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Jews in Leipzig:

Nationality and Community in the 20th Century

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Jews in Leipzig:

Nationality and Community in the 20th Century

by

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Jews in Leipzig:

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The thesis is a study of the Jewish community of Leipzig, Germany over the course of the 20th century. It begins with an overview of the Jews of the city until the rise to power of Adolf Hitler, emphasizing divisions with the Jewish community over the ideology of Zionism and between German-born and foreign-born Jews. It goes on to describe the lives of Jews as the Nazis come to state authority, the riots of November, 1938, and the gradual exclusion of Jews from professional and pubic life in the city. Jewish responses in education, politics and culture are examined, as are the decisions of many local people to emigrate.

After the 1938 riots, exclusion began to shift to extermination, and the Jewish community found itself subject to deportation to camps in Eastern Europe. Most of those deported were murdered. Those who lived were able to do so because of good fortune, canny survival skills, or marriage to non-Jews. Jewish life, which had been an important part of the city, was systematically destroyed.

After 1945, those few who survived in the city were joined by another handful of Jewish Leipzigers who survived the camps, and by some non-Leipzig Jews, to reform the Jewish community. A tiny percentage of the old Jewish world of Leipzig was left to

rebuild. They did so, reestablishing institutions, reclaiming property, and beginning negotiations with the new authorities, the Soviet occupation and then the German Democratic Republic. The Jews of Leipzig continued some of their old concerns in this new world, negotiating with the government and among themselves the nature of their identities as Jews and as Germans.

These negotiations were brought to a halt by a series of anti-Semitic purges in 1952 and 1953. The leadership of the Jewish community fled, as did many of their fellow-Jews. The behavior of the East German state at this point showed some surprising commonality with their Nazi predecessors. After the purges were over, those who remained began another process of rebuilding, this time in constant tension with a government that wanted to use them for propaganda purposes during the Cold War. With the fall of the communist regime in 1989-90, the Jewish community of Leipzig was able to chart its destiny again. The old issues of identity and community—among themselves and between Jews and their German neighbors—continue in a very different context.

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Introduction

Richard Frank was a manufacturer of textiles. He was born in the city of Halle in 1870, the year before the foundation of the German Empire. He moved to the city of Leipzig at the age of five, and enjoyed a fairly typical upper-class existence. He went to the classical Gymnasium, served in the army, even reaching lower officer rank. He attended the University of Leipzig, opened his own factory, had a family. He seemed not especially handicapped by the fact of being a Jew. After the collapse of the German Empire, Frank's professional career blossomed even more. The Weimar Republic was explicitly devoted to the equality of its citizens, and Frank's private success now took on a public character as a result. From 1920 to 1933, he served as a trade judge at the regional court.

But in 1933, of course, the German state changed its form and its intent toward its Jewish citizens. The effect on Frank's life was sudden and stark. He was ejected from his official position, and saw his entire life—both professional and personal—constricted. By 1937, his enterprises had begun to disappear, the result of Nazi "trusteeship" and then in 1939 under straight-forward "Aryanization." He was eventually required to wear a yellow star on his clothing, to move from his home with his wife into a so-called "Judenhaus", an over-crowded collective house, a sort of miniature ghetto. He was only spared from deportation and death by being in a mixed marriage with a Lutheran woman, and just barely at that.

After the war ended, Frank's life changed again. Under the Soviet occupation and then the German Democratic Republic, he was the first Chair of the re-founded Jewish religious community, the *Gemeinde*. He occupied an official role with the Trade and

Industry Chamber, not very unlike his old position as a trade judge. He was recognized by the new regime as an official victim of the Nazis, no insignificant distinction, coming as it did with a pension. He served as the Chair of the *Gemeinde* until Spring of 1953, when, after a purge of the *Gemeinde* by Communist authorities, he resigned. He was allowed to stay as Honorary Chair for a year, and then was expelled from the *Gemeinde*. He fled the country in 1955, and the government revoked his standing as a victim of the Nazis a year later.

Frank's story begins to display to us the relationship between the radically different states in Germany in the 20th century and their implications for Jews. Frank went from being a respected businessman and public official, to a despised and endangered enemy of the state, to a civic leader with the respect and assistance of the state, to its enemy, obliged ultimately to leave his home in his eighth decade of life. It is obvious that it was bad for Jews to live under the Nazis. What is less obvious is the way German and Jewish life change along with the different visions of the German state. This study will suggest some starting points for an understanding of the German-Jewish experience that reflects this longer view, and that offers us in the process a clearer appreciation of the patterns and discontinuities within and between the different historical versions of the German state in the twentieth century. Before doing so, it is appropriate to consider a few aspects of the existing literature, and where this work fits.

1. A "special path" for Germany?

The enduring debate about the nature of the German state is centered on the concept of a *Sonderweg*, a special path that Germany has taken, departing from an ostensibly "normal" European development. As developed by Hans-Ulrich Wehler, in

The German Empire, 1871-1918, this thesis emphasizes the distinctive nature of German unification in 1871, its alleged close ties to the conservative land-holding class personified by Prince Otto von Bismarck. According to this interpretation, liberal middle classes failed to plant the seeds of representative government and progress and the course of the Hohenzollern Empire was negatively affected as a result, leading in part to German involvement in the First World War. Wehler's image of the Empire is an inherently un-modern model, leaving the Germans more vulnerable to fascism when the time came. When a Republic finally arrived, it represented a revolutionary change and suffered as a result.

This outlook has been challenged over time, notably by Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn. Eley and Blackbourn take exception to the notion of a "normal" European development, from which Germany presumably strayed. They reject the image of the German bourgeoisie as marginalized and ineffective, and argue that German middle classes got most of what they wanted with German unification in 1871, and that indeed, the Bismarckian revolution should be thought of as a "progressive" one, taking more into account than just a narrow focus on representative government. From this perspective, there is nothing really "un-modern" about Germany's empire, and assumptions that a Republic represented a radical shift from the Empire, leaving the door open to a more "German" and less "modern" fascism, are problematized.

Detlev Peukert also challenged Wehler's notions of modernity and discontinuity. Looking at the *Weimar Republic*, Peukert clearly assumed that Republic was a modernizing regime, wracked by internal contradictions, an image not terribly different from Peter Gay's classic *Weimar Culture*. Like Eley and Blackbourn, Peukert insisted on

a broader agenda for modernization than only democratic politics, and traced a process of modernization from the Empire through the Republic. There is more continuity in this model than in Wehler's, to be sure.

But Peukert went further with his study *Inside Nazi Germany*. Here, he dismantled the assumption that the Third Reich was a decisive break with a modernizing trend. Despite National Socialism's declared war on the modern world, Peukert shows convincingly that the Nazi regime was a vigorously modernizing state, incorporating ideas about industrial and social organization in an effort to produce its own revolution, no less ambitious in its goals for being based on racialism. Wehler, Blackbourn and Eley and Peukert combine to produce a complicated picture of a German state coming to terms with the challenges of political, social and economic change.

The image that emerges is one that shows more points of continuity than division in the themes of German political culture. This study shares that perspective. The concerns that German Jews shared in the Republic, the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic were surprisingly similar, as will be made clear below. Questions over membership in a German community, divisions between rich and poor Jews, German- and foreign-born, Zionists and anti- Zionists—these were present over the whole of the period under consideration. From that viewpoint, it seems clear that many of the basic issues of German Jewish life were consistent.

But we can only go so far in this direction, of course. For all that there were important commonalities in the Jewish experience in Leipzig in the 20th century, there is no denying how radically different it was to be Jews under the Nazi state than under the Republic. And, though there are points of comparison to be made between the Third

Reich and the Communist state that followed it, the latter clearly represented a very different time to be a German Jew than either the Republic or Nazi regime.

I argue that in each regime, the discussion among German Jews and between German Jews and the state was driven by the same set of questions. Those questions were posed in very different ways over time and were given different answers as circumstances demanded. But the questions—in short, about identity—were largely the same throughout. And, though the German states behaved in very different ways over time, we can even point to a shared sort of strategy. In every case, the leaders of the German state used Jews to make an argument for their own legitimacy and self-definition. Whether a Republic devoted to civic equality, or a racial dictatorship defining itself in opposition to Jews, or a communist regime building its legitimacy as a representative of the victims and opponents of Nazism—and on the goodwill of the Soviet Union—every German state had a discursive relationship with Jews that was important to it. In turn, that discursive relationship did much to define the exercise of concrete power in the lives of Jews.

A study that covers each of these regimes can be better placed to draw out such continuities—when appropriate—than one that focuses on one, or even two periods of modern German political history. Clearly, there is an ideological component to some of this debate, centered on the identification of the middle classes with liberalism and representative government. Some of this debate is outdated, as was made clear by Peukert's innovative work, which moves beyond issues of class into those of culture and identity. Detlev Peukert's work is an influence on this study in that shift of emphasis, but where Peukert was drawn to examine a more general picture of German society, this

study focuses on Jews and their governments. And, where all of the above efforts take a national view, this one is focused on a particular city.

2. The significance of Leipzig

Local studies of German society during the 20th century constitute a rich literature. They range a great deal, from the political history of William Sheridan Allen's *Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1922-1945,* to the examination of the effects of industrialization in David Crew's *Town in the Ruhr: A Social History of Bochum, 1860-1914*, to the recent dramatic recounting of the Blood Libel in the town of Konitz by Helmut Walser Smith's *Butcher's Tale*. Through such studies, we can go beneath the general—though valuable—assertions of broader surveys. In so doing, we can affirm what is found at the national level, or problematize it, as Walser's work has required us to re-imagine the durability of "pre-modern" versions of Jew-hatred.

Of course, this is a work of Jewish history as well as of German history, and local studies of Jewish life have enabled us to examine the major issues of Jewish and German history in a different light. In Berlin alone, there is a wealth of work ranging from an examination of the intimacies of discrimination in *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden : Ausgrenzung und Selbstbehauptung 1933-1942,* by Hazel Rosenstrauch, to the history of Jewish salons in *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* by Deborah Hertz, to the memories of a expatriate Jewish Berliner in Peter Gay's *My German Question: Growing up in Nazi Berlin*. There is a similar, though less developed literature for other German cities, notably Frankfurt and Hamburg.[1]

[1] In Hamburg alone, works range from Ina Lorenz' monograph *Identität und Assimilation: Hamburgs Juden in der Weimarer Republik*, Hamburg, 1989, to her source collection *Die Juden in Hamburg zur Zeit*

But there is much less of a developed literature for the city of Leipzig, and it deserves one. Leipzig was different from the other big cities, not least because its Jewish population was so overwhelmingly foreign-born by the 1930s. This is very different from the other big cities, with the exception of Berlin, where, like Leipzig, many local Jews had been born in Poland and other eastern locales. Leipzig is also different from the other major centers of Jewish life in Germany in that its 20th century saw Empire, Republic, Nazi rule, and the German Democratic Republic.[2] Again, the only parallel is with Berlin, but that city is so much larger as to present other difficulties. With Leipzig, the Jewish community, though large, is small enough to make larger claims about the entire group. In Berlin, such claims are properly limited to neighborhoods or particular classes.

The most important work in local Jewish history for Leipzig is largely contained in a single volume: 1994's *Judaica Lipsiensia : zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, edited by Manfred Unger.[3] This collection offers essays by scholars on topics ranging from the earliest presence of Jews in the city through the period of the German Democratic Republic. It is an excellent resource, but no substitute for a monograph-length study of Jewish life in the 20th century. Other work includes Steffen Held's study of the local Jewish Community, the *Gemeinde*, after 1945.[4] Held's work is invaluable to an understanding of Jewish life in Leipzig, but editorial control is given to the Board of

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der Weimarer Republik : eine Dokumentation, Hamburg, 1987, to the personal narrative provided by Ingeborg Hecht in *Invisible Walls: a German Family under the Nuremberg Laws*, San Diego, 1985.

[2] The literature on East German Jewish communities is much less developed than that in the west. There are commemorative volumes available, like *Juden in Chemnitz: Ein Buch zur Geschichte der Gemeinde und ihrer Mitglieder mit einer Dokumentation des jüdischen Friedhofs*, Dresden, 2002, and Adolph Diamont's *Chronik der Juden in Dresden. Von den ersten Juden bis zur Blüte der Gemeinde und deren Ausrottung*, Darmstadt, 1973, but a critical literature is slow in coming in the former GDR.

[3] M. Unger [Hrsg.], *Judaica Lipsiensia. Zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, Leipzig, 1994.

[4] Steffen Held, *Zwischen Tradition und Vermächtnis. Die Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig nach 1945*, Hamburg, 1995.

Directors of the *Gemeinde*, and the book is, frankly, not very critical of that body at some crucial moments.

3. Themes in Jewish and German history

This is a very broad topic, certainly. Its parameters are beyond an introduction like this. But of all the various arenas for debate around Jewish history, a few suggest themselves as being especially relevant to this discussion. One is the relationship between German-born and foreign-born Jews. Trude Maurer's book on Eastern Jews[5] lays out the basic issues of tension between more assimilated and usually Reform-oriented Jews on the one hand, and more proletarian, eastern-born Jews, usually Orthodox or Zionist or both, and not all reconciled to the assimilationist vision of their German-born cousins. My dissertation consciously seeks to examine those issues in further detail.

The larger issue is that of the connection between German and Jews. Were German Jews merely outsiders? Was their story foreordained to end in disaster? Was Jew-hating a natural part of the German condition? One extreme in this debate, it seems to me, is represented by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen[6]. Though his book is not a book about German Jews, it is about their relationship with the larger community. Goldhagen essentially reads history backward from genocide, concluding that Germans were taken by a particular and vicious brand of anti-Semitism that would never allow Germans and Jews to fully integrate. A much more nuanced approach that still emphasizes the popular

[5] Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918-1933*, Hamburg, 1986.
[6] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York, 1996.

nature German anti-Semitism (though not as an exclusive cause for persecution of Jews) can be found in the work of Robert Gellately.[7]

The opposing ground is held by Christopher Browning[8] and Omer Bartov[9], who both argue for the primacy of context in the decision of actors in the genocide to perpetrate their crimes. From their perspective, there seems to be no *particular* impediment to German-Jewish integration among ordinary Germans, until the state steps in to prevent it. So, then, were German Jews hopelessly devoted to a liberal model of nationalism, that as many have noted (George Mosse, Walter Laqueur) was changing to a more virulent and exclusionary model, or were they well-integrated into German life?

No historian of the holocaust can ignore the realities of the expulsion of the Jews from German life, but that does not mean that the expulsion was pre-ordained. As will become clear over the course of this study, its sympathies are with Browning and Bartov, and historians like Amos Elon[10], whose work evokes the lost world of German Jewry without the assumption that the dream of assimilation was foolish or wicked. From that perspective, the actions of integrationist Jews like those studied here gain a new power. The power to build and define their community was certainly undone from 1933-1945. That does not mean that Jewish agency in doing so was always illusionary. As Elon and others show, the crucial determinant was not a long history of German Jew-hatred, but the form and intent of the German state.

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[7] Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*. Oxford, 2001.
[8] Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York, 1992.
[9] Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity*. New York and Oxford, 2000. While Browning sets his explanatory model squarely in the contingencies of war and masculine group dynamics, Bartov goes somewhat further afield, using literature and film to situate twentieth century genocide in the context of utopian politics throughout Europe. Though the reliance on literary sources is not unproblematic, this study is probably most sympathetic to Bartov's insistence on the importance of utopian ideals and their presence outside of Germany.
[10] Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743-1933*, New York, 2002.

4. The German Democratic Republic

The historical literature about the German Democratic Republic is of course somewhat less developed than that around German history more generally, or around the Holocaust. Part of this is due to the fact that access to the archives in the former East only opened after the end of the SED regime. As those archives have opened, a wealth of new scholarship has appeared, and the central question to arise has been that of the nature of the East German dictatorship. Was it merely a continuation of existing tendencies toward authoritarianism in Germany (a kind of echo of the "*Sonderweg*" thesis)? Did it have any legitimacy beyond the presence of the Red Army? Was it a totalitarian regime?

The main scholars on the GDR before the fall of the Wall were, of necessity, working in a Cold War atmosphere, and it is not surprising that the leading figure, David Childs, strongly emphasized the role of the Russians in imposing the SED system in East Germany. His *GDR: Moscow's German Ally*[11] is a portrait of a dictatorship in no real contact with its people. His more recent work, like *The Fall of the GDR*[12], also follows this theme of a regime with few ties to its people, a foreign state whose fall was hardly a surprise.

