their authority and territory, had remained neutral in the brewing conflict, but they had organized a 300-man militia to defend their homes and business. Poles counterattacked, and on 21 and 22 November they drove the Ukrainians out of Lvóv. The Polish military then detained the Jewish militia leaders and proceeded to rampage for two days against Lvóv's Jews—looting, burning, beating, raping, and killing in the Jewish quarter of the city. Polish officials refused to supply water to save burning

[511] Lewin, *The Jewish Community in Poland*, 197.

buildings. After 48 hours, there were 72 Jews dead, 443 wounded, many destroyed houses, and three burned synagogues. It was the worst pogrom since the 1905-06 pogroms in Russian.[512]

The end of the war in Poland proved to be as bloody, at least in some places, as its beginning had been four years earlier. Jews were still caught between military powers bent on controlling contested ground, though the surviving armies of 1918 were much smaller than those that arrived in 1914. They were, however, potentially just as deadly and just as hostile, as the Jews of Lvóv found out. Little if any of Jews' suffering over the past four years had been of their making. In November 1918 Jews throughout Poland surely agreed with the hard judgment that the German Julius Berger had made a year earlier—that "we Germans" had run Poland "into an ignominious collapse of all human and all moral foundations." To be sure, the Germans had not done it alone; the Russians had contributed heavily to the destruction of Polish lives. At the moment of that collapse, every *Ostjude* knew that there was plenty of blame to go around but little comfort to be had for the suffering that abided in their land.

[512] Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others,* 107-111; Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 75-91.

Epilogue: The Fatherland in the Abyss, November 1918 to November 1919

Germans had severe difficulty accepting defeat in November 1918. After what appeared to be total victory in the East in early 1918, most Germans thought they were winning the war. The surrender came as a shock—especially in the face of years of sacrifice and suffering. The Armistice and the abdication of Wilhelm II pitched German society into revolution. German soldiers returned to Berlin to find the city in the midst of revolt. Mirroring the Russian October Revolution, the communist driven Spartakist League announced a plan for governing Germany through worker-peasant councils. Three of the highest profile radicals, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht of Berlin, and Kurt Eisner of Munich, were all Jewish; they reinforced the German anti-Semites' strong inclination to equate all radicals with Bolshevism, which increasingly was termed "Jewish-Bolshevism." Right-wing groups challenged the Spartakists with demands for restoration of the monarchy. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) led in the formation of coalition government of center-left parties, based the drafting of its constitution in the small city of Weimar—the home of German humanism—and made it a liberal republic with universal suffrage and commitments to equal citizenship. The SPD was opposed to the constitution being drafted in Berlin because of what it represented: the *Kaiserreich*'s broad privilege for the *Junker* class, the military, and Prussian authoritarianism. German Jews played central leadership roles in the Weimar government's series of administrations and they welcomed the power and responsibility that was mostly thrust upon them after the failure of the Spartakist Uprising of 1919. Their very presence in the government incensed the same right-wing elements angry over the actions of the Spartakists. German Jews would have had a more

prominent role but for the deep reluctance of many to take public roles out of fear that it would provoke anti-Semitism, a completely legitimate fear as it turned out.[513]

Radicals and Rightists battled in the streets of German cities in the winter of 1918-19. German anti-Semitism, which had been on the rise since 1916, surged even more during the revolution. The Weimar government's repression of workers' uprisings fueled anti-Semitic thinking.[514] Liebknecht and Luxemburg had been openly against the war all along and now became ready targets for the postwar fury about defeat. On 4 January the newly appointed Secretary of Defense Gustav Noske authorized the volunteer units, the *Freikorps*, to become the Republic's defenders, the repressors of the radical socialists.[515] The SPD government and the Freikorps crushed the Spartakist Uprising of 1919. During the uprising on 15 January 1919, right-wing terrorists affiliated with the Freikorps assassinated both Luxembourg and Liebknecht. One month later a German nationalist shot Kurt Eisner in the back in Munich. Angry, hungry former soldiers began lashing out at their Jewish neighbors. According to Leopold Rosenak, "the returning Jewish soldiers encountered an unexpected anti-Semitism." After having shared the experience of war with so many gentile soldiers, "they were affected so much the deeper," the rabbi concluded.[516]

The Freikorps was composed heavily of soldiers just home from the Eastern Front. On 4 January Noske asked Peter von Heydebreck, a returning war officer from the Eastern Front, to

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[513] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 207-214.

[514] Ibid., 210.

[515] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 227.

[516] Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak*, 13.

head the Freikorps.[517] The Friekorps was united by their intense opposition to the democratic forces, which were undermining the influence of traditional centers of power in Germany—mainly radicals and Jews. At the same time that they were fighting and murdering radicals in Germany, some Freikorps soldiers remained in the East to fight for German influence and against the Bolsheviks in the chaotic postwar Baltic region. In June 1919 Freikorps troops reportedly executed 500 Latvians, while in Riga 3,000 died in the terror that followed.[518] Summoned home by the new Weimar government because of the intense Western hostility to the German renegade violence, Freikorps commanders mutinied and vowed to continue its crusade against the Bolshevik East. "The vicious rabble-at-arms," one scholar has written, "styled itself as a champion of *Kultur*, while in fact it was driven by nihilistic aimlessness bred of defeat, revolution, and years of total war."[519]

The actions of the Freikorps reflected the crucial and lasting effects of the war experience on German society. The historian Isabel Hull has noted that German society had never subjugated its military to civilian authority, and the essential action on which military power rested was violence. Hence front soldiers home from the Great War acted fully within their tradition in violently retaking the power stolen from them with the signing of the armistice—in full defiance of the peace that Germans claimed to desire.[520] George L. Mosse has observed that

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[517] Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 62.

[518] Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 231.

[519] Ibid.

[520] Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of war in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 324-333.

the Freikorps in 1919 was continuing the war in its attacks on radicals and Jews. The civil war of 1919 and the attacks on national groups in the Baltic regions were in effect the Freikorps' extensions of the war effort. In fact the Freikorps' refusal to surrender and their prominence in postwar right-wing politics composed a significant part of the background of National Socialism.[521] Thus, embittered soldiers whose formative fighting experiences were on the frontiers of Poland influenced future policies, especially when they returned to Poland as German officers and officials in 1939. The Freikorps was an extension of the radical right wing which, between 1919 and 1923 committed 324 political assassinations.[522] Not only did the ranks of the Freikorps provide the men of the front generation with an opportunity to continue their military service, but it also offered younger men who had missed the Great War a baptism by fire in the struggle against the forces of the Left. Other former members of the Freikorps later obtained senior leadership positions in the Nazi killing machine, including Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, Kurt Daluege, and Wolf-Heinrich Graf von Helldorf.[523] By 1938, several veterans of the First World War and the Freikorps became leaders in the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) and soon became commanders and members of an elite band of killers—the *Einsatzgruppen*.[524] For example, Paul Blobel, who had served on the Eastern Front in World War I, became the

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[521] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 169.

[522] Ibid.

[523] Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions,* 63.

[524] Ibid.

commanding officer of *Sonderkommando*-4a of *Einsatzgruppen*-C.[525] Otto Rasch and Martin Weiss, officers convicted at the *Einsatzgruppen* trials, also fought on the Eastern Front in the Great War. Weiss later became the camp commandant at Dachau.[526]

The embittered returning soldiers continued to influence future policies. Soldiers who became administrators during the Weimar Republic brought back prejudices from the Eastern Front. The Army's institutional memory began collapsing "the dirty, filthy East" and the Jew into a single identity. Jews of the East were seen as a threat to the German culture and society. They feared the spread of "Jewish-Bolshevism" from the East and their corrupting influence throughout Central Europe, especially on the German home front.[527] Some returned as German officers and officials during the Second World War. When Germany went eastward in 1939, the Jews were no longer to be managed, but removed, and by 1941, this policy culminated in their eradication. "We have never forgotten," General Joachim von Lemelsen, commander of an *Einsatzgruppen* corps on the Eastern Front in 1940 and 1941, that "it was bolshevism which stabbed our army in the back and which bears the guilt for the misfortunes which our people suffered after the war."[528] Almost immediately after the Armistice, excuses for defeat began to

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[525] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1985), 102.

[526] Richard Rhode, *Masters of Death: The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 274. The *Einsatzgruppen* Trials began on 3 July 1947 Otto Rasch - EG C, Arthur Nebe - *Kriminalpolizei*, Ernst Szymanowski alias Biberstein- EK 6. In total, fifteen of the *Einsatzgruppen* officers tried at Nuremberg had participated in the Eastern Front initiative during World War I.

[527] Max Hoffman, *The War of Lost Opportunities*, 211.

[528] Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45: German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare* (London, 1985), 170.

emerge. The provisional President of the new Weimar Republic, the Social Democratic Party leader Friedrich Ebert, met returning soldiers with the declaration "no enemy has vanquished you" (*kein Feind hat euch überwunden!*). While Ebert was paying tribute to the German soldier, he encouraged the search for internal scapegoats for German defeat.

In mid-1919 a British journalist asked Ludendorff why Germany had lost the war. Ludendorff offered a litany of excuses, including the assertion that the homefront had failed the military. "It sounds like you were stabbed in the back, then?" Ludendorff liked the phrase and told his old general staff henceforth that was their official explanation. Right-wing politicians soon picked up the *Dolchstoßlegende,* the "stab-in-the-back" theory, and used it against the SPD in the Weimar government. In 1919 Alfred Roth, leader of the *Deutschvölkischer Schutz und Trutzbund* (German Nationalist Protection and Defiance Federation), advanced the *Dolchstoßlegende* in his text, *The Jew in the Army*, which he claimed was based on evidence gathered during his participation in the *Judenzählung*. According to Roth, most Jews in the war were profiteers and spies, and Jewish officers encouraged a defeatist mentality among soldiers.[529] By the end of 1919, Paul von Hindenburg was also advancing the explanation before government inquiries into Germany's defeat. So too did Wilhelm II in exile. Notwithstanding his long and close social and political association with the *Kaiserjuden* and his dependence on the economic acumen of Ballin, Rathenau, and Warburg, the ex-Emperor blamed the collapse of the Reich on "the hated tribe of Juda." He added insult to injury with an admonition: "Let no German ever

[529] Richard S. Levy, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2005), 623-4; Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 59.

forget this, or rest until these parasites have been extirpated and exterminated from German soil. This toadstool on the German oak!"[530]

General Max Hoffman, who governed in the East longer than Ludendorff, fell into lockstep after the war. "The temptations to which the men were exposed for the corruption of the Jewish traders in the East and from Bolshevist propaganda," Hoffman wrote, "had broken their fighting spirit." Such drivel was widely accepted in the years after the war.[531]

The punitive terms of the Versailles treaty escalated German anger, which nurtured the stab-in-the-back theory to explain the unfair punishment. In the early 1920s, the *Dolchstoßlegende* remained the compelling explanation for defeat and postwar humiliation and degradation. The right-wing press continued to promote it, and leading Weimar officials, including Matthias Erzberger (the Catholic politician who had promoted the *Judenzählung* but then turned against the war) and Walther Rathenau were assassinated for their alleged stabs in the back. In 1924, during the trial of Adolf Hitler and Ludendorff for treason for their role in the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, the Munich journal *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* blamed the SPD and trade unions for Germany's defeat. The *Dolchstoßlegende* remained a crucial myth in postwar German propaganda, especially that advanced by Hitler and the NSDAP. Throughout his rise to power, Hitler denounced the "November criminals" who had stabbed the German military in the back and brought on the national degradation of the Versailles Treaty.