But more recent work has generally had to take into account the continuing affection of many in the East for aspects of life under the former regime. This tendency, called *Ostalgie*, can be seen in movies like *Sonnenallee* and *Goodbye Lenin!*, Eastern-themed bars, and internet sites selling GDR-flavored kitsch. It can be seen rather more seriously in the continued viability of the successor party of the SED, the Party of Democratic Socialism, in electoral politics. Even taking into allowance the

[11] David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*, New York, 1983.
[12] David Childs, *The Fall of the GDR: Germany's Road to Unity*. Harlow, 2001.

understandable fondness for memories of full employment and lifetime social security in a place that is now notably lacking in either, this warmth begs explanation, and certainly problematizes the image of the GDR as a foreign-imposed, totalitarian regime.

In response, scholars like Mary Fulbrook have begun to consider the ties between the GDR and its citizens, and have found a regime that is not very like the Nazi dictatorship in some important ways.[13] Fulbrook finds more room for opposition to the regime—and negotiation with it—than might have been expected, certainly more than is reflected in the work of David Childs. The regime had a long life, after all, especially compared to the Third Reich, and went through more permutations. For instance, she identifies the role of Erich Honecker in reducing tensions between people and state and moving toward some sort of integration between the two. These dynamics changed over time, then, not what one would expect from a totalitarian regime with no legitimacy other than a foreign garrison, or from a society naturally given to dictatorship. The question of how the SED integrated itself with the people of East Germany is not entirely clear here, however.

This move toward a more complicated understanding of life under the SED regime has been reflected in the literature on East German Jews, too. Mario Keßler's work, emphasizes a top-down model of authority in which Jews operated with no more autonomy than they would in any other "authoritarian" regime.[14] More recent research by scholars like Lothar Mertens[15] and Jay Geller[16] sees more agency for Jews, varying greatly over time and the stage and needs of the SED regime. This work is influenced by

[13] Mary Fulbrook. *Divided Nation: A History of Germany 1918-1990*, New York, 1992.
[14]See especially Mario Keßler, *Die SED und die Juden – zwischen Repression und Toleranz. Politische Entwicklungen bis 1967*, Berlin, 1995, (Zeithistorische Studien, Bd. 6).
[15] Lothar Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel. Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ/DDR und ihre Behandlung durch Partei und Staat 1945-1990*, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York, 1997.
[16] Jay Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945–1953*, Cambridge, 2005.

these studies that see more autonomy and political life among East German Jews, but focuses more than they do on the goals of the state and the particular significance of forms of the state over time.

Jeffrey Herf's book *Divided Memory*[17] is in some ways the most important predecessor to and influence on my study. Like Geller, for whom Herf's work is also clearly influential, Herf examines post-war Germany from both East and West, and comes to the conclusion—among others—that in both East and West the state saw Jews as a sort of organizing and rhetorical tool. In both postwar German republics, a relationship with German Jews, good or bad, was a way to lay claim to political legitimacy, a way to integrate themselves with their constituencies.

4. The German State and German Jews

My study accepts this assertion as a starting point, and not only in discussing the Federal and Democratic Republics. In the case of the Weimar Republic, openness to Jews was an important part of how the republic defined itself. Certainly, for the Nazis, opposition to Jews was a crucial part of who they were, and was an important tool for binding itself to its core following. The same is true, in a different way, for the SED. Jews were used by East German Communists as rhetorical devices, as symbols. Before the early 1950s they were useful props for attacking the west and for associating the SED with opposition to the Nazis, and so Jews were brought out for commemorations that bolstered the claims of the regime to authority. But as time went on, the party had to tend to other constituencies, and this meant Moscow. A wave of anti-Semitic activity led by Stalin had echoes in the GDR, leaving its tiny Jewish communities in shambles. Later,

[17] Jeffery Herf, *Divided Memory: the Nazi Past in the Two Germanies*. Cambridge, MA, 1999.

by the mid-1960s, Jews were again useful to the regime as "positive" support, offering affirmation of the regime's claims to moral superiority over the west. In every form of the German state in the 20th century, political leaders engaged in rhetorical strategies and concrete actions regarding Jews that were central for their self-representation and self-definition.

But, as was indicated earlier, this study argues for Jewish agency under the GDR, and this brings us to the central argument of this dissertation. One way to study Jewish life in the 20th century is to consider the varying freedom of Jews to define themselves and their relationship to the larger German nation, and this level of freedom changes in ways that reflect the comings and goings of various versions of the German state. During the Weimar period, Jewish life in Leipzig was a virtually non-stop debate, a free market of ideas and contention among Jews. The big questions were all on the table: Am I Jewish or German? Is there a contradiction between the two? Is Zionism the answer? How important is it that I was born in Germany or not? Whether I am Orthodox or Reform? Jewish life during the Republic was defined by contention among and between Jews, and a more or less free agency among them to define their place in German life.

The debates of the Weimar period came to an abrupt end beginning in 1933. The Nazi regime quickly and forcefully took all choice out of the hands of Jews. Whether they were Zionist or assimilationist, Reform or Orthodox, religious or secular soon became quite irrelevant. The Nazi had their own ideas about the Jews, their own definitions, and imposed them in the most brutal possible way. Questions for Jews no longer concerned now-fanciful ideals like nationality and identity, but mere survival, and many in Leipzig did not survive.

Those who did and returned saw a greater freedom of movement after 1945, under the Soviet Administration (SMAD) and the young (from October, 1949) German Democratic Republic. For the first years of the GDR, Jews had a more or less cooperative relationship with the state. Many Jewish leaders were true-believing communists, and shared the announced goal of a proletarian state that would move beyond religious difference. Even so, these same leaders became involved in reviving the pre-war Jewish organizations, and worked to move toward a synthesis of Jewish and German and Communist identity.

But the East German state changed in important ways over time, and this is what made it different from the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. At times, the GDR regime was more or less repressive, more or less closely tied to the whims of Moscow, more or less likely to allow Jews to find their own way. At all times, Jews were rhetorically useful to East Berlin, but sometimes had more freedom than at others to forge their own identity. So, in the context of rebellion and Stalinist anti-Semitism in 1953, the state cracked down, accusing East German Jewish leaders (quite baselessly) of Zionism. It matters that this was the charge—East German Jews were accused of wanting to opt out of the emerging community of the GDR, even though they were not Zionists.

And so, debate among Jews, contention about who they were and where they belonged in East Germany was shut down, but not forever. After the death of Stalin and the easing of tensions after the June 1953 East Berlin uprising, Jews in Leipzig went back to a way of doing business that looked much more like Weimar than was to be expected. As early as 1954, Jews in Leipzig were engaged in rigorous debate over who would lead the community, and over what being a good Jew meant. This varied over time, as Jews

had less room to move in some periods—like 1967, when hostility against Israel in the Socialist Block reached a peak—than in others, like the 1980s.[18] After 1989, we will see briefly that—though a world has changed since the Weimar Republic—the crucial determinant of the state and its form and intentions has come back in some important ways to its starting point in 1933. Just as the different forms of the German state found Jews valuable as rhetorical and symbolic devices in defining themselves, those German states went far in determining the level of freedom of Jews to define themselves. Jews in Leipzig today are free, more or less, to imagine what it means to be a Jew and a German, to argue between native-born and foreign-born, Orthodox and Reform. This is a case study in the importance of politics, the intent of the state, and the power of people to live their lives in differing visions of different Germanies.

[18] Geller emphasizing this ebb and flow of Jewish agency during the East German regime, but he attaches it more to patronage politics by the most important Jewish leaders. This study focuses a bit less on institutional give-and-take than Geller, looking more closely at efforts by individuals and groups to run their own lives in the context of differing state forms.

Chapter 1: "no uniform community"

There had been Jews in the city of Leipzig since at least 1349, when, during a plague, Jews were accused of having poisoned the wells, and they were "expelled, killed, and to a large degree brought to disaster." By 1698, conditions for Jews in the city, now dependant on an international commercial fair, had improved to the point that the Saxon King Friedrich August I gave his imprimatur to private religious services for "Messejuden", Jews in town for the trade fairs. Gerd Levi, a Jewish trader with interests in Leipzig, was given the right of residence in the city, the first Jew so privileged; his sons and grandsons followed suit. In 1767, one of the sons of Herz Jacob, also a trader, enrolled at the University of Leipzig.[19]

Between 1688 and 1764, 81,937 Jews visited the great Leipzig fairs, contributing 719,661 Reichsthalers in the punitive "*Leibzoll*" body taxes. This suggests a relationship between greater privileges for Jews in the city and the importance of their presence to the trade fairs and therefore to the fiscal well-being of the city and the Saxon state. Indeed, this is a theme that will resurface over and over again—the local authorities in Leipzig frequently extended a bit more compassion to Jews at times when their presence was perceived to make a difference around the institution of the trade fairs. At any rate, by the beginning of the 19th century, Jews in Leipzig and Saxony were tolerated more or less in direct proportion to their value to the state treasury.

Outside of a privileged and useful few, though, Jews were in no enviable position in Saxony, which lagged behind most of the other German states in emancipation. It was

[19] *Juden in Sachsen: Ihr Leben und Leiden*, Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit Dresden, e.V., Leipzig, 1994. 9-13.

only in 1837 that religious communities in Leipzig and Dresden could be founded under state auspices, and the same year, the Saxon Crown Prince petitioned the *Landtag* for emancipation for the Jews, saying "With all attention to public opinion, I must intercede on behalf of the Jews. I believe we are responsible for the Jews as humans and as fellow citizens. I have no different sympathy for the Jews than for all of my fellow men."[20] Though the tone is one of personal political courage and risk, its context—years after the Napoleonic liberation of the Jews and the 1812 Prussian Emancipation edict—lends that tone a degree of disingenuousness.

The heir's protestations notwithstanding, formal equality did not come for the Jews of Saxony until 1866, with the creation of the North German Federation, and the consequent regularization of domestic statutes.[21] Christians of Jewish heritage had a slightly easier time of it to be sure, as shown in the career of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. The great composer and grandson of Moses Mendelssohn was also conductor of the city's *Gewandhaus* orchestra from 1835 to his death in 1847, and founded the city's music conservatory.

1837 was the beginning of a decade-long process of founding a Jewish religious community, or *Gemeinde*, in Leipzig. Finally, on June 1, 1847, thirty-three Jewish Leipzigers met in the home of the kosher butcher to elect a *Vorstand*, or board of directors. A flaw in the election necessitated a new vote, which was taken on June 23rd.[22] By 1838, there were 162 Jews resident in Leipzig; in 1839 the first Jew was granted Saxon citizenship. In 1855, the *Gemeinde* built a synagogue, and in 1864 a cemetery. By

[20] Ibid., 13.
[21] Solvejg Höppner & Manfred Jahn, *Jüdische Vereine und Organisationen in Chemnitz, Dresden und Leipzig 1918 bis 1933. Ein Überblick*. Dresden 1997, 7.
[22] Steffen Held, "Schalom: 150 Jahre Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig", in *Leipziger Blätter*, 37, Fall, 1997. 34.

1871, the year of unification, there were 1739 Jews living in Leipzig; nine years later, there were 3179. By 1925, there were 12,594 Jews in the city. There was a new cemetery in 1928, and by 1931 there were 14 Jewish houses of worship.[23] Clearly, there was a major boom in the Jewish population in the last part of the 19th century, as Leipzig went from a small and legally marginalized community to the sixth largest in Germany. What had happened? Like Berlin, Leipzig was the beneficiary of a massive immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe.

Arrivals from the East

Jews from the East had been among the first and most important initiators of Jewish life in the city. The most significant were those from the East Galician city of Brody. It was at the behest of Jews of Brody, in town for the trade fair, that the city gave its sanction in 1813 for a Jewish cemetery in the city. As the German-born population grew, especially in the wake of the Prussian occupation of Saxony after the Napoleonic wars, the division between German and foreign-born became one of the deciding facts of life in Leipzig. In 1820, the first synagogue was built in Leipzig, and it was a Reform temple. The division between German and foreign Jews—present from the early 19th century—was also a division over religion, since the Brody Jews and others from the East were overwhelmingly Orthodox. It was a division, too, between ideals of assimilation into German society—the core value of German Reform Jews—and an attachment to a particular Jewish identity.

Saxon law toward Jews was different from that in Prussia. Saxon Jewish communities were "Unity" communities. This meant that all Jews had to belong, and

[23] *Juden in Sachsen: Ihr Leben und Leiden*, 30.

since the community had been founded by German-born Reform Jews, foreign-born orthodox Jews were obliged to pay taxes to support a temple and a style of worship they did not endorse.[24] It would be some time before an Orthodox temple was founded, and some time later before it gained support from the *Gemeinde*.

"Germans" and "Foreigners"

The wave of immigration in the 19th century, and the resulting demographic facts of life defined the Jewish community in Leipzig right up to the beginning of the Nazi period. The essential and continuing division within the community was between "Germans" and "foreigners", those whose families had been resident in Leipzig for several generations and those who had come from abroad, and whose numbers were greatly increased in the great wave of "*Ostjuden*". Leipzig was by no means unique in this conflict but was unusual in the relative makeup of the community. Like all Jews in German cities, Leipzigers dealt with the divisions between assimilation and particularism, secularism and public religiosity, Reform and Orthodoxy. What set Leipzig apart was the ratio of foreign-born to German-born Jews: by 1925, 68% of the Jewish population of Leipzig was foreign-born.[25] In comparison, 19.6% of the Jewish population of Frankfurt was foreign-born, 10.9% in Königsberg, 8.6% in Breslau. Saxony as a whole had a foreign-born Jewish population much smaller in proportion than Leipzig did, only 22.2%.[26] This made Leipzig unique among mid-sized German Jewish communities. Only Berlin had a similar ratio.

[24] Held, *Schalom*, 33-34.
[25] Höppner and Jahn, 9.
[26] Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland, 1918-1933*. Hamburg, 1986. 76.

Felix Goldmann, who was the Reform "*Gemeinderabbiner*" or chief Rabbi of the community through most of the 20th century until his death in 1934[27], had this to say about the divisions between "Germans" and "foreigners": "Leipzig in the second half of the 19th century was no uniform community in the sense of an intellectual and Jewish communality, but rather solely a large aggregation of Jews that wanted to form a single unit not at all. And up to the current day only little has changed on that score."[28] This is no exaggeration; attitudes about religious, cultural and political differences divided the community into separate worlds. The foreigners claimed that they were discriminated against, and it is difficult to refute the charge: until 1884, no Jew who had immigrated, or whose parents had, could hold *Gemeinde* membership. Even after that, when "foreigners" could vote in *Gemeinde* elections, 25 of the 33 board seats were reserved for native members.[29]

Fred Grubel was a lawyer in Leipzig and a leader in the Jewish community there until dismissed from the bar by the Nazis in 1933. He became director of the taxation department of the Gemeinde in 1934, moving on to become Administrative Director, which role he held until his emigration in early 1939. He went on to become the Assistant to the Director of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York in 1966, taking over the Directorship in 1968.[30] He put it this way: "Heated controversy ruled Jewish life within the legal framework of the *Israelitische Religionsgemeinde* of Leipzig." Rich and poor; German and Polish; reform and Orthodox; Zionists and assimilationists; new divisions like those between communists and nationalist war veterans—a myriad of communities

[27] StAL PP-V 4441 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on "Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig" 1934-36, 28 September, 1934.
[28] Höppner and Jahn, 6.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Correspondence with Viola Voss of the Archival Department at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, April 27, 2005.

existed under one roof.[31] The Leipzig Jewish community was about as divided as it could be, according to Goldmann and Grubel. But this division reflected a real freedom of self-definition for Jews in Leipzig. The debates between different versions of what a Jew in Leipzig was, what he or she ought to be, were much more likely to happen in a free environment.

The divisions between the "Germans" and the "foreigners", or "Russians" as they were sometimes called, never went away entirely; even as late as the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, one reads of assimilated Jews bemoaning the effects of the foreign-looking *Ostjuden* on Jewish/German relations. The complaints of foreign-born Jews about their assimilated and frequently more-wealthy neighbors were enduring ones, too. However, the admission of non-German born Jews to the board of directors of the *Gemeinde* was an important symbol of an increasing equity—or at least respectability—within the community for foreign-born Jews.

An important and symbolic figure for this change was the eminent Orthodox Rabbi Ephraim Carlebach. Carlebach arrived in Leipzig from Berlin in 1900. His work in establishing schools and the Orthodox role in communal life ended with his emigration to Israel in 1936. He was a leading figure in the construction of the first Orthodox school, the *Höhere Israelitische Schule* [the Jewish High School], and the major Orthodox synagogue, Ez-Chaim. In between, he had emerged as a revered figure among all sectors of Jewish society in Leipzig, honored with the title of *Gemeinderabbiner*, equal to the leading Reform Rabbi in the city,[32] and the namesake today of a leading institution devoted to Judaic studies in Leipzig. His appointment as *Gemeinderabbiner* in 1924,

[31] "Leipzig: Profile of a Jewish Community during the first years of Nazi Germany" by Fred Grubel and Frank Mecklenburg, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* XLII 1997, 160.
[32] Ephraim-Carlebach –Stiftung, *Leipziger Jüdisches Jahr-und Adressbuch 1933*, 72.

after two decades teaching at the "private" Talmud-Thorah, was a crucial step in integrating the community.[33] By establishing a paid and official position for an Orthodox Rabbi, the *Gemeinde* made an important to gesture to foreign-born Jews that they were a valued part of the community.