German Jews who had worked with Ludendorff found it hard to believe his new persona as rabidly anti-Semitic right-wing revolutionary. "Ludendorff never revealed himself to be

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[530] Pulzer, *Jews and the German State*, 214.

[531] Max Hoffman, *The War of Lost Opportunities* (London: Kegan Paul, Tench, Trubner & Co., LTD., 1924), 211.

anything resembling an anti-Semite," Sammy Gronemann wrote. "On the contrary, he often proved that he knew how to appreciate Jewish help and cooperation and frequently and gladly made use of Jewish assistance." He had nurtured Jewish artists and talked extensively with Gronemann and others about their work, which led them even to dedicate their works to him. More than once, Gronemann insisted, Ludendorff had intervened to stop "anti-Semitic excesses." Not just German Jews were shocked at the fate of Erich Ludendorff after the war. He conspired with Adolf Hitler, whom he professed to admire greatly, in the Beer Hall Putsch to overthrow the Weimar government. Tried for treason and acquitted, Ludendorff subsequently ran successfully for the Reichstag in 1924 through 1928. But he fell out of favor with the Nazis and was outraged in 1933 when Hindenburg, now Chancellor of Germany, handed power over to Hitler. "By appointing Hitler Chancellor of the Reich, you have handed over our sacred German Fatherland to one of the greatest demagogues of all time," Ludendorff wrote to Hindenburg. "I prophesy to you this evil man will plunge our Reich into the abyss and will inflict immeasurable woe on our nation. Future generations will curse you in your grave for this action." Ludendorff was, of course, correct in his assessment of Hitler, though he failed to accept his own responsibility in the Nazi rise to power.[532]

Rabbi Rosenak, who had buried many Jewish soldiers side by side with their fellow Christian combatants, immediately took up the fight against anti-Semitism. One of his tools in this fight was publishing the brochure *Truth and Justice,* his response to a novel written in 1920 by Arthur Dinter entitled *The Sin against the Blood,* more than 60,000 copies of which were

[532] Gronemann quoted in Sander Gillman, "The Rediscovery of the Eastern Jews: German Jews in the East, 1890-1918," *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic Symbiosis,* ed. David Bronsen, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979), 355; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-193: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1998), 377.

sold. Rosenak's brochure became an important weapon in the struggle for basic, unalienable rights for Jews and made recognizable their status both as German people and as equal, full citizens of Germany. Deeply wounded by the anti-Semitic currents, Rosenak turned to Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the commanders with whom he had worked on the Eastern Front. In 1921, Rosenak sent them the brochures and requested their support fighting not only for the rights of German Jews but also for public recognition of Jews' wartime efforts and social contributions. His son, Ignatz Rosenak, later recounted the day in 1921 when Hindenburg's response arrived at his father's house. "My father had trusted that this man, who was so proud to play the role of the German 'Ekkehard,'[533] the legendary guardian of German loyalty and honor, and who he thought "would speak out against the infamous post-war anti-Semitism." "The opportunity was given to the future president of the Weimar Republic to speak up for . . . the Jewish race," Ignatz wrote. This denial of a past friendship was representative of the German officer corps, who brusquely refused to stand up to the anti-Semitic mobs."[534] Ludendorff's response was even more detached, "I thank you for your friendly lines, Rabbi . . . I would like to read it but at the moment, I haven't the time."[535]

After the war Poles rightly felt that they had suffered badly at the hands of both the Russians and the Germans. At the end of hostilities, the costs of the war in Poland could be calculated. The infrastructure had been devastated: gone were 40 percent of the main bridges, 63

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[533] *Ekkehard*, a well-known German historian had completed a history of the world in the year 1101 when he determined to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his return he entirely rewrote the particulars of his history relating to the First Crusade, and finally issued it as a little separate volume called "Hierosolymita."

[534] Rosenak, *Rabbiner Dr. Leopold Rosenak*, 18.

[535] Ibid., 15.

percent of railroad stations, and 48 percent of the mills making railroad rolling stock. In 1918 in Congress Poland, only 15 percent of the industrial labor force was at work. Poland's economy had become relatively more agricultural, though its farm output was drastically reduced—to one-fourth its prewar level in Galicia, just over a third in the old German partition, and about half in Congress Poland and the Pale of Settlement. At least a third of the livestock and draft animals were lost, as were 1.5 million acres of forestland. About 1.35 million Poles were killed or wounded during the war. About 700,000 had moved east, most of them, including Jews, forced to go as prisoners or conscripted labor. [536]

The war had changed how Poles viewed Jews—for the worse. Prior the war, anti-Semitism had been an ideological commitment of right-wing political parties, most notably the Endeks. Anti-Jewish feelings mostly arose from economic competition with Jewish merchants. Among many gentile Poles, the war transformed Jews from being an accepted minority group in an ethnically diverse society to being a vicious "other" hated by the xenophobic masses. The Russians, in their wartime propaganda, had promoted Polish anti-Semitism by painting Jews as the pawns of the Germans and Austrians, and then the exploitative practices of the German and Austrian occupation strengthened the Polish national census and encouraged the blaming of Jews for awful wartime conditions. The war caused, one scholar has concluded, a "highly introverted popular consciousness" among Poles with "beliefs in the putative racial distinctiveness of the Jews." The intensified anti-Semitism reinforced Polish nationalists' struggle against foreign oppression.[537]

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[536] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 369.