Ephraim Carlebach is a symbolic figure, too, in his ability to move beyond the old divisions of the community: the Orthodox rabbi whose constituency was overwhelmingly foreign-born was feted by the cream of German-born society when he left, with people turned away from the synagogue for his farewell service. The man who went to Palestine to live out his days had been a member of the *Centralverein der Deutschen Staatsbürger des jüdischen Glaubens*, an assimilationist group devoted to defending the position of Jews as good German citizens, since 1926.[34] Carlebach's life and connections point out that the Jewish community of Leipzig was an increasingly interactive group by the later Weimar period. The situation was complex. German-born and foreign; rich and poor; assimilationist and Zionist, all combined to form one of the most varied and sometimes divided communities of Jews in Germany. Sometime the same people were members of apparently opposed groups—references to Orthodox foreign-born Jews were to be found in the records of meetings of the assimilationist CV, for instance. Surely we can expect similar variety of opinion within the community as a whole.

This fluidity of boundaries between groups in Jewish Leipzig was a sign in the Weimar Republic of the distinctive freedom of that age. The Republic was founded on

[33] Grubel and Mecklenburg, 160.
[34] StAL, PP-V 4437, Polizeipräsidiums Leipzig file on "*Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig*", 1935-38, 47.

notions of pluralism and liberty, not least for Jews.[35] The boundaries between groups of Jewish Leipzigers—and the freedom to negotiate those boundaries—would collapse in the Nazi period, because that state was founded on radically different notions of community and identity.

Jewish Publications

A number of Jewish publications aimed at various audiences were produced in Leipzig, and a glance through their pages offers clues to the themes that bound together Jewish Leipzig, just as much as their differences illustrated what divided that community. The "*Zeitschrift des Hilfsvereins israelitischer Gewerbetreibender und für die Interessen des Judentums*" [the Magazine of the Aid Society of Jewish Tradesman and for the interest of Jewry], which appeared for the first time in 1913, was [as the title indicated] a journal for craftsmen and a general interest publication, including advertisements for the Reform and Orthodox synagogues, Carlebach's *Höhere Israelitische Schule*, and the young Zionists' league.[36]

A few years later, the "*Mitteilungen des Hilfsvereins russischer Juden*" appeared. This was the organ of a local Jewish group dedicated to aiding refugees from Galicia and Russia, as the name suggests. The mission statement expresses humanitarian goals: "above all, we must reach an accord with the government to make it possible to ease the path for those among the army of unemployed who have relatives in America. Thus, we

[35] Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution guaranteed equality of all citizens. Article 135 guaranteed freedom of religious practice. Both Peter Gay, in *Weimar Culture: the Outsider as Insider*, New York, 1978, and Donald Niewyk, in *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, New Brunswick, 2001, make the point that liberalism was the bond that held German Jews to the new Republic.

[36] StAL, PP-P 147: Zeitschrift des Hilfsvereins israelitischer Gewerbetreibender und für die Interessen des Judentums, for January 9, 1913.

will help a considerable portion of the homeless."[37] It is perhaps worth noting that the main goal of this organization was not to help Russian Jews settle in Leipzig, but to ease their way out of town to the emigration ports.

A few years later, the "*Allgemeines Jüdisches Familienblatt* [the General Jewish Family Paper]" (incorporating "*Leipziger Jüdisches Familienblatt*" (in its 70th year) and "*Leipziger Jüdische Zeitung*"), an explicitly general-interest journal, devoted the front page of its first issue to a pending visit by the president of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, Nahum Sokolov. Sokolov was invited by the Zionist League of Leipzig, and was to be greeted by "the most prominent Jewish personalities in the city." A notice for a travel agent advertised "Forwarding and Removal to Palestine". There was also an article on "The German Jewess in Palestine", and an ad for Jarco Munda beauty salon, which reminded readers that "permanent waves are recommended: good for travel."[38] This shows us that the division between "Zionist" and "German" was not as wide as it might seem (this was a general-interest, long-standing German language periodical, devoting much of its capacity to a positive discussion of Zionist leadership) and that there was support for (or at least consideration of) Zionism outside of the ranks of Orthodox, foreign-born Jews.

At least a benign neutrality toward Zionism can also be seen in children's periodicals. The "*Jüdische Kinder-Zeitung*" [Jewish Children's Newspaper] from June, 1926 offered parables about traditional German heroes Max and Moritz and ads for piano lessons, standard fare for Jews who aspired to membership in the German middle classes. However, it also featured a section "von Onkel Musja", which offered the words to

[37] StAL PP-P 149: "Mitteilungen des Hilfsvereins russischer Juden", first issue.
[38] StAL PP-P 152: "Allgemeines Jüdisches Familienblatt", first issue.

several songs in Hebrew. Searching out these lyric sheets, or the lessons in Hebrew offered elsewhere in the magazine, did not mean that the readers were die-hard Zionists, but it is clear that a complicated relationship to Jewishness, Germanness and Zionism was very much a part of the mainstream of Jewish life in Leipzig during the Weimar republic.

A sketch of the community

The high point of Jewish life in Leipzig—in numbers, influence and freedom—was the Weimar period, when Jews comprised 1.8% of the total population of the city, or 12,594 souls. Of those who were in the work force, 41.3% described themselves as "*Kaufmann*", a vague category that encompasses everything from street peddlers to haute bourgeoisie; 35.5% described themselves as "*Angestellte und Beamte*" [employees and officials]; 10.2% claimed status as members of "*Freie und akademische Berufe*" [professionals]; 9.8% were artisans, and only 3.2% of Leipzig's Jews described themselves as workers, with over a third of those working in the fur district on the Brühl avenue, and the bulk of those of Eastern European descent.[39] Only 4.2% of Leipzigers as a whole worked in the fur industry, but 8.7% of Jewish Leipzigers did. The Brühl was an emblem of Jewish economic activity in Leipzig, and of the city as a whole (later, in the early 1950s, newspapers would hail the return of Leipzig's status as a "fur city", albeit without any reference to the former leaders of that industry).

Compared with the general population of the city, the Jewish population was much less represented in heavy industry, with 23% of the working population, versus 47.6% of the city as a whole [with 45,591 in machine manufacture alone], and a slightly

[39] Kerstin Plowinski, "Die jüdische *Gemeinde* Leipzigs auf dem Höhepunkt ihrer Existenz. Zur Berufs- und Sozialstruktur um das Jahr 1925", in Manfred Unger, ed., *Judaica Lipsiensa: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*. Leipzig: 1994. 80-81.

higher percentage of Jews than of the general population worked in the free professions. In comparison to another German city with a comparable Jewish population, Hamburg, Leipzig Jews comprised a slightly higher percentage of the city's population, many more of them were foreign born, and a greater proportion of the Jewish was work force devoted to trade than in Hamburg, where finance was more important.[40]

Jewish Leipzigers were not just employees, of course; they were also entrepreneurs, and some of the most important in town. As in other major German cities, department stores were the archetypal "Jewish business", and in fact, the most heavily patronized of the stores in town were owned by Jews. The Ury brothers' store was the most popular, attracting customers from the turn of the century to their place on the *Roßplatz*.[41] Walter Ury was active in the integrationist Centralverein.[42] Bamberger and Hertz was a top of the line men's shop, opened in 1912 as an extension of the Bamberger family business founded in Worms in 1876. The store was in the *Königsbau*, originally the site of the Saxon King's Leipzig residence and one of the most prominent locations on the city's central *Augustusplatz*.[43]

The Held brothers, Moritz and Albert, moved to town in 1906, the sons of a retailer from Külsheim in Baden. They opened their first business in that year, and expanded to a larger store in Lindenfeld, the workers' quarter, in 1913. The Helds were exemplary leaders in the community, active in Jewish and general charities. They offered free meals for the unemployed, established special funds for deserving employees, and offered donations regularly to Jewish orphans and students. In 1933, Albert became chair

[40] Ibid., 85-6.
[41] Andrea Lorz, *Suchtet der Stadt Bestes: Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer aus Leipzig*, 1996: Pro Leipzig, 26.
[42] StAL PP-V 4506: Akten des PP-Leipzig Kulturbund Deutscher Juden. 22 October, 1935.
[43] Lorz, 44.

of the *Israelitische Wohltätigskeitverein* [Jewish Charity League]. The Helds were not just philanthropists, though. They were active and assertive in their business lives, too, and when their store was hit by fire in 1926, and their insurance carrier balked at payment, the brothers sued and were successful.[44]

The most important Jewish department store owner, in civic terms, was probably Samuel Hodes, whose longevity and devotion to the *Gemeinde* were responsible for his being called the leading Orthodox personality in town.[45] Born in 1856 in Lithuania to a religious bureaucratic family, Hodes came to Leipzig in 1887. His store, nicknamed the "*Große Feuerkugel*" [the big fireball], in honor of the magnificent baroque building (since destroyed) in the heart of the inner city where it stood, sold clothing. The store was successful for many years, but the place of Hodes within the community—he was so popular that he needed to take out an ad in the Community Newspaper to thank all the well-wishers on his 80th birthday[46]—was established by his activity within it. He was a member of the emergency aid society and the charity union, and a director of Talmud-Thora school, the Jewish hospital, and the B'nai B'rith Lodge. He took the lead in providing for the establishment of the great Ez Chaim Orthodox synagogue, and would continue to provide for the temple as long as he could. Hodes is an important symbolic figure, too, as one of the first eight foreign-born and Orthodox members of the *Gemeinde* board of directors, elected in 1923.[47]

All of these businessmen were representative of different Jewish experiences. They were natives and foreign-born, Orthodox and Reform, more or less active in their

[44] Lorz, 70-74.
[45] StAL PP-V 4438, Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizei Leipzig: Israelitische Religionsgemeinde, 8 April, 1938. Report from Vorstand to Gestapo.
[46] *Gemeindeblatt der israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig*, 8 November, 1935.
[47] Lorz, 136-8, 146, 148.

community, more or less successful in business. Hodes was the preeminent figure in the Orthodox and foreign-born communities, while Walter Ury and others were dyed-in-the-wool assimilationists, a position that would cause them grief in time. They came from very different perspectives, but the overlapping nature of their professional and public lives is indicative of a similar trend in Jewish life in Leipzig. Jewish Leipzigers were growing closer together by the later Weimar period. But there were limits to this growing closeness—limits of national background, religion and politics. Those limits would only finally be overcome during the Nazi period, when a dramatic and forced unanimity became the order of the day.

Club life

The same mix of difference and commonality is seen in an examination of club life in Leipzig; the city was not immune from what *Gemeinderabbiner* Felix Goldmann called the "German vice". Goldmann asserted that the trends in clubs, or *Vereine*, "reflect the vice of Judaism to disunity, often only the result of particularism and dogmatism. Added to the Jewish sins of overweening individualism and intellectualism is the assimilationist product of the German vice of organization mania."[48] Let us briefly examine Jewish club life in Leipzig through the 1920s with an eye toward assessing how right Rabbi Goldmann was—did Jewish associations reflect disunity, particularism and dogmatism?

Leipzig Jews had the usual, expected array of associations: Zionist, assimilationist, working class, trade, religious, charitable and sport. The oldest *Verein* in the community was founded in 1840, several years before the *Gemeinde* itself:

[48] Höppner and Jahn, 10.

"*Jeschuat-Achim, Verein zur Unterstützung hilfsbedürftiger jüdischer Studenten*" [Society for the support of needy Jewish Students].[49] In the next two years, two more charitable organizations were founded. Over the course of the later 19th Century, though, many of the charitable functions of the private organizations were taken over by the *Gemeinde*.

Several organizations were founded to deal particularly with the needs of the growing immigrant and Orthodox communities[50]: the "*Talmud-Thorah Verein*" was in actuality a private synagogue, but this was a violation of the charter of the *Gemeinde,* and so the synagogue was called a *Verein* and the *Gemeinde* [and, presumably, the state] looked the other way. As the immigrant and therefore the Orthodox population grew, Talmud-Torah was followed in 1918 by Ohel-Jakob, focusing on ritual purity. Ohel-Jakob eventually opened a synagogue, as did Ez Chaim (1922), which grew under the leadership of Ephraim Carlebach to become the largest Orthodox synagogue in Saxony. The "*Jüdischer gesetzestreuen Verband*" [Jewish "true-to-the law" Association], founded in 1920, ran a ritual bath, and the Verein "Mischnajis" Leipzig (1915) declared themselves open for membership to any Jew who "*auf dem Boden des gesetzestreuen Judentum steht*" [stands on the basis of "true-to-the law" Judaism]. [51]

Clearly, these organizations were for the Orthodox community, and therefore endorse Rabbi Goldmann's claims of divisiveness based on doctrine. There were other *Vereine* that were more neutral, of course: sporting, charitable, trade groupings. Even with these, however, there is some reason to believe the Rabbi. There were seventy-nine

[49] Ibid., 23.
[50] Not all Eastern immigrants were Orthodox, of course, but there is a significant connection between the groups, as we can judge from the membership lists of Orthodox organizations. Most of the leaders of such groups were born abroad.
[51] Höppner and Jahn, 23-5.

Jewish *Vereine* during the Weimar period, including thirteen religious, eight occupational, seventeen political—of which eight were Zionist—and twelve youth groups. The last were rigidly segregated according to political outlook—there were five Zionist youth groups, two "German-liberal".[52] That split was a reflection of the deep divide in Leipzig Jewish society.

In sum, we can say that the Leipzig Jewish community in the latter stages of the Weimar period was continuing on a trajectory that it had followed from the 19th century until that point. It was growing in numbers, it was growing in institutional strength, and it seemed from much of the evidence to be growing in acceptance by the larger population of the city. Its merchants were among the most prominent in town, its religious figures were widely held in high regard, and if it was a divided community, its divisions and allegiances along organizational lines were perhaps no more egregious than that of the larger society.

But there was something different, of course, about the Jews of Leipzig compared to their gentile neighbors. The bulk of Germans never had to worry about the basic question of whether they were Germans. They did not have to ask one another, and they were not asked by anyone else. This was radically different for the Jews of Leipzig, who were obliged to ask and answer these questions on an almost daily basis. As German nationalism began to alter over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, German Jews were faced with a new set of questions. The ways they asked and answered those questions created what became the single most important division within the community: did they have a place in Germany, in the long run? Should they? The conflicts between

[52] Ibid., 24.

Zionists and anti-Zionists formed a long-lasting and bitter division, one which was solved only at the behest of the least friendly imaginable foe, the Nazis.

The role of Zionism

George Mosse argues that Zionism was a particular form of European nationalism—an older, 19th-century variety. This model is one of inclusiveness, of identity based much less on race or religion than on shared cultural identity.[53] Assimilationists shared in the basic assumptions of early German nationalism, and wanted nothing more than to join it, pinning all of their hopes on the development of just those more liberal elements of nationalism. But Zionists did not; they could not. Zionism is not a reflection of liberal nationalism: Jewish assimilationism is. Zionism is, almost by definition, a reaction to another kind of nationalism, one that was based more on exclusivity for its definition.[54] It is, in clear distinction to the integrationist model, based on a notion of community that is based on religion and common ethnic identity. It is obvious from the perspective of the present that the CV and its allies bet on the wrong horse: their vision of the nation, and their place within it, was giving way to something altogether less open and inclusive. The story that this study will pursue in examining the Nazi period is not least the story of the increasing consensus among the Jews of Leipzig that Zionism was the only useful language of national identity. This realization was made very much under the gun. The Nazis agreed with the desirability of emigration to Palestine, for a while, and the period of Nazi domination is at times a striking study of

[53] George L Mosse, *Confronting the Nation. Jewish and Western Nationalism.* 1993, Brandeis University Press: Hanover and London. 126.
[54] This is of course more true for some groups—the Revisionists—than for others. This point will be revisited below.

insistence on ideological conformity—conformity to a Zionist line. It is a fundamental goal of this study to present the malleability and broad usefulness of the language of Zionism to represent and enforce several different kinds of nationalism, with widely varying results.

The evidence here suggests the following preliminary conclusion: that the divisions between different kinds of Jews lessened over time. As the *Ostjuden* settled into the community the differences in religion and devotion to a German identity grew less and less acute, but these divisions were still present and important through the end of the Weimar period. Further, these readings suggest that Zionism became more and more a unifying factor in the mainstream of Jewish life, and less the point of contention and division that it had been and that one might expect. As time went on, and as a language of nationalism became the coin of the German realm, German Jews—those in Leipzig included—increasingly adopted a similar language to make sense of their own identity. That language was Zionism, and though it was not universally embraced, much of its rhetoric was, or at least seemed to make sense to many Leipzig Jews, whether they considered themselves Zionists or not.

It seems clear that as Leipzig Jews felt more German—both long-term residents and newer arrivals—they increasingly spoke the predominant political language of Germany, a language deeply rooted in 19th Century notions of nationality and nationalism. Therefore it is to be expected that as Jews were increasingly isolated from a German national community—as the society around them grew less hospitable in the last days of the republic and after 1933—they would speak the German political language in the only dialect allowed, that of Zionism, the Jewish variation of the new nationalism.

They thus displayed the degree to which they had become German, ironically by embracing an explicitly un-German philosophy.[55]

Zionism is of course a richly complex set of ideologies, and there are many different and competing versions of it. In Leipzig alone, there were representatives of the *Zionistische Vereinigung*, the mainstream affiliates of the World Zionist Organization, the *Poale Zion*, critical from the left of the mainstream as insufficiently attentive to the issues of the working class, and, on the right, ofState—or Revisionist —Zionists, demanding a Jewish state and harsh confrontation with the British. These groups were engaged in an ongoing debate with one another that was sometimes quite extreme. For instance, the *Poale Zion* referred to the State Zionists as "these Jewish fascists"[56] and to the *Zionistische Vereinigung* as "clerical lackeys".[57]

Zionism and the reactions to it provided the single largest point of identification within the Jewish community of Leipzig during the 1920s. Through this issue, dramas of assimilation, Orthodoxy, and class were played out in a way that everyone could understand, and as the rise of the Nazis came closer, more and more Jews turned to Zionism. The bitter divisions aroused by the debates around Zionism were a reflection of real divisions in the community. But so too was the tone of those debates—the very assumptions and language of Zionism and those who opposed it—proof of a set of shared assumptions about political culture and identity in that community. Those assumptions were largely based on an emerging language of exclusionary nationalism.

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[55] Carl Schorske, in his *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, places Theodor Herzl squarely in a context with emerging, and decidedly exclusionary, visions of nationhood. Here, too, we see Herzl, a Jew brought up in an assimilationist world, carried by a developing language of politics in Germany [writ large, to include Vienna, which is one of Schorske's points] to a position physically outside of Germany.

[56] StAL PP-V 4424, 15 May, 1933.

[57] Ibid., no date but next to clipping dated 14 May, 1925.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that questions of Zionism often broke down along lines that mirrored class, religious preference, and national origin. The first issue of a Zionist paper, "*Das jüdische Volksblatt*" declared for the SPD prior to the 1928 national elections, for instance, while decrying the "*treudeutscher*" recommendations of the "*der assimilatorischer Haltung der deutschen Juden bürgerlichen Glaubens*" [the assimilationist attitude of German Jews of the Civil Faith, a play on the old construction "German Citizens of the Jewish Faith] and the flirtations of the CV with the right-liberal German People's Party, or DVP. Similarly, the *Poale Zion* encouraged workers to support the SPD in that election, and to work toward a Jewish-socialist Palestine, but closed with a cheer for the "*Deutsche Sozialistische Republik*".[58]

There *were* middle-class Jews active in Zionism, of course: three men with doctoral degrees were on the first local board of the main Zionist organization, the "*Zionistische Vereinigung*". But that meeting also made it explicit that non German-born members were welcome, suggesting the importance of the foreign-born working class as a part of the Zionist constituency.[59] That first meeting of the local branch of the ZV was held in 1925. The signatories to the first charter promised the formation of a "*Heimstätte*" in Palestine, along the lines of the program adopted at the first World Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland. They stressed youth work, propaganda, and the development of Jewish spirit among the youth. Membership was open to any Jew over the age of 18, with voting rights at 20. There was no limit according to citizenship or place of birth.[60] As mentioned earlier, the local leaders of the ZV were as good as

[58] *LVZ*, 3 May, 1928.
[59] StAL PP-V 1339, Vereinsregister des Amtsgerichts Leipzig "Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig", 1925-33. 22 April, 1925.
[60] StAL PP-V 1339, 22 April, 1925.

their word. In the interwar period, Leipzig had an extremely active and popular Zionist movement, with youth activities, sports, a vibrant women's wing, and an increasingly prominent and respectable role in Jewish public life in the city. Zionism, in its varied forms, provided many Jews in Leipzig with a rhetorical home, and the numbers attracted to it only grew over time. But of course, there was another approach to questions of Jewish identity in Germany.

The first local meeting of the anti-Zionist *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (the Central Organization of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, the CV) was held in Leipzig 14 years earlier, at the Centraltheater in the downtown Thomasring. The initial Vorstand was comprised of three businessmen, two lawyers, and a Rabbi. By 1917, the Reform *Gemeinderabbiner* Dr. Felix Goldmann was involved in the leadership of the local CV, writing letters to the police on their behalf. The CV, as in other cities, pursued an assimilationist program, including talks on "*Die Jüdische Internationale*" (a debunking session) in 1926, and "Der Jude als deutscher Staatsbürger und Kulturbürger" [The Jew as a citizen of the German state and culture] in 1928. The latter meeting was broken up by a contingent of 150 NSDAP men, who were then confronted outside by the center-left *Reichsbanner* paramilitary. The ensuing disturbance was broken up by the police who filed the report on the meeting.[61]

What divided the camps was obvious: a fundamental disagreement over the nature of Jewishness and nationality. The opposing groups represented a basic division, and played out that division, in ways familiar to most students of the period. There were public relation campaigns, affiliations with political parties, public events, and a serious

[61] StAL PP-V 5007 "Akten des Polizei der Stadt Leipzig, betreffend den Zentralverein [sic] deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens Orstgr. Leipzig, 1911-40". Unpaginated.

attempt, at least on the part of the Zionists, to engage masses of people in organizational life. What united them was something less obvious. I would contend that all of the Zionists and the anti-Zionists, too, shared two sides of a common language of nationality and nationalism, and that they shared it not only with each other, but with the larger German and European political culture of the time.

The larger purpose of this introduction into Jewish Leipzig is to make clear how varied a world that was. From die-hard assimilationists to adamant Zionists—of several different kinds—there was an enormous range of experience and perspectives. There was a lively debate about the nature of identity and what it meant to be a Jew in Germany. It could only happen in a free political environment. The Weimar Republic—for all that it had its problems—was such an environment, and so debate and contention were the order of the day. That would not last for long. In 1933, everything changed for Jews, and the space for contestation over identity among German Jews shut down in short order. The new regime had very specific ideas in mind about Jews, and was not about to let Jews decide these issues for themselves.

Chapter 2: “What would the Führer, Adolf Hitler, say?”: Jewish life under the Nazis, 1933-38

All of the assumptions that fueled the Zionist position during the 1920s were given the strongest possible validation with the entry into government on 30 January, 1933 of Adolf Hitler. Starting with the nasty discrimination of the April 1933 boycott and the laws regarding the civil service and judiciary, followed by the Nuremberg laws in 1935, a wave of anti-Semitism swept the city. Jews in Leipzig found themselves increasingly on the outside looking in. Their responses to that exclusion—the creation of a whole new set of institutions in which Jews could operate, and then the victory of the Zionist position—reflect both radical change in response to radically altered positions, and a surprising degree of continuity, even as the divisions over national identity, religion, and ethnicity continued in a dramatically altered form.

Jews in Leipzig were remarkably adaptive to their new conditions, but it is utterly clear that a large range of options were taken from them beginning in 1933. The debate over identity—the central question of Jewish life in Germany—changed in tone from 1933, as we will see. Gone were the free exchanges between Zionists and assimilationists. Gradually, that debate was exchanged for a consensus in favor of Zionism. This was no free choice, though. Partly in recognition of the danger of their situation, and partly under direct pressure from their tormentors, the Jews of Leipzig shut down the market of ideas from 1933. There was no more room for an argument about who they were. From that point, the central fact of life was the simple drive for survival, and many did not survive.

Exclusion from public life

Jews were excluded from most elements of German life after the Nazis assumed power in January of 1933. Beginning with the Law for the Re-Establishment of the Professional Civil Service, which expelled Jews from the bureaucracy in April of 1933, the establishment of the *Reich* Chamber of Culture in September of that year, through the National Press Law (October), an anti-Semitic vision at least as old as Heinrich Class' *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär* was coming to life. The culmination of this stage of the Holocaust came with the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, which revoked the citizenship of German Jews, outlawed intermarriage, and sentenced Jews to second-class status in their own country.

One example of the exclusion facing Jews was the treatment of Jewish students in the schools. Like Jewish schoolchildren all over Germany[62], the students of Leipzig were subjected to a gradual process of marginalization, and then expulsion, while the religious community was obliged to pick up the pieces. It was a gradual process. In April, 1933, the Leipzig school office sent the *Gemeinde* a letter, asking for its cooperation in enacting a new directive from the Saxon Ministry for Popular Education. The directive concerned itself with religious education, and was to make provisions for the education of Jewish students in the Jewish religion outside of the schools. The *Gemeinde* replied with a series of letters, asking how that compliance was to be achieved.[63] The school office followed

[62] The trauma of exclusion from the schools in Berlin is well-captured in the case of Marianne Strauss Ellenbogen, in Mark Roseman, *The Past in Hiding*, London: 2000. Especially chapter 2, "Schoolgirl in the Third *Reich*".
[63] SAL Schulamt 1/105/9/6. 13 April, 1933.

up with a circular to all the schools, asking their cooperation with the *Gemeinde*, and enclosing a list of all Jewish students, together with a list of Seventh Day Adventists.[64]

This relatively innocuous beginning was only that, of course: a beginning of a much more violent regime of segregation. The wishes of men and women like Walther Lange were soon to be fulfilled. Lange wrote to the school office in October, 1936, asking that his daughter be transferred to another school, away from the Nordstrasse, where there were too many Jews for a "*Völkisch* thinking person" like him. The school office wrote back, telling him not to fret, since the expulsion of all Jewish students was imminent.[65]

Indeed it was. In September, 1935, the Saxon education ministry directed the local school offices in all the big cities to begin preparing for the expulsion of all Jewish students. Following a *Reich* level decision, the religious education facilities of the Jewish communities were to take on all Jewish students. Educational officials all over town were advised to set up meetings with their counterparts in the various communities to deal with the transfer.[66]

The Leipzig *Gemeinde* was overwhelmed; the old school facilities were designed to take care of many fewer students than were now expected to flow into the system. Officials from the *Israelitischer Schulverein* [the Jewish schools association] met with a representative of the *Schulamt* [local school officals] and asked for state assistance, since the influx was more than the existing infrastructure could bear, especially given the difficult economic situation the *Gemeinde* was dealing with, overall. The *Schulverein* also asked that only religious Jews should attend, not all of those declared non-Aryan.

[64] Ibid., 24 April, 1933.
[65] Ibid., 28 October, 1935.
[66] Ibid., 17 September, 1935.

The representative of the *Schulamt* came to the conclusion that the *Gemeinde* ought to bear the responsibility for the new building. His rationale is interesting—he thought *Gemeinde* should put up the building since the bulk of the students served by the *Gemeinde* were foreigners: 499 of the 551 students at the *Israelitische Volksschule*, for instance. The *Reich* directive only dealt with German citizens, so his argument went, and so state aid should only be directed to dealing with citizens.[67]

Protests and pleas for individual exceptions came into the *Schulamt*. Dr. Friedrich Blaschke said that his only son Stefan was in danger of expulsion because his mother was Jewish. He hastened to point out that his personal background ("I am an Aryan") and worldview made it important to him that his son be raised "German and Christian." He asked that his record as a veteran who had fought three years on the western front of the First World War be taken into account, and that his son be allowed to stay in school. It is not known how his requests were ultimately answered.[68]

Even had Stefan Blaschke been allowed to stay in school, he would have had a difficult time of it. "Non-Aryan" students were being systematically excluded from life in the public schools, a process which was often directed against one individual at a time. By fall of 1936, a girl whose grandmother was one quarter Jewish was forced to leave a lecture on world bolshevism at the girls' occupational school. Her father, Hermann Meyer, objected that the girl's maternal grandmother, who was Jewish, had no contact with the girl, or with Meyer's wife, who had been raised Lutheran. Meyer, like Blaschke, insisted that his rights as an Aryan and as a war veteran were being infringed. There is no sign of what happened to Meyer's daughter, but the occupational school asked the

[67] Ibid., 20 September, 1935; 7 October, 1935.
[68] Ibid., 30 September, 1935.

Schulamt for clarification on dealing with one-quarter Jews.[69] The classmates of any Jewish children who stayed in school probably would not have been supportive, at least not if they were paying attention to what they were being told in class. According to a SOPADE (the underground and exile iteration of the Social Democratic Party) report from 1936, schoolchildren in Leipzig were being instructed "to hold their nose if they meet a Jew in the street, because the Jews stink fearfully."[70]

This exclusion continued, and only got worse over time. The Jewish High School had to endure more than one refusal before being allowed to use two public playgrounds, two afternoons a week. Finally, the *Schulamt* gave grudging permission "if the space is free."[71] The city water works informed the *Schulamt* that Jewish children were banned from the city's pools, with the exception of special periods, when no one else could come in and Jewish classes could have the pool—recreational swimming by individuals was banned.[72]

The ban on Jews in the public pools and baths was not just limited to schoolchildren, of course. The city baths were very popular, and Jews were duly banned from them, as well, on June 8, 1935. Leipzig was more concerned with its international image than most German cities because of the *Messe* [trade fair]. The city therefore had to deal with fears that this discrimination against Jews would be used against it. In fact, the economic adviser of the party's regional leadership expressed unease about international public perception during the upcoming fairs, going so far as to call Leipzig *Bürgermeister* Haake to make his concerns known. Haake responded coolly, saying that

[69] Ibid., 24 October, 1936.
[70] Juden in Sachsen: Ihr Leben und Leiden, Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit Dresden, e.V., Leipzig, 1994. 68.
[71] SAL Schulamt 1/105/9/6, 28 April, 1936.
[72] Ibid., 9 August, 1935.

the ban was already published, and it was too late for a revocation of the order to make it into the news in time for the Messe.[73]

Later that month, Haake responded to a letter from Carl Sabatsky, the leader of the integrationist Leipzig CV about the barring of Jews from the baths. Haake's response to Sabatsky asserted that the ban was a response to the demands of the population, expressed in their own "*völkische Interesse*" (racist interests). Jews could still use their own communal bath, and the medical baths were still open to Jews.[74] Haake was certainly telling the truth; anti-Semitic measures in Leipzig generally met with popular approval, from what the archives tell us. Leipzig applied anti-Semitic measures with a vigor that caused even some of the leadership of the local party to hesitate a bit, as we saw above, and in fact even those measures taken by the government against Jewish citizens were not enough for many of their gentile neighbors.

There was an awkward balance of anti-Semitic forces at work in Leipzig. Sometimes the state, now the party, now individuals from the larger population—each took a turn in dragging the others along in a more vigorous persecution of the Jews. This is a complex picture. No one element of the society—not even the Nazi party—always took the lead. This is important, because when one pillar of the community, say the state, slackened in the persecution of the Jews, another would rally the community to the cause. Sadly, it is also clear that though there seemed to be a competition to determine who could be the most hateful to Jews, there was no dynamic in the opposite direction. There is little evidence of gentile defense of Jews in this period.

[73] SAL, Kapital 1, #122—Maßnahmer gegen jüdischen Bürger, 1933-45. 8 August, 1935.
[74] Ibid., 19 August, 1935.