[537] Prusin, *Nationalizing a Borderland*, 74.

Though some Jews joined Pilsudski's fight for independence, nationalist Poles continued to identify the *Ostjuden* with Bolshevism and enemies of Polish independence. The many nationalist groups fighting against Russian power in the postwar years focused their hostility toward the Jews. Western nations were alarmed soon after the war by reports of the numerous pogroms occurring throughout Poland. Concern for Poland's Jews brought about explicit clauses for minority rights in the Versailles Treaty protecting the rights of the various minorities in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe.[538] An American investigating committee found widespread anti-Semitism, identified eight pogroms in 1918 and 1919, and estimated the number of victims at 280. Among the atrocities reported was the event in Pinsk in which the Polish commander of a local garrison accused Jews of plotting against him and executed 35 people.[539] The same concern in the West resulted in additional demands in Versailles Treaty for equal legal rights, which guaranteed religious tolerance for Jews. Such demands only antagonized nationalist Poles and resulted inevitably in persecutions of the Jewish population. The large number of Jews immigrating to Poland from Ukraine and Soviet Russia also provoked Polish anti-Semitism in the postwar years. According to Polish national census of 1921, there were 2,845,364 Jews living in the country; by 1938 that number grew to 3,310,000, an annual average increase of nearly 30,000. At the same time, every year 100,000 Jews passed through Poland on their way to other places. Polish anti-Semitism rose steadily during the interwar period, and is only overshadowed

[538] Fink, *The Great Powers,* 133-69.

[539] Neal Pease, "This Troublesome Question: The United States and the Polish Pogroms of 1918-19," in *Ideology, politics, and diplomacy in East Central Europe*, ed. Mieczysław B. Biskupski, Piotr Stefan Wandycz (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 59.

in the historical memory mainly because of the genocide that the Germans began in the East in 1939.[540]

What happened to Jews in the East during the Great War set a precedent for mass brutality that later yielded the most notorious genocides in history. The Russian advances then retreats from, Poland and Lithuania throughout 1914 and 1915 caused horrific violence toward Jews. Similar genocidal events occurred in Poland in 1918 and 1919 and also in Ukraine in 1919 and 1920. It has been variously estimated that between 30,000 and 100,000 Jews died from actual physical violence in Ukraine during 1918 through 1920, though another quarter million Jews probably died from starvation and disease at the time. At Tetiev, Ukraine in March 1919, 4,000 Jews of the town's 6,000 were killed. At Dubovo in June, 800 of 900 were killed.[541] The genocide in Ukraine occurred mainly at the hands of Ukrainian nationalists—mainly Cossack soldiers—but also White Russians and a small portion by Bolsheviks. One historian has argued that the killing of Jews on a massive scale in Ukraine in 1919 set the stage for the German genocide in the East that began in 1940 and was codenamed Barbarossa. "If Barbarossa, then was on the one hand a prelude to the systematic destruction of European Jewry in the period 1942 to late 1944," one historian has written, "it also could be argued to be the final sequence in a pattern of 'frontier' genocide which links it back to the events of 1914-1920." The main thread running through these genocides was "anti-Jewish animus."[542]

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[540] Mendelsohn. *Zionism in Poland*, 105.

[541] Manus I. Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 45-46.

[542] Mark Levene, "Frontiers of Genocide: Jews in the Eastern War Zones, 1914-1920 and 1941," in *Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia*, ed. Panikos Panayi (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 83-117.

The war did leave a significant positive legacy of Orthodox activism in postwar Poland. *Agudat Ha-Ortodoksim* changed its name to *Agudat Shlomei Emunei Israel*, later simplified to *Agudat Israel*, and continued to be the guiding force in Orthodox political life. The system of Orthodox schools that Joseph Carlebach, Leo Deutschlander, and Sarah Schenirer had initiated during the war thrived in the 1920s and beyond. The Orthodox newspaper, *Dos yidischer Vort* changed its name to *Der Yid* and grew ever more influential as the instrument of Orthodox opinion. The Orthodox stayed engaged in politics, with several effective Polish leaders now, but the overall commitment of the *Hasidim*, who had effectively joined the Orthodox, to political involvement never reached the level of the Zionists and the Folkists. In postwar Poland, the latter two groups won representation in politics in much larger proportion than their numbers. Zionists also had lasting success in Polish parliamentary elections in the 1920s.[543] Despite the new but for the most lasting politicization of the Orthodox during the war, Zionists and the Folkists were simply more committed to political action and were better at it.[544] After the war Zionists controlled more newspapers; by 1929 the Zionist press had a total circulation of a half million. Still, Jews in Poland were effectively powerless against the forces of Polish anti-Semitism that had gained over-powering strength in the 1930s. They were, moreover, mostly helpless when the Nazis arrived in September 1939 with the will to kill them all.

The German Jews who suffered perhaps the greatest loss in the war were the so-called *Kaiserjuden*. They held the Prussian state in the highest regard, were the most committed to assimilation in Wilhelmine society, and had achieved status and wealth sufficiently high that

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[543] Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*, 262.

[544] Ibid., 200.

they had a long way to fall. The war experience forced them to see the humiliating limits that actually existed on their assimilation in German society. It may have been providential that just a few of them lived very long after the war.