On the question of the baths, for instance, we see a letter to the *Oberbürgermeister* from Siegfried Hohmann, complaining about the continued presence of a Jew at the *Germania* baths. A "German-feeling person", he viewed it as nothing less than "a sabotage of the Nuremberg laws" for the owner of the *Germania* baths to allow his business to remain open to racially hostile elements. An unsigned response reminded Hohmann that the city did not own *Germania*, and that if he wanted to bathe free of the presence of Jews, he could come to a city-owned bath.[75]

The Rosenthal

The most consistently expressed dissatisfaction came from non-Jewish residents who resented the continued presence of Jews in the city's great forested park, the Rosenthal, and especially the presence of Jews on the benches in the park. In summer of 1937, an engineer named Hans Schmidt wrote *Bürgermeister* Haake, enclosing a clipping from the *Angriff*. The story was about the Teutoburger park in Berlin, which had put up signs on their benches that said "Für Juden Verboten" (Forbidden to Jews"). Schmidt wanted to know why Leipzig couldn't do something like this in the Rosenthal. Three days later, Haake wrote to the relevant group in Berlin, asking how they had done it, noting that "here in Leipzig in the Rosenthal, so many Jews spread out on the benches so extraordinarily."[76]

An undated letter to Haake from about the same time apologized for taking up his valuable time, but noted that he (Haake) was "known as an energetic and sympathetic and dauntless fighter for the goals of our *Führer*." The writer noted that "every Jew insists

[75] Ibid., 25 June, 1936.
[76] Ibid., 24, 27 August, 1937.

that the greatest number of the benches [in the park] be taken for the sons and daughters of Israel, and they do not budge when "Aryans" want to take a spot, so that a stealthy war always breaks out between them, with the end result that the shameless and callous "Itzigs" win." The writer was so incensed by the injustices committed by the Jews, apparently still oppressing the Germans despite four years of brutal marginalization, that he resorted to nostalgia. He was left wishing that "it would be possible to limit them to living only in designated houses, and in that way to construct a ghetto, as was customary in the middle ages."[77]

The furor over the benches found its way through Haake to the police department. In mid-September of that year, a police report from the 15th district made it back to city hall. It counted 2,000 Jews still living in the district, a surprising number given the late date, and said that, indeed, on holidays and Sabbaths, large numbers of Jews did walk in the park and sit on the benches. However, the district report said that the numbers of Jews in the Rosenthal never constituted a hindrance to the *Volksgenossen* (racial comrades), and that a ban on Jews at the benches was not recommended.

Two days later, the city Police President sent a letter to the*Oberbürgermeist er*, Carl Goerdeler[78], saying that he thought it was a shame that Aryans had to put up with Jews in the Rosenthal, and asking for regulations on the matter. The gap between the career policeman filing his report and the political appointee at the head of his department is exacerbated by the *Oberbürgermeister* (*OBM*'s) office copying the one onto the back of the other; when one picks up the letter in the archive, it really is two sides of the same

[77] Ibid., page 26.
[78] Goerdeler was later involved in the plot to kill Hitler, his named raised as a possible Prime Minister in a conservative after the assassination. He also raised protests in 1937 against the removal of a statue of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy from the *Gewandhaus* orchestra hall.

story.[79] But it only serves to remind us of the complicated nature of public and official anti-Semitism in Leipzig—here we see, apparently, a disagreement between a lower and higher-level official. Does this mean that anti-Semitism was imposed from above? We certainly have ample evidence of it originating from below. Again, we see here a dynamic of apparent competition as anti-Semites in and out of government topped one another in demands for more discrimination against Jews..

The city government asked their colleagues in other German cities, and there were mixed messages from around the country on the subject of park benches. Apart from Berlin, only Königsberg reported having hung a sign to ban Jews from the parks. Cologne, Dresden, Hamburg and Frankfurt all maintained that it was not a problem for them, not yet anyway.[80] In January of the following year, the director of the city archive ordered a sign that said "*Juden unerwünscht*" ("Jews not welcome").[81]

Two months later the new *Oberbürgermeister*, Walter Dönicke, got a letter from the regional economic director of the NSDAP, asking for a ban on Jews in the Rosenthal, since it "was as good as lost to the *Volksgenossen*, since the Jews make themselves so at home there." He wanted "to give our *Volksgenossen* the possibility to relax undisturbed after a day of work by going for an evening walk in the Rosenthal." A few days after he received the note, Dönicke—a former regional leader in the party—replied, saying that the Rosenthal was not just a park; it also was a thoroughfare connecting northern and central parts of the city, and that a large proportion of the city's Jews lived there. He would take a look at the situation, but did not think there was a need for a ban.[82] The

[79] SAL, Kapital 1, #122—Maßnahmer gegen jüdischen Bürger, 1933-45. 20, 22 September, 1937.
[80] Ibid., 29 September, 1937.
[81] Ibid., 12 January, 1938.
[82] Ibid., 5, 9 March, 1938.

Police President followed up in July of 1938 with a letter asking that most benches in the Rosenthal be limited to Aryans, and that signs to that effect be placed. He included a clipping describing the situation in the Rosenthal as untenable: "that it is almost impossible for a German to find their own little spot." The Police President asked that some benches be painted yellow for the use of Jews.[83]

An indication of how popular the drive to rid the park benches of Jewish occupants had become can be seen in a semi-anonymous poem in the *Leipziger Tageszeitung* from September, 1938 by "Frau E.Z.". The verse asked for relief for the besieged occupants of the park neighborhood. A salient excerpt read: "The whole front of the Rosenthal/ is occupied by innumerable Jews/ and after all we go downtown/ specially after fresh air/ especially for our small children/ forest air is healthier than stinky air./ If I go with them for a walk/ we have to wander quite a lot/ before we sit—thank God!/ on a Jew-free bench."[84]

A few months later, after the devastation of the *Kristallnacht*, another letter to a daily paper was published with the screaming headline "They're Still Sitting There!" The writer, signed "Grs.", complained that Jews were still sitting in the Rosenthal. The Jews might have reasonably been expected to figure out that things had changed by the previous October, "instead the Isaacs and Sarahs sit happily, blinking in the sun on the

[83] Ibid., 8 July, 1938. The forced wearing of the yellow star was not national policy until September 1, 1941, but the color yellow was clearly associated in people's minds with Jews, from the yellow stars painted on the windows of Jewish-owned businesses during the April, 1933 boycott to traditional Christian measures against Jews going back at least to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. See Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith, Irena Steinfeldt, eds., *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, New York: 2000, 37.
[84] *Leipziger Tageszeitung*, 25 September, 1938. German: Das ganze vordre Rosenthal/ bevölkern Juden ohne Zahl/ und grade uns im Zentrum drin/ nach frischer Luft steht oft der Sinn;/ zumal für unsere kleinen Kinder/ ist Wald- statt Stinkluft auch gesünder. Geh ich mit ihnen mal spazieren,/ so muß ich schon sehr weit marschieren,/ eh' wir mal sitzen—Gott sei dank!—/ auf einen Judenfreien Bank.

path, as though nothing had happened."[85] The writer insisted that, at the least, signs be put up banning Jews.

Now the Gestapo took a turn. In April of 1939, the *Oberbürgermeister* got a letter from the Leipzig office of the Gestapo complaining about Jews in the parks. "Jewish mothers and their children show a preference for making themselves quite comfortable on the benches in the "big meadow" in the Rosenthal, so that for *Volksgenossen* there is oftentimes no possibility of sitting down. Besides which, it is too much to expect any Aryan mother to go with their children there, or to send them. The presence of Jewish mothers with their children brings with it the automatic disadvantage that German-blooded children play with Jewish children, as can be observed in the playground near the 'Frege-Stege'". The letter requested that the *OBM* ban Jews from the city's parks.[86] In a letter signed by *Bürgermeister* (*BM)* Haake, the city replied that this was the province of the *Regierungspräsident*, not the office of the mayor. Haake also said that for several months he had been asking for an appointment to talk to the *Regierungspräsident* to raise the issue.[87]

The SD took a turn: the day after Haake replied to the Gestapo, the *Unterabschnittsführer*-Leipzig of the *Reich* Security Service wrote to the *OBM*. "Even this late in the season ("*mit vorschreitenden Jahreszeit*") the cry has multiplied in the German-blooded population of Leipzig about the tedious swaggering about of the Jews in the Rosenthal. The benches which are placed in this park are predominantly occupied by Jews, generally of a young age, who give not the slightest consideration to making room for elderly <u>*Volksgenossen*</u>, at least." The *Unterabschnittsführer* demanded that Jews be

[85] Ibid., 25 April, 1939.
[86] SAL, Kapital 1, #122—Maßnahmer gegen jüdischen Bürger, 1933-45. 4 May, 1939.
[87] Ibid., 4 May, 1939.

banned from the park, or at least that benches be set aside for them.[88] Haake responded five days later with essentially the same letter he had written to the Gestapo the previous week.[89]

Finally, the regional leadership of the NSDAP stepped in. In late June, Haake was summoned to a meeting to address the issue of "continuing complaints against the Jews." At the meeting it transpired that the order that the city believed had given authority to the *Regierungspräsident's* office for regulating the public behavior of Jews was in fact only designed for Berlin. It was the city's business, after all, and the *OBM*'s office declared in notes from the meeting that it was about to begin establishing a reserved area (*Reservat*) for Jews in the Rosenthal.[90]

A second meeting was held a few days later, and we have the notes from the *OBM*'s deputy, Lisso: "In the consultations of the *OBM* with the deputies the opinion was put forward that we had no reason to somehow oblige the Jews. They certainly have no reason to be in the Rosenthal, so that turning over a part of the Rosenthal to them could not be considered. Likewise they must be made to disappear from the benches on the ring roads and the surrounding areas. I therefore recommended going to the *Regierungspräsident* with the request to prohibit Jews from entering the Rosenthal or using the benches on the ring, permanently."[91] Two weeks later, an official request came from the *OBM* to the*Regierungspräsident* , asking for a ban on Jews in the Rosenthal, Johannapark, König-Albertpark, and on all of the benches along the downtown Ring. Much of the language of the letter was taken directly from the Gestapo's letter of 25

[88] Ibid., 5 May, 1939.
[89] Ibid., 10 May, 1939.
[90] Ibid., 4 July, 1939.
[91] Ibid., 12 July, 1939.

April, including the prospect of Aryan mothers afraid to take their children where they might mingle with Jews.[92]

What we see here was a sort of microcosm of the gradual exclusion of Jews from public life all over Germany. Various elements in the town—city bureaucrats, writers of angry letters to the paper, party and police officials of various stripes—demanded that something be done. Their demands were initially met with resistance from a city leadership seemingly more concerned with maintaining order than enforcing the strict racial code of the Nazi party, even on some occasions when the leadership of the city came from the party itself. This was true not only in Leipzig but in the other big cities of the *Reich,* as well, as is seen in the correspondence noted above.

In time, more and more elements of the city's administration showed themselves willing to crack down on Jews, especially after receiving letters from the Gestapo, the SD, and the party itself. We can pause and take note of some important factors. One, that anti-Semitic measures were not just a top-down or a bottom-up phenomenon. It was much more complicated than that—ordinary citizens and active Nazis were all involved in demanding the removal of Jews from public sight. Elements of officialdom were actively opposed to one another's vision of what ought to be done, and the only suggestion of mercy came from a police report. It goes perhaps without saying that the incident gives us graphic evidence of the popular nature of Nazi anti-Semitism—in its 1938 incarnation, anyway.

Second, we ought to note that, once the bureaucratic ball started rolling—once the meetings started and various officials began to cast about for a solution—that solution grew more and more radical. The suggestions moved from some yellow benches for

[92] Ibid., 27 July, 1939.

Jews, to exclusion of Jews from the benches in the Rosenthal and on the Ring, to exclusion of Jews from all of the above and the other major city parks. This is characteristic of the multi-faced nature of Nazi governance.

It was characteristic of the Third *Reich* to have many, competing layers of authority—in this case, the traditional authority of the city, vested in the office of the *Oberbürgermeister*, the Nazi-era regional chief, the *Regierungspräsident*, and the area leadership, or *Kreisleitung* of the party, in addition to several security organs, all of whom thought themselves competent to make decisions on this question. When these bodies finally did meet, it was with the apparent goal of trumping each other in radical cruelty toward Jews.

Others, especially Ian Kershaw, have identified this phenomenon of "working toward the *Führer*"—of identifying a policy from the utterances of Hitler, and trying to outpace bureaucratic rivals in meeting the *Führer's* expectations. Because the Nazi state was so multifarious and vague in its governing style, because the Nazi party was so radical in its racism, and because state officials perceived their own interests in matching the perceived radicalism emanating from Berlin, the most radical solution was applied time and time again. This was true with regard to the exclusion of the Jews of Leipzig from the benches in the park, as well as in the plans at Wannsee to engage in unprecedented mass murder. It was true as well as in the efforts of Jews to pursue their religious practice.

Religious persecution

Religious life during the period of the early Nazi dictatorship was obviously difficult for the Jews of Leipzig. The old established synagogues had served the population of the city well, but as the Jewish citizenry grew over the early twentieth century as a result of immigration from the east, many of the new arrivals found themselves in makeshift temples. Over the course of the mid-1930s, German officials began to crack down on Jewish religious observance, under the guise of restoring order, compromised by the patchwork of smaller synagogues. The reports from the field make clear that their purpose was no more than harassment, and that Jews were forced to scramble as best they could, for as long as they could, to provide adequate religious services.

In September, 1936, the Leipzig Police President called in the lawyer for the *Gemeinde*, and complained that there were too many synagogues in town for the police to keep an eye on. This might have been in response to letters from the *Gemeinde* to the police the previous month, warning of big crowds and parking problems at the city's synagogues during the high holidays. At any rate, it was the opinion of the police chief that there were too many Jewish houses of worship in town, and that some ought to be closed down. [93]

The lawyer for the *Gemeinde* said that he would not mind shutting some of them down, but that immigrants from the east were particularly attached to their neighborhood temples, and would probably not come downtown for services at the *Gemeinde* temple on Gottschedstrasse. The police chief ended the meeting by telling the *Gemeinde*'s

[93] StAL file pp-v 4437, Polizeipräsidiums Leipzig file on "Israelitische Religions*Gemeinde* zu Leipzig". 26, 28 August, 1 September, 1936.

representative that the community would have to close down and merge some synagogues in the coming year. He followed up by writing letters to his opposite numbers in Berlin and Frankfurt, and concluded from their responses that Leipzig had too many synagogues for a Jewish community of its size.[94]

Even before he had heard back from Frankfurt and Berlin, the Police President asked his political section to compile reports on the existing synagogues in the city, their numbers of visitors and conditions. In the first precinct the Tiktiner-Synagogue, in the Brühl fur-trading district downtown, was 12 meters long, 8 across. It had 93 seats for men, and 62 for women, with one altar (the word used by the policeman, probably referring to the ark) and one podium. It had been standing since 1878, and its condition was "worthy".[95]

The second precinct sent in a chart, with listings for nine places of worship, ranging from the "clean" Ohel-Jakob-Synagoge in Keilstraße, with 300 visitors, to the "unworthy" Jassyer-Synagog, which shared a building with another "dirty" hall, that of Bochnia-Synagoge, in the Gerberstraße. Both had about 50 visitors.[96] A temple in the Eisenbahnstraße, and a theater used for high holidays in the Tachauer Straße received higher marks from their police reviewer, who noted that the full congregations in both (100 in one, about 400 in the other) went all but unnoticed by the non-Jewish population, "because the visitors to these temples did not hang around in front of them."[97] This comment begins to give the lie to the announced purpose of the crackdown on religious

[94] Ibid., 8, 17, 30 September, 1936.
[95] Ibid., 10 September, 1936.
[96] Ibid., 26 September, 1936.
[97] Ibid., 27 September, 1936.

life which was to prevent disorder. There was none to be prevented. The interests of the police must have been elsewhere.

The northern police division compounded this impression with their report on services held in the *Gemeinde*'s property in the Landesbergerstraße. The room held about 30 people, with entrances through the court and cellar—that is to say, no front entrance. With holiday decorations up, the policeman noted, the room looked "worthy". He also noted that "The holidays were so unobtrusive that disinterested people would not have noticed them." The Jews of Leipzig were not giving the police or anybody else reason to complain. What, then was the police chief after?

The other reports that came in, about the monumental *Gemeindesynagoge* in the Gottschedstraße, and the Ez-Chaim with over 600 seats, and many others, give the same impression. They were generally in good shape, and there was no report of disturbance. The 20th precinct sent word of a temple in some rented space in the "Golden Eagle" tavern in the Angerstraße. The hall was in good condition, and not recognizable from the street. The policeman reported that 50-60 "*mosaisch Gläubige*" (not "*Juden*", but members of the mosaic faith, the formulation used by integrationist Jews) came and went in groups of two or three in an unobtrusive way. Those who drove parked on a side street, and traffic was not blocked at all.[98]

With all of these reports in his hand, the Police President then went on to order that the Jewish new year could only be celebrated in "operational holy places." One is struck again here by the gaps in tone between the orders and decisions emanating from the political center of the police force, and the tone and evidence employed by police officers in the field. The chief had obviously wanted a report that would justify shutting

[98] Ibid., 26 September, 1936.

down synagogues, and he did not get it. Clearly, he was motivated by something other than the reasons he shared with his officers.