Albert Ballin spent the long war in frustration at the failed strategy of the Prussian military and the increasing deference of Wilhelm to the military men. Ballin died on 9 November 1918, the same day as Wilhelm's abdication, of an overdose of sleeping pills, which may or may not have been a suicide. Paul Nathan and James Simon each lived quietly and largely removed from public life for only a few years after the war. Walther Rathenau served as Foreign Secretary for the Weimar government, during which he supported the German compliance with terms of the Versailles Treaty, though working for revisions of it, and negotiated in 1922 the Treaty of Rapallo, which normalized relations with the U.S.S.R. Two months later, German ultranationalists, including members of the NSDAP, assassinated Rathenau with the justification that Rapallo was a Jewish-Communist conspiracy against German power.[545]

At the end of the war, Max Warburg remained a German patriot, serving as financial advisor to Chancellor Max von Baden. In 1919 he advised German delegates on economic matters related to the Versailles peace treaty. In 1922 Rathenau asked him to join the cabinet as minister of finance, but Warburg refused, saying that two Jewish ministers would be too much for Germany. Rathenau's assassins had apparently also planned to kill Warburg. His two American brothers helped Max secure capital for Germany during the world economic crisis between 1930 and 1932. Increasingly committed to Palestine after the war, Warburg in 1933 arranged the complex Haavara transfer agreement, designed to help facilitate the emigration of

[545] Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 76, 98.

German Jews to Palestine, between the Third Reich and the Zionist leadership to circumvent the worldwide anti-German boycott. Property of German Jews who were immigrating to Palestine was exchanged for German-made goods, which were shipped to Palestine and sold there. Money from the sale of these goods went to the migrating Jews. About ten percent of German Jews, 60,000 people, emigrated through the Haavara deal, which strengthened the Zionist community in Palestine. Until 1938, Warburg worked with Hjalmar Schacht, Hitler's chief economic adviser in the mid-1930s, but when Schacht's influence with Hitler waned, so did Warburg's influence throughout the German business community. When the Nazis "aryanized" German corporations, Warburg lost control of the family bank, which had been in business since 1798. He migrated to the U.S., where he died in 1946.[546]

Ludwig Haas, another German nationalist who sacrificed heavily for the war effort, returned to the Reichstag as a Liberal deputy. He later served the German government as a diplomat, including as a part of the German diplomatic team negotiating the Locarno Treaty in 1923. He became a leader of the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten (RJF)* (Reich Association of Jewish War Veterans) which undertook to recount Germany's Jewish war dead of World War I. German authorities at first denied the figure of 12,000 Jewish war victims and reaffirmed the original census's figure of half of the *RJF*'s number, but later agreed to recheck its statistics and confirmed the *RJF*'s total. Haas died in 1930 and did not have the vindication of the German

[546] Ron Chernow, *The Warburgs: The Twentieth-Century Odyssey of a Remarkable Jewish Family* (New York: Random House, 1993), 196-203, 365-463.

government's open acknowledgement of the full contribution of the *jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, which, strangely, came in 1934 after the rise of the Nazis.[547]

The men who founded and ran the *Komitee für den Osten*, the original German Zionists, felt great loss over the war's outcome. Perhaps their most fundamental response to the war was to commit even more firmly to Eretz Israel. The rise of Zionism is typically dated from the Herzl's declaration for a Jewish state in Switzerland in 1897 or the Balfour Declaration in England in 1917. While both of those were crucial events in the history of the Jewish people, the experience of the Ostjuden in the Great War, and that of the men who worked to alleviate their suffering, persuaded millions of Jews between 1914 and 1917 that an independent Jewish nation was necessary. The state of Israel can be said to have originated more from events on the Eastern Front in the Great War than from any other circumstance in history.

Many German Zionists themselves were unwilling to relocate to Palestine until the 1930's as anti-Semitism escalated and was officially sponsored by the newly elected National Socialist Party and Adolf Hitler. Max Bodenheimer had staked his reputation as a Zionist on the German government, which he felt had betrayed him with its growing indifference to the plans for the *Ostjuden* autonomy that it had embraced at Bodenheimer's behest in 1914. In the early 1920s he supported new land purchases in the Jezreel Valley in Palestine. Bodenheimer deeply resented Chaim Weizmann, whose British patriotism was the perfect opposite of his German nationalism. After the war he became a critic of Weizmann in the World Zionist Organization. He thought Weizmann was not tough enough in facing British authorities in protecting Jews in the mandate area. In 1929, in the aftermath of Arab riots in Palestine that left more than 100 Jews

[547] Schrag-Haas, Judith, *Erinnerungen an meinen Vater: Ludwig Haas, 1875-1930*; LBI Memoir Collection; ME 581/MM 66, Leo Baeck Institute.

dead and many hundreds injured, Bodenheimer joined Ze'ev Jabotinsky's Revisionist Party, which advocated a militant defense of Jewish rights and territory in Palestine. In April 1933, after the Nazis' rise to power, Bodenheimer left Cologne for Amsterdam. In 1936 he settled in Jerusalem where he wrote his memoirs. He died there in 1940. [548]

Franz Oppenheimer in 1919 filled the first chair in sociology at a German university, Goethe University in Frankfurt-on-Main. He continued his pioneering historical analysis of the development of states based on the distinction between the political means of acquiring wealth (such as coercion and taxation) and the "economic means" (through peaceful and voluntary exchange). In 1934 and 1935 Oppenheimer taught in Palestine. In 1938, fleeing the Nazis by way of the Far East, he immigrated to Los Angeles in the United States, where he died in 1943. Another *KfdO* stalwart, the Berlin lawyer Adolf Friedemann, was the only one of the older Zionists not to settle in Palestine. In 1919 he published the first biography of his colleague Theodor Herzl. He became an attaché at the General Consulate in Amsterdam 1925 where he died the year before the triumph of National Socialism.

The younger and more radical cohort of German Zionists, most of whom worked in the German propaganda effort in the East, embraced the cause of Jewish nationalism with even more fervor, as most of them pursued distinguished careers that took them eventually to Palestine. Though they had all supported the war enthusiastically, each took from it deep reservations about the legitimacy of military conflict. They had all witnessed its devastating human cost and never forgot that fact. They were indeed typical of their generation in the West in their subsequent aversion to war and their feelings of its futility and waste. They were vastly different from so

[548] Ticker, "Max I. Bodenheimer," 25.

many gentile Germans of their time who brought home from the war feelings of national grievance and a need for vengeance.

The German Jews who served in the East had their views of the *Ostjuden* vastly altered. They had gone east with a keen sense of German superiority to Eastern Jews, who they thought were backward, dirty, dishonest, and superstitious. They came back using terms like purity, sincerity, candor, and faithfulness to describe the people they met during the war. In 1920 Arnold Zweig and Hermann Struck published *The Face of East European Jewry*, the most significant printed document demonstrating the appreciation that German Jews acquired for the *Ostjuden* during the war. Illustrated with Struck's sketches showing the pacific character and innate beauty of Eastern Jews, the book casts its subjects as the opposite of the civilized, secular Westerner. At the same time that they celebrate the *Ostjuden*, Zweig and Struck condemn the modern technological, industrial men of the West who wrought the awful war. "The Jew of the West," they argued, had traveled a road to a "fervent atheism and an exaggerated and totally false application of scientific objectivity . . . the alluring, rose-covered, enlightened path of a cultural decline into mishmash." The East European Jew, on the other hand, was "sincere and dreamy," having procured a purity that same from sacrificing himself to simple pursuits: "To start a small trade, to eat bread and herring, to father and raise children to say the daily prayers and the prayers over meals, and read many pages of Gemara; to give a bit to the poor from the little that one earns, to provide daughters for marriage, to visit the sick, to bury the dead, and console the mourners." Although a partly romantic over-reaction to guilt over their original condescension, *The Face of East European Jewry* set the interpretation for future understandings, at least among

Western Jews, of the *Ostjuden.*[549] Struck did not remain in Germany long after the book appeared, notwithstanding the great appreciation there for his talents. He immigrated to Palestine in 1922, taught art, and helped establish the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. He visited Berlin every summer until the Nazis rose to power. He died in 1944. Zweig became prominent as a socialist and Zionist in Weimar Germany, partly from his position as the editor-in-chief of a newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau*. In 1927 Zweig published the anti-war novel *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, which made him an international literary figure. From 1929 he was a contributing journalist of anti-Nazi newspaper *Die Weltbühne* (World Stage). When the Nazis took power in 1933, Zweig immediately went into voluntary exile, first in Czechoslovakia and then Switzerland and France. He sent his wife and children to Palestine in 1934 and went there himself in 1936, and published a German newspaper *Orient*. During the years spent in Palestine he became disillusioned with Zionism but remained a committed socialist. Ultimately, as a pacifist, he became increasingly unhappy with the growing militaristic identity of Israel. In a singular departure among German Zionists, he moved in 1948 to the new East Germany, became a member of parliament and delegate to the World Peace Council Congress, and was elected president of the German Academy of the Arts from 1950 to 1953. The USSR awarded him the Lenin Peace Prize (1958) for his anti-war novels. He died in East Berlin in 1968.[550]

In the postwar years Sammy Gronemann enjoyed major success as a writer of humor and fiction. His first novel, *Chaos*, was a bestseller immediately when it appeared in 1920. In 1926 he wrote his first play, "Haman's Escape," an expose of the many forms of anti-Semitism.

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[549] Arnold Zweig, *The Face of East European Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, [Originally published 1920].

[550] Zweig, *The Face of East European Jewry.*

Gronemann's writing showed an ever-stronger commitment to Zionism. He wrote with growing urgency about the absurdity of Jewish existence in the Diaspora and the necessity of a Zionist solution. In March 1933 he fled the Nazis to Paris and in 1936 settled in Palestine, where he practiced law, held a German salon, and wrote plays. Gronemann died in 1952 in Tel-Aviv.[551]

Nahum Goldmann, the young *Ostjuden* specialist in the German Foreign Office during the war, established a Zionist publishing house and created the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in the late 1920s. The National Socialists suspected Goldmann of being a communist as early as 1923. He escaped Nazi arrest in 1933 only because he was in Palestine for his father's funeral and had his German citizenship revoked in 1935. He settled in New York where in 1936 he helped found the World Jewish Congress, an organization to protect Jewish political and civil rights throughout the world, of which he was president for many years. Goldmann supported a Jewish state in Palestine, but he also favored the creation of a neighboring Arab state. In October 1942 he reported on the Holocaust even as the killing escalated in the part of the world he had known so well in the First World War. "Our generation is in the tragic position that one-half of the generation is being slaughtered before our eyes, and the other half has to sit down and cannot prevent this catastrophe," Goldmann said. After the war he negotiated reparations from the West German government. Only in 1962 did Goldmann become a citizen of Israel, and then he was critical of the nation's reliance on and admiration of its military prowess. He objected to Israeli occupation of territories gained in the 1967 war. Goldmann viewed Israel as only one possible alternative for sustaining Jewish life, including Jewish life in the Diaspora. As an ardent believer of the Diaspora he chose to spend most of his time outside of Israel; he lived in the United States

[551] Gronemann, *Hawdoloh und Zapfenstreich.*

and then in several cities throughout Europe including Geneva, Paris, and Bad Reichenhall, Germany, were he died in 1982.[552]