What that "something" was may be more clearly seen in an episode involving, as the affair of the Rosenthal had done, a dynamic relationship between party, state and people. In September, 1936, a woman named Anny Hoffmann, whose husband was a member of the NSDAP, wrote a letter to the vitriolic anti-Semitic journal, *Der Stürmer*. In it, she said that she had been interested by an article in the previous issue, discussing celebrations of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. She wanted to write to the *Stürmer* to discuss an event in her neighborhood in Leipzig. She and her family lived in Neu-Gohlis, a housing development formerly owned by Kroch, the same (Jewish) man who had built the first skyscraper in downtown Leipzig. Hoffmann pointed out that during the "*Systemzeit*" ("time of the system, meaning the Republic), Kroch had been known as the king of Saxony. The problem was that a laundry room in her area was being taken over by Jews for celebration of the holidays. She said that when this happened, all of the housewives had to use another laundry room, and if this was not bad enough, were forced to bear witness to this "Jewish underhanded dealing" (*jüdischen Gemauschels*) when the 60 Jewish families that lived in the development came streaming through with bag and baggage.

> Powerless, one stands before these events, and it takes real discipline to walk by, as if nothing were happening. Report after report has already been sent to the authorities and read, but everything has thus far met with no success. We even had to witness that over this site (flags had been ordered to be put up) a swastika flag waves proudly. Of all places, a [party] cell leader lives over this synagogue.

> And, dear *Stürmer*, the whole "*Mischpoge*"[*sic*: probably "Mischpoke", "tribe"] is watched by a German policeman in uniform during their hate sermons. What do you say, dear *Stürmer*, and what would the *Führer* Adolf Hitler say, if he had to observe all of this with us. Could you not publish this article as a horrible example? [99]

In late November, the police department received a letter from the NSDAP *Kreisorganisationsamt* (regional organizational office), along with copies of Hoffman's letter to the *Stürmer*, and a letter from the local party leader from the area. The cover letter called attention to the enclosures, and asked for help soon. The letter from the local leader had made the original call for attention to Hoffman's letter, and it also complained about the services in the laundry. He had heard many complaints, he said, and had asked the authorities to do something about it, but had been told that religious activity could not be interfered with.

> The agitation among the party comrades was often very strong, especially during the interminable Feast of the Tabernacles, so that I myself had to step in, to avoid any rash steps. I would welcome it very much, if the Jews' perpetration of their religious practices, which is often connected to very loud noises, were forbidden in the development, because there is after all a synagogue in Leipzig at their disposal. The long distance [Neu-Gohlis is several miles from the downtown synagogue] is not a consideration, because the Catholic residents also have a great distance to cover to their church. At any rate it is really expecting too much of the other residents, especially those of National Socialist sensibility, to have to listen

[99] Ibid., 30 September, 1936.

to and watch the greetings of Jewish residents on the street, which often happen under the swastika flag (the treasurer of the *Ortsgruppe* (local party group) lives above the wash house synagogue).[100]

I do not think that these popular demands for persecution of Jews were especially representative. There were not thousands of such demands—really more a handful. What had changed? The state, and its attitudes toward Jews. Just as German Jews had their rhetorical [and of course physical] space narrowed by the transition to Nazism, so did gentile Germans find their rhetorical arena shifted. The form of the state went far in determining which "popular" whims would be honored, no matter how popular they really were.

Shortly after the intervention of the Party leadership, an internal memo from the 24th police precinct described what the police found when they actually investigated the wash-house synagogue. It turned out that the wash room in question was not generally used as such, because it was not hooked up to the hot water main. The religious services were held in an inconspicuous manner. They were observed by the police, and they ended punctually. There was no disturbance or inconvenience. There had been no complaints lodged with the police. It seemed clear that this was a manufactured crisis. Obviously, zealously anti-Semitic individuals were trying to whip up actions toward the Jews when none were required, even according to the perverse logic at work at the time. And the police on the beat were not hesitant to say so.[101] Despite this rather tepid risk assessment from the field, the Police President took action. He reported to the NSDAP

[100] Ibid., 21 November, 1936.
[101] Ibid., undated, but clearly filed between letters of 21 November and 17 December, 1936.

Kreisleitung that, even though the police report had shown that the laundry room was not generally used, he was reducing locations for Jewish celebration of the holidays. By the following year, he wrote, the wash room synagogue would be shut down.[102]

He was as good as his word. In April, 1937, both of the *Gemeinderabbiner*, the Reform Goldschmidt and the Orthodox David Ochs, were summoned to the Gestapo and told that Leipzig had too many synagogues, compared with Frankfurt. Before the police took action, they were told, it would serve the community well to shut down the marginal synagogues—the ones in "unworthy condition", the Golden Eagle, and the laundry synagogue in Neu-Gohlis.

The rabbis agreed, but then, after a meeting with the leaders of some of the smaller synagogues, came back to plea for restraint. They reminded the Gestapo in a letter that the small synagogues were independent of the *Gemeinde*, that it was important to be in walking distance on the Sabbath, that the communities had historical ties with the halls in question, and that there were, after all, real religious and cultural differences between different kinds of Jews in Leipzig.[103]

Goldschmidt was informed that the washroom synagogue's days were numbered, that it could stay there for the time being, but that police approval was being withdrawn. But in late summer a homeowner in the development, Erich Blumenfeld (it is not clear whether he was Jewish), offered the use of an empty home in the development as a substitute. Despite Gestapo warnings that only one Jewish family lived in the new

[102] Ibid., 17 December, 1936.
[103] Ibid., 8 April, 2 June, 1937.

building, and that complaints would certainly be forthcoming, the *Gemeinde* was told on the 24th of August that they could use the empty house.[104]

Services were held in the new building through September. They were quiet, the report from the 24th precinct said—no one would notice them if they did not already know about them. There had been no complaints from neighbors. However, it was then decided "due to the concerns of the surveyor's office", to cancel permission for the services, and to disperse the congregation.[105] A pattern emerges: Jews going about their business, as quietly as they could, until denounced by a zealous and politically connected anti-Semite, who brings public and official attention to the "problem", in this case, Jews using an unused wash room to worship. After the denunciation, party and municipal officials engage in a sort of dance, going back and forth between the rhetorical claims of necessity—the Jews were creating a disturbance, they were rubbing Aryans' noses in it—and the course suggested by the simple truth coming from field police reports. Eventually, the most punitive solution was the one chosen.

The *Lehrhaus*

The combination of official persecution and popular hostility, especially as seen in the institutions of public life—schools, parks, theatres, and so on—drove Jews into isolation and, therefore, into a new culture of self-reliance. Perhaps the most impressive and telling achievements were in education. As a way of serving the many Jewish students who were being excluded from academic and vocational institutions around

[104] Ibid., 18, 23, 24 August, 1937.
[105] Ibid., 15 September, 1937.

town, the *Gemeinde* founded a "*Lehrhaus*" in October, 1935. It emphasized Jewish studies, technical classes, and language classes.

We know a great deal about the curriculum and instructors of this school, because its leaders were required to submit weekly course plans to the state police. In Jewish studies, courses were taught on Talmudic ethics, the Prophets, observation of holidays, folklore, like the stories of Mendele Mokher-Sforim, and the conditions of Jews in Germany, with an emphasis on Palestine.[106] The faculty was fairly evenly divided among Zionists and non-Zionists, with 10 teachers belonging to Zionist groups, 7 to integrationist groups, and 10 to neither. The Zionists taught courses on the Prophet Amos, the Rabbi Löw, medicine, French, and bookkeeping for beginners, as well as much that dealt with Palestine. The integrationists taught English, Talmudic ethics and photography.[107]

By November, 1935, many of the educational functions of the *Gemeinde* had been transferred to the *Lehrhaus*, and it had become a central focus of community life. Some of the most prominent Jews in the city acted as lecturers. The leader of the integrationist CV, Kurt Sabatsky, taught about the current legal situation of the Jews in Germany, including employment law. *Gemeinde* Rabbis Gustav Cohn and David Ochs lectured on Talmudic ethics and the accomplishments of the Jews in Germany, respectively. Full professors, engineers and physicians held courses on anatomy, technology and "Hygiene and sicknesses in Palestine." Arnold Muscatblatt, proprietor of an electricians' shop, taught "Technical measurements for metal workers."[108]

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[106] Ibid., January 2, 1937.
[107] Ibid., 13 April, 1937.
[108] *Gemeindeblatt der ReligionsGemeinde zu Leipzig*, 6 November, 1935, pg 4.

For the next several years, until *Kristallnacht*, the *Lehrhaus* operated as a sort of clearing house of Jewish knowledge in the city. It seemed to offer a balance between Zionist and integrationist positions and instructors, a balance that could not have been an accident in an organization so closely tied to the central personalities and institutions of Jewish life in Leipzig. This balance was especially pronounced in the first year or so of the *Lehrhaus*'s existence. Sabatsky taught a class on modern Jewish history, for instance. In this class, he emphasized the long history of Jews in Leipzig and in Saxony, played up the positive role of the Prussian monarchy (sure to inflame the Saxon policeman taking the notes), and pointed to the patriotism of German Jews in 1870 and 1914. Even when he got to the post-1933 period, he gave a sober assessment of the effects of the Nuremberg laws, but asserted that a period of calm had followed. He acknowledged that Jews in Germany had been excluded from the national community, and discussed the role of emigration aid societies, but, in sum, his course was an assertion of the role of German Jews in German life, and their continuing place there.[109]

But at the same time, there were discussions of "Basic questions of Zionism" by Dr. Ernst Markowitz, and "The history of the Jews of Palestine." There were many classes on foreign language, especially Hebrew, and some emphasis on practical, manual, and technical work, both reflections of Zionist notions that German Jews had to turn to more practical education in preparation for eventual emigration.[110] In the early period of the *Lehrhaus*, as in much of Jewish life during the period, a kind of truce was called between Zionists and integrationists.

[109] StAL PP-V 4439 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig; Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizeistelle Leipzig: Israel. Religions*Gemeinde*, 1938-1940. 14 January-11 February, 1936.
[110] Ibid., 22 January, 1936; 29 January, 1936.

During this period of balance, and extending past it, one can see a clear bias of concern on the part of the German state authority. The curricula were delivered to the police every week, several days ahead of time, and the police seemed to take their oversight obligations fairly seriously, so that observers were sent and reports filed on dozens of instructors and courses. For instance, the same week that Sabatsky lectured on modern Jewish history, the course on "Basic questions of Zionism" began, but the police found no need to send an observer. It seems that Zionists—along with religious and technical instructors—were not made the target of state observation as frequently as known integrationists, who were, one can surmise, seen as some sort of threat or undesirable presence.

The relationship between Nazis and Zionists is a difficult one to assess. Saul Friedländer makes the point that the Nazi regime supported Zionism as the only course for Jews to take, though this was only "instrumental": "The Zionists had no doubts about the Nazis' evil designs on the Jews, and the Nazis considered the Zionists first and foremost Jews."[111] Francis Nicosia expands on this, offering the useful formulation that the Nazis exploited Zionists in a context of brutality against all Jews. But even Nicosia recognizes that for much of the Nazi period, it was in the interests of the Nazis to encourage and favor Zionists.[112] This is what we see here, and at other points. The German government cast a considerably heavier net of surveillance over known integrationists than known Zionists. The range of possibilities for Jews to define themselves was being cut off by the German state.

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[111] Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, volume 1, the Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*. 1997: New York, 63.

[112] Francis Nicosia, *The End of Emancipation and the Illusion of Preferential Treatment: German Zionism, 1933-1938* Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook, XXXVI, 1991: 244.

Over the course of early 1937, class offerings were reduced, until by April only shorthand, languages, and bookkeeping were offered. By the 18th of April, regular course offerings had been largely replaced with "*Kursabende*", topical lectures on weekday evenings (Sunday having been declared off-limits to Jewish groups for meetings[113]). During these topical evenings, the former balance between Zionist and integrationist offerings in the regular curriculum was entirely absent. Topics during January 1938 included Rabbi Cohn on "The State of Israel in decisive moments in history", Dr. Jacob Braude on "The intellectual environment of Palestine", and a Dr. Joel on "The Geography of Palestine".[114]

There were talks by Dr. Robert Weltsch of Berlin, on the controversial Peel-report, and its effect on British policy in Palestine.[115] There were no offerings after 1937 from Kurt Sabatsky or any other person associated with anti-Zionism. This may have been the result of continued surveillance and pressure from the police. It may have also reflected a lack of people willing to argue for the integrationist position.

On 7 March, 1938, there was a fairly pivotal moment in the history of the *Lehrhaus* and indeed of the *Gemeinde* and of all Jewish life in Leipzig. Dr. David Ochs, the Orthodox *Gemeinde* Rabbi, spoke on "Education and Religious Life in Palestine." 700 people came, drawing a Gestapo observer. Ochs told his mostly male listeners that the Jews faced a time of great crisis. The bulk of the talk was about getting ready to go to Palestine. Everyone must prepare themselves in artisanal and farming skills, he insisted. He pointed to Jewish youth as an example, learning Hebrew, mechanics and agriculture, English and Arabic. He said that the Sabbath was venerated in Palestine. He concluded

[113] StAL PP-V 4437. 28 October, 1936.
[114] StAL PP-V 4439. 16 January, 1938; 23 January, 1938; 30 January, 1938.
[115] Ibid., 9 February, 1938.

by saying of Erez Israel: "You belong here, you are at home here. Everyone who looks out at the land from Haifa and experiences prayers at the Wailing Wall has this feeling."[116]

Such an emphasis may be a sign that a communal consensus on Zionism had emerged by early 1938. If the *Lehrhaus* had abandoned its original commitment to balance between Zionist and anti-Zionist instructors and materials, it could only be for the same reason that this important representative of official Jewish Leipzig, Rabbi Ochs, discarded the same cloak of impartiality. The community had come to a conclusion, and it was in favor of Zionism.

Resistance

The range of possible Jewish activity was dramatically narrowed by the Nazi assumption of power, as we have seen, and trends and movements that had not been especially popular became much more so, like State Zionism. On the other hand, some Jews, especially younger ones, began to do things they had never done before. One possibility for dealing with the National Socialist regime was to engage in active resistance. Leipzig was an important center of resistance to the Nazis, which is not surprising given its long history as a stronghold of the Communist party. And, in fact, resistance in the city was driven by former members of the communist youth league. Between late summer 1934 and spring 1935 alone, 1,600 people were arrested for anti-

[116] Ibid., 7 March, 1938.

government activity in Leipzig. Many of these were members of the "*Zelle Zentrum*", and a few were Jews.[117]

Solvejg Höppner concludes that, for the few Jews in the *Zelle*, working class identity was more important than Jewish identity and that these young people were acting in response to the repression of working class parties and groups, rather than to the burgeoning persecution of the Jews.[118] Most were from working class families, but some were educated middle class adherents of Social Democracy. There were six Jewish members of the *Zelle*—all but one of them had been members of the *Gemeinde*, but all were forced to realize their Jewishness by the Nazis. At any rate, the *Gemeinde* and other traditional Jewish organizations were ill-suited as loci of resistance; they were too closely watched, and far too concerned with legality.[119] We cannot really call this Jewish resistance, per se. This was a non-sectarian Socialist resistance. It was, however, a route open to Jews who wished to resist.

The *Zelle* was eventually denounced after a conversation was overheard in someone's garden. Most of those imprisoned served short jail terms. Horst Blaustein, who came from the SPD, served a brief term, and then disappeared underground, serving as a courier between Leipzig and Berlin for the duration of the war. He was the only member of his family to survive. Walter Gutmann was released and told to leave the

[117] Solvejg Höppner, "Juden in Leipziger Widerstand 1933/34", in *Judaica Lipsiensia: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, herausgeben von der Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung, Redaktion: Manfred Unger. Leipzig, 1994: Edition Leipzig, 158

[118] Ibid., 157.

[119] This represents a somewhat different phenomenon than the Jewish Communists who returned home after 1945, as discussed by Karin Hartewig in *Zurückgekehrt:Die Geschichte der jüdischen Kommunisten in der DDR*. Those Jews, at least on the national level, were more likely to be atheists. These resisters in Leipzig were more likely to identify themselves as Jewish in a religious sense. Indeed, this distinction is to be found after 1945, too, as the leadership of Leipzig Jewry was more involved in religious life than Hartewig's subjects.

country; he was last heard from in Yugoslavia. Georg Gerst served four years, and then was allowed to leave the country. His last known address was in Paraguay. His brother, Alfred, served three years and nine months, before he was released into the custody of Rabbi David Ochs. He was murdered in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in February, 1942.

Hermann Gottschalk was incarcerated for two years and three months before he was released. He was eventually re-arrested, and was murdered in Dachau in 1937. His sister Erica had the best outcome, serving three years in jail, during which she renounced Judaism and resigned from the *Gemeinde*. She eventually ended up in Sweden, where she married an Austrian refugee. She found work as a foreign correspondent for English language newspapers there, and became active in Amnesty International in later life.[120]

Emigration

One of the other options open to Jews in Leipzig during these early years of the Nazi regime was, of course, to leave the country. From 1933 to September, 1935, 800 Jews emigrated from Leipzig to Palestine alone—we do not know the numbers for other destinations.[121] Many prominent people left town in these early years, including Ephraim Carlebach, the esteemed orthodox *Gemeinderabbiner*, who followed two of his sons out of the country.[122] Losses at the *Gemeinde* and its organs were so great that those Jews who remained in town were obliged to take on responsibilities they would not have otherwise had. Samuel Sonnabend, the bass in the synagogue choir, left and the *Gemeinde* was forced to ask permission from the authorities to hire a Polish national.

[120] Ibid., 163-5.
[121] StAL 4437, 25 September, 1935.
[122] Ibid., 26 February, 1936.

Similarly, when the staff of the annual winter charity drive left town, the community had to ask permission to take on their former cemetery attendant, Rudi Goldberg, who had been fired from that job because of Polish citizenship, at no pay.[123] *Kindergarten* teachers, gardeners, religious workers, and many more left the country, and the *Gemeinde* was forced to beg the state for permission to hire foreign and "stateless" Jews.[124]

Many went to Palestine; the *Institut für Wanderungswesen und Auslandkunde* (Institute for the Study of Migration and Foreign Cultures) in Leipzig counted over 10,000 Jews from the whole of Germany leaving for Palestine in the last nine months of 1933 alone. The *Institut* also noted that professionals were among the émigrés, and wished the Zionists success in reeducating such people for the realities of life in Palestine.[125] Not surprisingly, the leadership of the Zionist organizations was severely depleted by this sort of emigration. Dr. Fritz Loebenstein, who had been chair of the local Zionist organization since the Nazi assumption of power in 1933, joined his two daughters in Palestine in 1936. A huge party was given for his departure, noting his work as leader of the organization in hard times, and his work as a pediatrician, giving thanks that he would be bringing German science to Palestine.[126] Other Zionist groups suffered similar losses.

Palestine was not the only option. Many Leipzig Jews went to the USA.[127] In fact, one Zionist speaker at a group meeting argued that many more Jews were going to

[123] StAL 4439, 6 September, 1938.
[124] StAL 4438, 6 April, 1938.
[125] SAL Kap. 1, #2 Band 3, pg. 113.
[126] StAL PP-V 4441 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on "Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig" 1934-36, 16 April, 1936.
[127] E.g., *Gemeinde* welfare officer Julius Folmann, 11 May, 1938; Dr. Michael Lipschütz, former religious teacher, reported January 9, 1939. Both in StAL 4438.

the USA than to Palestine.[128] He noted that those who went to America were generally not Zionists themselves. Some, like *Gemeinde* worker Bote Naftali Schmulewitsch, sought refuge in Argentina.[129] Some Leipzig Jews, driven by ideology, went to the USSR. Things did not work out well for many of them.

Samuel Katzenellenbogen, a musician who had been an active member of a Communist Party (KPD) agitprop troupe, fled to the USSR only to fall into the hands of the terror machinery in 1937. He was last seen in a prison camp, obviously mistreated. Erika Rotzeig, who had studied with the estimable Henrietta Goldschmidt and had been a *Kindergarten* teacher at the *Israelitische Schule*, was a communist. She emigrated to Moscow with her son, where she worked at the Karl-Liebknecht-Schule until she and the rest of the German faculty were arrested in 1937 and 1938. Hilde Hauschild, a KPD member, went to the USSR but was arrested in 1937, and was turned over to the Gestapo in 1940, after which she disappeared. Clearly, Russia was not the best place for Jewish émigrés from Leipzig.[130] It was obvious by the middle of the 1930s that many Jews in Leipzig had concluded that emigration was now mandatory. The balance of power in the Jewish population of the city had swung drastically in the direction of the Zionists, and it was not coming back.

The *Kulturbund*

One of the areas in which this transfer of power was most evident in Jewish life in Leipzig between 1933 and 1938 was cultural activity. In the efforts of the *Kulturbund* we

[128] StAL PP-V 3937/9 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig, 1936-1939, 29 November, 1937.
[129] StAL 4438, 3 August, 1938.
[130] Günter Fippel, "Zum Schicksal Leipziger Juden in der Sowjetunion nach 1933 und in der DDR bis 1953" in *Judaica Lipsiensia*, 210-212.

see many of the themes of the Jewish experience in this time brought to the stage, as it were. Jews were given less and less space in the public sphere. Accordingly and with great resourcefulness, they created a new, if segregated place where they could work, and some of the leading cultural lights of Leipzig shone in a much narrower focus.

But, segregation was not sufficient in the long term for the Nazis, and they gradually restricted the autonomy of the *Kulturbund* in Leipzig, until it could no longer function. The state played a larger and larger role in the functions of the *Kulturbund* over time. In the dealings of the state and with the *Kulturbund*, we see a strong example of the favor shown by the Nazis toward Zionists during this period. No real good was done the Zionists of Leipzig, but we can say that non-Zionists had a distinctly disadvantaged position.

The earliest activity of a *Kulturbund* in Leipzig was a November, 1933 production, appropriately, of *Nathan der Weise*, the classic apologia for Jews in Germany. This was put on by the visiting Dresden *Kulturbund*, with assurances to the police that audience members would be asked on the way in whether they were Jews.[131] Over the next few months, the Leipzig police wrestled with the requirements for such an organization in their own town—they found out from the Prussian authorities that only Jews could be members of a *Kulturbund*; that they needed passports with pictures to prove that they were Jews; that they could not sell tickets; that all programs had to be cleared with the appropriate authorities a month in advice, and that the *Kulturbund* could not advertise its productions, except in Jewish publications. The police tried to ascertain

[131] StAL PP-V 4506: Akten des Polizeipräsidiums Leipzig *Kulturbund* Deutscher Juden (Jetzt Jüdischer *Kulturbund* Leipzig). 23 October, 1933. Play presented 6 November.

whether these rules applied to Leipzig, before concluding that the city had no *Kulturbund*.[132]

Three days before the Dresden group's presentation of *Nathan der Weise*, a lawyer named Jacoby had approached the police with the intention of forming a local *Kulturbund*, only to be told by the police that doing so was not desirable.[133] There the matter stayed for over a year, though the police received a notice from the Saxon ministry for culture, noting that purely Jewish cultural groups did nothing to hinder the end of Jewish influence in the larger society, and were therefore not objectionable.[134] Finally, in December, 1934, the police noted the formation of a regional group of the Cultural Organization of the German Jews (*Ortsgruppe of the Kulturverband Deutscher Juden in Leipzig*), along with a note describing the *Vorstand*, or governing Board, of the organization.

The *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden Ortsgruppe* Leipzig, as the organization became known by early 1935, was nothing less than the cultural showplace of the cream of Jewish life in Leipzig. There were 575 members of the group, plus spouses. The Bamberger brothers, owners of the department stores, were on the membership rolls, as were their competitors Samuel Hodes and Albert, Max and Moritz Held. Rabbi Ephraim Carlebach was a member, along with all of his family. The Reform rabbi Gustav Cohn, and his son Dr. Felix Cohn joined them. Fritz Kroch, the erstwhile "King of Saxony" and still owner of substantial portions of downtown and residential property in Leipzig, was a member, as was Kurt Sabatsky, leader of the assimilationist CV.

[132] Ibid., 15 July, 1933.
[133] Ibid., November 3, 1933.
[134] Ibid., 17 July, 1934.

This group was more than the cream of Leipzig Jewish society; it was the elite of native-born, Reform, and assimilationist Jewish society. Despite the presence of some prominent orthodox and foreign-born Jews, much of the group, and its entire leadership, was German-born and reform.[135] The *Vorstand* was composed of Conrad Goldschmidt, described by the police as one of the best lawyers in town and a well-known integrationist, Tanja Ury, a pianist, and wife of the well-known department store owner, and Dr. Hans Abelsohn, a physician, and the only ardent Zionist of the three.[136] The cultural biases of the *Kulturbund* soon made themselves felt in its programming choices.

The first concert of the group, attracting 550 listeners, was a presentation by the Mendelssohn-Trio-Leipzig, with pieces by Mendelssohn, Tchaikowsky and Mozart. The choice was a natural one for the group: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy represented everything they held dear about the German-Jewish synthesis. The composer and conductor of the *Gewandhaus* orchestra, as noted on the back of the program, had founded the conservatory and made Leipzig a world-class cultural city.[137] He was a man, and a symbol, of whom integrationist German Jews could be proud. He was, of course, also a symbol of a deeper assimilation than even the most ardent integrationists in the audiences would accept—he was a Christian. This fact did not stop either the *Kulturbund* from claiming him as their own, or the state and Nazi party from assigning him the same, Jewish identity.

This cultural bias was perhaps even more pronounced in the next concert by the *Kulturbund*. Presented in two parts, the evening was an ode to the German-ness of the Jews of Germany and Leipzig. The first part, "*Berliner Bilderbogen* 1900", was a

[135] Ibid., 4 April, 1935.
[136] Ibid., 21 December, 1934.
[137] Ibid., 28 May, 1935.

collection of nostalgic sketches and songs from the German popular light theater of the turn of the century. This exercise in nostalgia was an effort to remember a time when German Jews were more clearly German, as well as a paean to a broadly German shared cultural experience.

The second half of the evening was perhaps even more telling. "*Ostjüdischer Bilderbogen*" consisted of songs, dances and dialect humor from the Shtetl. This placement of "*Ostjuden*" in juxtaposition to the solid German Jews who had enjoyed middle class life and culture during the empire served to remind the audience of who they really were—they were Germans, and one of the ways to make that point was to indicate the strangeness of the relative newcomers. One wonders what the few foreign-born Jews in the audience made of it all.[138]

Perhaps this should not be surprising; after all, the *Kulturbund* was about preserving a place for Jews in traditional western European high culture. It therefore makes some sense that the choices made by the group would fall squarely within that tradition. At the same time, though, we should not be surprised thatthe members of the group were self-selected. That is to say that people most vested in a continuation of the relationship between Jews and European culture would join this organization, and we would probably not find people whose vision of German Jewry was grounded in Zionism. But that some were there. Ephraim Carlebach and Samuel Hodes and Hans Abelsohn were Zionists, but they were there. Taken *in toto*, the *Kulturbund*, and its choices and leadership seem to represent the sensibilities of respectable, not to say elite, Jewish Leipzig. And as conditions changed, so to did the sensibilities of that group.

[138] Ibid., 21 June, 1935.

For the rest of 1935, there were few surprises in the programs of the *Kulturbund*: a dance evening, a play by Bernard Shaw. Even in January, 1936, there was an evening of humor, "*Der Bunte Karren*" ["The Colorful Cart"], which included satirical remarks about *Ostjuden*, which the police observer insisted most of the audience did not understand.[139] But, by the time this program had been presented, things were changing. The state had decided that the *Kulturbund* had to become the sole province of Zionists, and anyone who did not comply was to be ousted.

As early as August, 1935, regional police officials had begun to ask about the political orientation of the members of the *Vorstand* of the *Kulturbund*. In September of that year, the Saxon interior minister ordered that no assimilationist could serve on the *Vorstand* of a *Kulturbund*.[140] Still, it took until October for the Leipzig police to report back, saying that Abelsohn was a member of the *Zionistische Vereinigung* , but that Goldschmidt was a member of the *CV*, as was Tanja Ury's husband.[141] Abelsohn was brought in for interrogation the following month, and testified that Goldschmidt was indeed a hardcore anti-Zionist, but seemingly the last one. So, the tide of opinion had turned. It was hard enough putting together Jewish cultural programs without being ideological about it, and he and Goldschmidt had cooperated.[142]

A few days later, Goldschmidt was brought in to explain himself. He admitted that he was not a Zionist, but said that the *Kulturbund* did not act in a political way. Pressed about the continued performance of German music at the *Kulturbund*'s programs, he was obliged to say that this was merely because there were so few Jewish composers,

[139] Ibid., 16 January, 1936.
[140] Ibid., document of 8 January, 1936.
[141] Ibid., 22 October, 1935.
[142] Ibid., 13 November, 1935.

and because German art was global in its impact. One can easily imagine the pain it cost this ardent integrationist, this German, to have to say these things. He closed his interview by asking for help in circumventing a growing boycott of the *Kulturbund*'s performances by venue owners.[143]

In January of the following year, Goldschmidt was notified that he would no longer be allowed to serve on the *Vorstand*. He asked to be given time to find a replacement, and this was granted. He was then able to convince the local police that, although he was not a Zionist, he had ceased to work actively against them. Goldschmidt also warned that appointing an outspoken Zionist to the*Vorstand* might provoke some members of the *Bund*. He had initiated this institution, it would suffer without him, and he ought to stay to take care of it.

During his exchange with the police, the *Zionistische Vereinigung* sent a letter to the police on his behalf, saying that although Goldschmidt was not a formal Zionist, he worked toward the construction of Palestine. They did point out, though, that there were no members (not even Abelsohn) of the *Vereinigung* on the *Vorstand*, and suggested a new member.[144] This satisfied the local police inspector, who had let him stay, with a warning that the *Bund* would not be allowed to propagate assimilationism.[145]

This reprieve suggested that the integrationists had been marginalized. At the same time, it indicated a slight willingness on the part of Zionists to turn the situation to their advantage even as they closed ranks with their old foe, Goldschmidt. At any rate, it was not enough to save the latter's position for long. The Saxon police demanded his

[143] Ibid., 22 November, 1935.
[144] Ibid., 22 January, 1936.
[145] Ibid., exchange of 21, 25 January, 1936.

resignation in February, and got it on the 11th of that month.[146] The *Bund* was directed by the police to elect a new *Vorstand* and report back. They did so, electing 4 members, including the returning Abelsohn and Ury. The report to the police made clear that all were members of Zionist organizations.[147]

Indeed, Abelsohn was a member of the *Zionistische Vereinigung*, and the "*Leipzig-Loge*", and the "*Gesellschaft der Freunde*", Zionist social and fraternal groups. Willy Hofstein, a businessman who was a new member, was a member of the ZV and the lodge, and Nothmann, the head physician at the Jewish hospital, was a member of the ZV. Tanja Ury was no Zionist at all, of course—she was in the *Jüdische Frauenbund* [the Jewish Women's Federation], and the *Frauenverein* (Women's Club) "*Ruth*", both described as politically neutral—and her husband was a prominent member of the *CV*. The local police wrote to the Saxon authorities, asking what to do with her.[148]

The office of the *Präsident des Geheimen Staatspolizei Sachsen* (the President of the Saxon Secret State Police) continued to press the issue, writing the Leipzig police, who then wrote the *Kulturbund*, demanding that Ury be replaced on the *Vorstand*.[149] In late March, the *Kulturbund* asserted that Ury had joined the *Zionistische Frauengruppe "Wizo"* [Women's International Zionist Organization, a group founded in Britain in 1920 to aid emigrants' transition to life in Palestine], and was ex officio therefore a member of the ZV. By May, the police had concluded that this was the case, and that she could stay.[150]

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[146] Ibid., 11 February, 1936.
[147] Ibid., 24 February, 1936.
[148] Ibid., 26 February, 1936.
[149] Ibid., 14, 26 March, 1936.
[150] Ibid., 30 March, 16 May, 1936.

What can we make of this incident? It seems clear that Tanja Ury was no more a Zionist than Goldschmidt was. Joining the *Wizo* was nothing more than an attempt to stay on the board of directors of a cultural organization that was important to her, and which needed her, as a leader and as a performer. She was willing, or able, to do what Goldschmidt had not, by convincing the authorities that she had changed her stripes. But, it seems that the state must have known better. Local police in Leipzig, who were familiar with all of the personalities and organizations involved, seemed to have engaged in a willful ignorance as to Ury's change of heart, and one is led to wonder whether they would have done the same for Goldschmidt, had he been able to pretend.

It seems that the Nazi state believed, in this period, that Zionist Jews were more in tune with the desires of their state than integrationists were. Therefore, the state and its agents practiced intervention even into cultural institutions that seemed innocuous to guarantee the predominance of the Zionist position in Jewish life. We can also conclude, though, that they need not have bothered. The statements and positions of the figures involved in the Goldschmidt dismissal make clear that the ardent integrationists were a dying breed, even in a group so reflective of the traditional integrationist constituency as the elite, German-born, Reform core of the *Kulturbund*. The tide had indeed turned by 1936, and no Jewish group in Leipzig could withstand it.