Goldmann typified the younger Zionists who applied what they saw as the lessons of the Great War in the postwar world differently from older men like Bodenheimer, especially with regard to the defense of Jewish rights in Eretz Israel. After the war the Zionist journalist Robert Weltsch settled in Berlin, where he helped Arnold Zweig edit the *Jüdische Rundschau* from 1919 to 1938. In the 1920s Weltsch supported Brith Shalom, an organization that advocated peaceful coexistence, including sharing land, with Arabs in Palestine. Weltsch and a number of other German Zionists were alarmed at the militancy of some Jews in the emerging conflicts with Arabs in Palestine. What Weltsch and others viewed as dangerous Zionist bellicosity reminded them of the war enthusiasm of 1914, and they reminded fellow supporters of Eretz Israel of the awful outcome of bellicose nationalism. In 1939 Weltsch immigrated to Palestine, taking his publication with him. In 1945 Weltsch became the London correspondent of the daily *Ha-aretz* and one of the founders of the Leo Baeck Institute, the yearbook of which he edited from 1956 to 1971. Weltsch died in Jerusalem in 1982. Julius Berger, the World Zionist Organization secretary who commented on conditions among Polish Jews while living there during the war, worked for the Jewish National Fund (JNF) after the war, and then settled in Palestine in 1924. He agreed with Goldmann and Weltsch, and disagreed with Bodenheimer, about the degree of

[552] Nahum Goldmann, *The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann: Sixty Years of Jewish Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

militancy with which Jews should confront their Arab neighbors. [553] Berger continued to chair the JNF until he passed away in 1946.

Though he did not serve in the war directly, Martin Buber supported the war effort and published many of the most trenchant wartime evaluations of the situation in the East in his journal *Der Jude*. After the war, Buber resumed his career as a philosopher and theologian and in 1923 wrote an essay on human existence, *Ich und Du* (I and Thou), the basis of his dialogic philosophy for which he became world renowned. He taught at the University of Frankfurt where in 1930 he was awarded a professorship. With the rise of the Nazis in 1933, however, Buber was forced, along with other Jewish academics, out of his university position. He traveled and spoke throughout Germany until 1935, when he was forbidden to speak to Jews. He was then invited to speak to the Quakers, until the Gestapo also forbade that. In 1938 he moved to Palestine, where he was appointed professor of social philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. There he focused extensively on Jews' relationships with Arabs. Like his fellow young Zionists of Wilhelmine Germany—Goldmann, Weltsch, and Berger—Buber as an old man in confrontation with the brutality of the twentieth century also supported the creation of a bi-national state, which Buber viewed as a more proper fulfillment of Zionism than a solely Jewish state. In 1946 he published *Paths in Utopia* in which he detailed his communitarian socialist views and his theory of the "dialogical community" based on humane, engaged (as opposed to objectified contacts) "dialogical relationships." Buber died in 1965 in Jerusalem.

The *Feldrabbiner* returned to their old lives, though postwar Germany hardly allowed a normal one, even for men who had sacrificed so heavily for the *Vaterland* at the war fronts. They

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[553] Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 185-199.

served Jews with a new awareness of their faith, and a humility about their German Jewishness that they had gained in contact with the *Ostjuden.* In the postwar years, they had to face the unworthiness of the German nation for the patriotism they demonstrated on the Eastern Front. If they lived long enough, each one had to flee the country that they had loved. Their lives personified what they perceived as the incompatibility between a Jewish existence and the German nation. It was a harsh lesson for men of faith—faith in their homeland—especially having witnessed so much sacrifice on its behalf.

Aron Tänzer remained on the Eastern Front until 19 November 1918, longer than any other *Feldrabbiner*. He returned to his congregation in Göppingen and in 1927 published a history of the Jews in that city. Tänzer died in 1937, leaving a wife and six children. His widow died in the concentration camp at Theresienstadt in 1943 while all his children had immigrated to the United States. Jacob Sonderling returned to Hamburg and his reform congregation, but in 1923 he moved to the United States where he led Reform congregations in Rhode Island, New York, Chicago, and before settling into a long and successful tenure in California. Soon after the war Sali Levi took over the rabbinate in Mainz, where he remained until 1941, when he went to Berlin to prepare to immigrate to the United States, but he died before he could leave.

Leopold Rosenak returned from the Eastern Front to assume his duties as chief rabbi of Bremen, but his heart and hands remained committed to the *Ostjuden.* Because of the escalation of postwar pogroms in Poland and Ukraine and the displacements caused by the Polish-Soviet War, Rosenak resumed his efforts in assisting *Ostjuden* immigrate to the United States. He did this by coordinating efforts between German and American relief agencies. He persuaded the North German Lloyd Lines to serve kosher meals on their steamships. He made several trips to the United States, and there finally met Jacob Schiff with whom he shared the commitment to get

Jews out of Eastern Europe. As Schiff had sensed during the war, Americans were becoming hostile to all immigration, especially that from Eastern Europe. Schiff died in 1920 and was spared the final closing of the Golden Door in the National Origins Act of 1924. So was Rosenak, who died aboard ship during a return trip from the U.S. in 1923. His wife Bella Carlebach Rosenak and a son immigrated to the U.S. in 1941.[554]

Leopold's brother-in-law, Joseph Carlebach returned from the war to serve as chief rabbi of Lübeck, then Altona, and finally Hamburg. In 1921 Carlebach became headmaster of the Talmud Torah high school in Hamburg. After the Nazis banned Jewish students from attending German schools, Carlebach set up a number of schools throughout Germany to educate Jewish children. The Nazis sent Joseph to a concentration camp near Riga, Latvia—not far from where he had built schools during the war—and they executed him on 26 March 1942 during the mass shooting of approximately 1,600 Jews, an atrocity known as the Dünamunde Action. His wife and younger children were also killed during the Holocaust. One son, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, survived to supervise the Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, New York, after the war. A daughter, Miriam Gillis-Carlebach, immigrated to Israel in October 1938 and became the head of the Joseph Carlebach Institute at Bar-Ilan University and has dedicated herself to researching her father's writings as well as the writings of other Jewish leaders of the same time period.[555]

Leo Baeck returned from the war to teach at Berlin's Liberal rabbinical seminary and to lead the Union of German Rabbis and the German B'nai B'rith Order. When the Nazis rose to power in 1933, Baeck was elected president of the *Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden*. As the

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[554] Carlebach-Rosenak, Bella, *Lebenserinnerungen, 1897-1957*; LBI Memoir Collection; ME 81/MM 14, Leo Baeck Institute.

[555] Ibid.

head of this organization, he struggled to keep the morale of the German Jews up while trying to alleviate the discrimination and persecution of Jews. He traveled frequently in an attempt to bring the situation of the German Jews to international attention. In 1935 Baeck incurred the wrath of the Nazis with his Yom Kippur prayer, read in synagogues throughout Germany, in which he answered the Nazi denigration of the Jews with the declaration, "We bow our heads before God, but we stand upright before men!" In spite of several offers of immigration, Baeck refused to leave Germany. He reportedly said he would only leave Germany when he was the last Jew remaining there. His synagogue was destroyed at *Kristalnacht* on 9 November 1938. When the Nazis disbanded the *Reichsvertretung* in 1943 when he was seventy, Baeck and his family were sent to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt. During his time in Theresienstadt, Baeck continued to teach, holding secret lectures on philosophy and religion in the barracks of the camp. In spite of being forced to perform hard labor, he also managed to begin a manuscript, writing secretly on scraps of paper, which became *Dieses Volk–Jüdische Existenz*, an interpretation of Jewish history in the light of Nazism and the Holocaust. None of Baeck's four sisters survived Theresienstadt. He spent his postwar years travelling, lecturing, and helping to found several organizations to aid the remnants of European Jews. In 1955 the Leo Baeck Institute was created in Jerusalem for the study of the history and culture of German-speaking Jews. During the last week of his life in 1956, Baeck completed *Dieses Volk*.[556]

The Orthodox rabbis who activated the *Hasidim* politically stayed faithful to their mission, though in circumstances even worse than they knew during the war. Emanuel Carlebach returned to his synagogue in Cologne and then to one at Hamburg, where he also established a

[556] *Papers of Leo Baeck (1873-1956*), 1885-2001; Subgroup I: Leo Baeck Estate, 1894-1964, 1982; Leo Baeck Collection; AR66/MF710; Series 1: Personal, Leo Baeck Institute.

Torah school—as he also did in his last appointment at Altona. Emanuel died in 1927. Pinchas Kohn served as president of the world Aguda movement and travelled throughout Europe opening local branches of the organization. In 1939 he was rescued from Germany by his son-in-law and taken to Palestine, where he died in the 1941.

Carlebach and Kohn's great ally in Poland, the Gerer rebbe Avraham Mordechai Alter, became a target of the Nazis during the Second World War, but he managed to escape to Palestine with several of his sons and there began to rebuild his Hasidic dynasty. His eldest son, Rabbi Meir Alter, perished at Treblinka with his children and grandchildren. They were among the almost six million *Ostjuden* whose awful fate began to unfold in 1914. During the first three years of the war, despite often terrible suffering, the prospects for improving their lives through more political rights seemed promising. Certainly the *Feldrabbiner* and the other German Jews who went East intended to help their fellow Jews in the East rise culturally, economically, and politically. By the time the guns stopped firing in 1918, however, the German government had reneged on their promises of recognition and help, the German Jews felt entirely betrayed by their own country, and the circumstances of many *Ostjuden* were as precarious as they had been before the war. Even worse, the experience of war in the East encouraged the rise of racist nationalism in Germany and Eastern Europe. The roots of Nazi policies toward Jews were planted firmly in Poland and Lithuania between 1915 and 1918. But for defeat in the war, it is highly unlikely that the Nazis would ever have risen to power, and in the absence of the German experience of war in the East, the later commitment to a Jewish genocide might never have been imagined. The blood shed at Jacob's tent in the Great War prepared the ground for the drenching that came a quarter century later.

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VITA

In 2002, I followed my intellectual passion for history as a profession. I returned to Texas A&M University to begin working on a M.S. degree with the Department of Geography under the direction of Professor Peter Hugill. I was awarded a fellowship to conduct research at the University of Munich during the summer of 2003. That summer, I received language training at the Goethe Institute in Bonn. I completed the M.S. in May 2004 with a thesis, "Karl Haushofer and His Impact on the German-Japanese Alliance, 1908-1945." This work provided me a foundation in the discipline of historical and political geography. I studied in Krakow, Poland, in Summer 2004. I then began work on an M.A. in history, completed in 2007, focused on the political and social context of modern Germany and the Holocaust, which led me to this dissertation concerned with the interethnic experiences in Poland under German occupation during the First World War. My topic has been well received, particularly by the United States Holocaust Museum Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies. In the summer of 2006, I received the United States Holocaust Museum Fellowship at Indiana University to study Yiddish language. I have delivered papers on the role of the German army rabbis during World War One at the Schiller University in Jena, Germany, in 2006, and at the 3rd International Holocaust Conference in Krakow in 2007. During the summer of 2007, I received a fellowship to attend the Holocaust Education Foundation Seminar to learn how to teach courses in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. In the fall of 2007, I began my doctoral studies at the University of Tennessee. In 2008, I received a United States Fulbright Scholarship to conduct research in Poland and was invited to join the Jewish Studies Department at Jagiellonian University in Krakow. On June 30, 2010, I successfully defended my dissertation titled, "Shattered Communities: Soldiers, Rabbis, and the *Ostjuden* under German Occupation: 1915-1918."