The other main observation to be made about the experiences of the *Kulturbund* is about the perversely close interaction of victim and oppressor seen in the constant observation and regulation of the group. The *Kulturbund* was watched very closely, and the state, at several levels, was involved in every kind of decision, from the constitution of the board of directors to the programming decisions made. After the assassination in

February 1936 of the head of the Foreign Section of the Swiss NSDAP, Wilhelm Gustloff, by David Frankfurter, a Jew, all *Kulturbund* events were shut down[151], and afterward, all events had to approved by no less than the *Geschäftsführer* of the *Reichskulturkammer* (Managing Director of the National Chamber of Culture, one of the many pseudo-guilds established by the Nazis to control elements of German life), Hans Hinkel.[152] Every event of the *Kulturbund* after April, 1936 was accompanied by a note from this fairly "Grosses Tier" ("big shot").

This was a striking addition to the observational regime under which these Jews of Leipzig had to operate. In addition to the regular observation by the local authorities, the state Gestapo was watching, and the *Reich* authorities were also signing off on every single performance of the *Kulturbund*. This ludicrous display of overkill was a sign of how important the Nazis believed culture to be, and the actions of the overseers also show how disposed they were toward Zionism, at least for the time being.

Youth Groups

Among the other signs of the increasing degree of imposed self-sufficiency among the Jews of Leipzig was a proliferation of youth groups after 1933. There was a long record of youth activity among Jews in the city—in 1929, there were enough organized youth activities that the *Gemeindeblatt* was asking citizens "What are you doing for the Jewish youth? Help build their house!" above a picture of a boy in a youth group uniform and an appeal for donations to the "*Verein 'Jüdisches Jugendhaus'* Leipzig" (the "Jewish Youth House Club of Leipzig"), led by *Gemeinderabbiner* Dr.

[151] *Leipziger Tageszeitung*, 6 February, 1936. The killing of Gustloff is an element of Günter Grass' recent novella *Crabwalk*.
[152] StAL PP-V 4506. 4 March, 1936.

Ephraim Carlebach, Gustav Cohn, and Dr. Felix Goldmann.[153] The Zionists had made youth organization a priority for as long as they had been registered in Leipzig.[154]

But the picture changed after 1933, of course. As one youth leader said, the youth movement carried the future of the Jews after the rise of Hitler, because the older generation just could not deal with the scope of the changes since 1933.[155] The range of groups for young people after 1933 gives a sense of how important the community thought such groups were. Young people could join groups for Zionist boys and girls, or CV boys and girls. They could join athletic organizations, or Jewish boy and girl scouts.[156]

Among Zionist groups alone, there was the "*Hechaluz*", with an emphasis on physical labor and education to prepare young people for Palestine; the "*Misrachi*", which pursued the same goals from a more religious standpoint; the "*Bar Kochba*"—with over 700 members the largest of the Zionist groups—which sought to improve physical well-being through sport; the "*Jüdischer Pfadfinderbund*" ("Jewish Pathfinders' Federation"), which was a kind of Zionist scouting group; the "*Brith Habonim*", which was the same as *Hechaluz* for younger children, and the "Franz Rosenzweig", which was not officially Zionist, but would be soon.[157] And this does not include the groups for the *Staatszionisten*, an important splinter group.

Each youth group had its own uniforms, pennants, and songs. The central role of such symbols was made clear in the issues of the ban of the wearing of uniforms and

[153] *Gemeindeblatt der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig*, 27 September, 1929.
[154] StAL PP-V 1339 Vereinsregister des Amtsgerichts Leipzig "Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig". 22 April, 1925.
[155] StAL PP-V 4437. 19 January, 1936.
[156] In Berlin, Uri Aloni rembered the youth movement as a compensation for the exclusion from the rest of German society: "it straightened our backs." Roseman, 83.
[157] StAL PP-V 4441 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on "Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig". 26 October, 1934.

bearing of pennants in late 1934,[158] and by the many requests for exceptions to made to the rule.[159] German youth groups had generally gloried in the wearing of uniforms and the waving of banners. But now such display was only for the Aryan youth of the nation.

The turn to Zionism

Over time, the sentiments of people like Dr. Fritz [Fred] Grübel—a *Gemeinde* and youth leader in Leipzig who encouraged young people to think about the fatherland, to not assume that they were heading to Palestine[160]—were outweighed by a preponderance of activity pointed exactly in the direction of Palestine. The very next month after Grübel's talk, the integrationist Rabbi Goldschmidt presided over a youth meeting for the *Gemeinde*, during which the eventual move to Palestine was discussed as a foregone conclusion.[161] By the time big youth meetings were banned in 1937[162], the *Gemeinde* (and therefore the mass of respectable Jewish opinion in Leipzig) had joined the Zionists in agreeing that there was no place for young Jewish Germans in Germany.

This was another sign of the tide having turned in favor of the Zionists by the mid-1930s. The *Zionistische Vereinigung*, the largest Zionist organization in the city, had grown in importance by 1934 to the point that 2,500 people showed up at its Herzl celebration. There were youth in uniforms, and songs in Hebrew, and appeals for trees for Israel. There were pamphlets from the association of independent Jewish artisans

[158] Ibid., 30 November, 1934.
[159] Eg., in January, 1935, the youth group of the CV asked for permission to go to the services for the deceased *Gemeinde*rabbiner Felix Goldmann with "Kluft und Wimpel" [uniforms and pennants] because he was a member of the CV. Permission was granted, along with a strong warning not be seen on the street with the stuff, or to even wear it under their coats, a move specifically proscribed by the order of the previous November. StAL PP-V 5007, files on the Jüdischer Centralverein. 16 January, 1935.
[160] PP-V 4437, 10 January, 1936.
[161] Ibid., 5 February, 1936.
[162] StAL PP-V 3937/9 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig. 15 May, 1937.

("Remember the Jewish Artisan!"), and the ZV ("Herzl Lives!", with a short biography). Participants were told that "Zionism is the solution to the Jewish question", a clear response to the rhetoric of anti-Semitism.

But, at the same time, the speaker, Rabbi Joachim Prinz from Berlin, felt obliged to assert in an essay distributed to the audience that Zionism was not just an issue for poor Jews from the east. Zionism was not a humanitarian question, but a national and a political one.[163] It seems that, even though Zionism was an important and growing force in Leipzig in 1934, and even though the movement was acting in clear response to what the German state had begun, there was still a great divide, and Zionists felt obliged to point out that their movement had some relevance for the German-born, Reform Jews of the community.

Despite Rabbi Prinz's insistence to the contrary, Zionism was still in the process of emerging from its past as a movement by and for orthodox and foreign-born Jews. This relative marginality is underscored by the comments of a police observer at a youth meeting in August of that year. The speaker, Asael Davidsohn, exhorted his listeners to think of Jewry, to help define and build the Jewish nation. The observer pointed out that the speaker, who left the next day for Israel, did not have a solid command of German.[164]

Zionism was a more religious movement than that of the integrationists. The ZV planned a Simcha Torah celebration for October, 1934.[165] It is difficult to imagine the CV or any other integrationist organization doing so, and there is no evidence that they ever did. In November of that year, the ZV sponsored a talk by a Frau Dr. Blau from Hamburg, who insisted on placing the construction of a new "Jewish empire" within a

[163] StAL PP-V 4441. 2 July 1934.
[164] Ibid., 27 August, 1934.
[165] Ibid., 28 September, 1934.

"sacred tradition". Palestine would only work, she said, if Jews paid more attention to religion: "It is religious duty to build Palestine on a religious basis."[166]

There were still bitter divisions between Zionists and integrationists in 1934. Dr. Franz Mayer from the national office of the ZV told his audience how he had become disgusted with disunity among Jewry, and had "settled accounts with Liberal [Reform] Jewry, and come to the conclusion that all Jews could only become strong again under the leadership of the Zionists."[167] The link is very clear here, between integrationists and Reform. Similarly, Martin Altertum, a jurist who was to become increasingly important in the *Gemeinde* and in Leipzig Zionism, concluded that "a Zionist must be a 100% Jew."[168]

But things were changing. As Jews' exclusion from the mainstream of German life grew more and more pronounced, the old enemies on the two sides of the Zionist divide grew closer and closer. The ZV canceled its Simcha Torah celebration in 1934, to mark the death of the *Gemeinderabbiner* and CV war-horse Goldmann, who, as Altertum noted in his speech, was not a Zionist but gave his all for Jews. When the Zionist leader Dr. Fließ left town, his party was attended by no less than the leader of the CV in Leipzig, Kurt Sabatsky.[169] Conrad Goldschmidt, integrationist head of the *Kulturbund*, came to a meeting of the ZV, to advertise the *Bund* at intermission.[170] Goldschmidt had to go to the ZV meeting if he wanted to reach a sizable audience.

Jews felt increasingly unable to deny the Nazi definition of the national community. More and more, they seem to have come to the conclusion that Germans had

[166] Ibid., 15 November, 1934.
[167] Ibid., 4 November, 1934.
[168] Ibid., 24 October, 1934.
[169] Ibid., 30 September, 1934.
[170] Ibid., 13 February, 1935.

decided that their nation was an ethnically derived national community, and that they did not fit in. Over time, the rhetoric of the Zionists in Leipzig changed, from religious exhortations and references to Jews from the east, to arguments founded in the language of 20th century nationalism. These arguments tended to be based on the overwhelming evidence of the hostility of the German people toward their Jewish countrymen.

So, Rabbi Prinz came back to town and gave a speech on "The Jewish situation—Today". It was a moving litany of the changes in Jewish life in Germany after 1933. The Germans wanted the Jews out, he said. The government had banned propaganda aimed at convincing people to stay in the country, and many who felt that they were German had been forced to realize, for the first time in their lives, that they were Jews. Jewish life had become a ghetto—German culture no longer belonged to them. Beethoven had become a grotesque reminder of their exclusion, his humane vision—the "other Germany"—now reduced to yet another tool to remind Jews of their marginalized status by denying his work to Jews. He did not think that the political situation would change—he saw a Germany in ten years that would have very few Jews. To live, he said, one needs food and water, but also neighbors. He did not understand the continuing division. He did not understand how anyone could fail to be thankful that there was a Palestine.[171]

The evidence led some to conclude that the Nazis had it right, in some ways at least. Dr. Leo Goldhaber, a ZV member in Leipzig, told a meeting of *the Jüdischer Pfadfinderbund* that Jews needed to develop a national, or "*völkisch*" awareness. The police reporter dryly observed: "as an example he held up Germany. Germany, which had been, in contrast to other states, split as a nation, and by party, was now united."

[171] Ibid., 5 April, 1935.

Goldhaber even spoke of developing "national and social people".[172] If it is hard to understand how a German Jew could talk that way, it also too much to expect that all Jews would remain immune to the "logic" of what was happening all around them.

The State Zionists

One group of Jews in Leipzig who shared many of these same assumptions about national communities was the State—or Revisionist—Zionists. It is worth pointing out here that there were many different kinds of Zionists. The bulk of German Zionists belonged to the mainstream *Zionistische Vereinigung*, and shared its moderate politics and social democratic outlook. But the mainstream World Zionist Organization, led by Chaim Weizmann, was seen by some as far too conciliatory, much too given to compromise, whether with the British or with Palestinian Arabs. Dissatisfaction with the perceived retreats of the movement had caused some Zionists, led by the fiery Russian Vladimir Jabotinsky, to branch out. Jabotinsky, a former member of the Zionist executive and the *Wunderkind* of Zionism[173], believed that Zionism was not nearing the end of political struggle, but was approaching the beginning of meaningful conflict, an armed conflict resulting in a Jewish state in Palestine.

Jabotinsky argued for Jewish armed force in Palestine, and for the creation of a self-governing Jewish commonwealth in the whole region, including in Transjordan. His was a maximalist position.[174] As Walter Laqueur says, "This position was revolutionary inasmuch as it demanded the establishment of a Jewish state at a time when it was not

[172] Ibid., 10 February, 1935.
[173] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, New York, 2003. 339.
[174] Ibid., 347.

openly advocated by any other Zionist leader or movement."[175] This would eventually become the position of the whole Zionist movement, but for the time being, the "Revisionist" movement was a dramatic break from the mainstream Zionist vision of a semi-autonomous homeland for the Jews, with or without a Jewish majority, a majority that Jabotinsky claimed was essential. Revisionists also became more socially conservative over time, replacing the socialism of the mainstream "Labor" Zionist movement with a frank anti-socialism.[176] Though Jabotinsky was embarrassed by the tendencies of some members of the Revisionist movement—most dramatically when Palestinian Jewish leaders asked him to become a "Duce"[177]—there were undoubtedly some Revisionists who embraced the illiberalism and ethnic politics of the fascists, and they were quite active in Leipzig, as we shall see.

In June, 1933 a group of splinter Zionists, having formed a local branch of the SZ, asked permission from the Leipzig police to hold meetings. After the police checked with their opposite numbers in Berlin about SZ activity there, permission was given to the locals, led by a lawyer, Dr. Leo Goldwasser, to hold meetings, but only in private homes.[178] Goldwasser had practiced law in Leipzig since 1924. He did well for himself in business and continued his activity in Zionist politics. He was elected to the first *Vorstand* of the *Zionistische Vereinigung* in Leipzig in 1925, before joining the anti-Marxist revisionist breakaways in 1927.[179]

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[175] Ibid., 348.
[176] Ibid., 351.
[177] Ibid., 362.
[178] StAL PP-V 4498: Polizeipräsidium Files on Verband der Staatszionisten [later the Staatszionistischen Organisation]. 17, 19 June, 16 October, 18 November, 1933.
[179] StAL PP-V 4500, 31 August, 1938. PP-V 3937/9 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on Zionistische Vereinigung Leipzig, 1936-1939, 22 April, 1925.

The State Zionists wrote back, protesting the ban on public meetings on ideological grounds. In a long letter detailing the history of mainstream and State or "Revisionist" Zionism, the *Verband* condemned the democratic and Marxist tendencies in the ZV, and compared itself to the Nazis. It emphasized discipline within their movement. It compared squabbles with the ZV to the conflicts within the Nazi party. They quoted Hans Frank's approval of Zionism. They described their vision of Zionism as a new national development, a revival of a national community comparable with what the Nazis had done. They compared their youth group, the "*Herzlia*" to the HJ. They said they wanted a "totaler Staat", a "total state".

They assured the police that they would not present any opposition to the NSDAP, any more than they would any national-minded movement, like the Fascists in Italy, for instance. They joined the NSDAP in opposing assimilation. And they included with their letter a manifesto written in language seemingly designed to direct Nazi attention to their opponents in intra-Jewish politics, calling the mainstream Zionists assimilationists and Marxists.[180] These people were operating in an environment in which the logic of exclusionary nationalism was becoming a shared presumption.

The SZ spent a fair amount of time trying to convince the Nazi authorities that they shared the same set of basic goals. In March 1934, when permission was denied to the SZ for a lecture to be held entitled "*Judenstaat—Das Ziel. Staatszionismus—der Weg*" ("A Jewish state—the goal. State Zionism—the way"), Goldwasser wrote a long letter to the police trying to convince them that the state and Party had nothing to fear from the SZ, that they shared the same goals. The flaw in Goldwasser's efforts, of

[180] StAL PP-V 4498, 26 November, 1933.

course, was that that the state and party did not fear the SZ, any more than they feared any other Jewish group. They merely loathed them, and sought to use them, for the time being, as best they could.[181]

After being told, without explanation, that the term "*Judenstaat*" ("Jewish State) was an affront to public order, Goldwasser offered the police a number of choices for a speech a few months later by Georg Kareski, former *Vorsitzender* (Chair) of the Berlin *Gemeinde* and president of the national SZ organization. The preferred choice was "*Judenstaat—die einzige Lösung der Judenfrage*" ("A Jewish State—the Only Solution to the Jewish Problem"). But, in case the term *Judenstaat* gave offense, they also offered "*Politischer oder Unpolitischer Zionismus*" ("Political or Unpolitical Zionism").[182] When the talk had to be rescheduled and moved on technical grounds, Goldwasser notified the police and said he wanted to do whatever he could to help comply with regulations flowing from §1 of the *Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutze des Deutschen Volkes* (Order of the *Reich* President for the Defense of the German People) of 4 February, 1933.[183]

Goldwasser might have thought his efforts well worth the time he expended if he could have read an internal police memo of two months later from the file entitled "*Judenbewegung*" ("Jewish movement"). The memo was a summary of the intent and direction of State Zionism. The document referred to Zionism generally as the "national renewal movement of the Jewish people", language directly comparable to the way the Nazis talked about themselves. The SZ's opposition to the ZV was based on democratic and Marxist tendencies within the ZV, and the SZ's struggle against Marxism and class

[181] Nicosia, throughout.
[182] StAL PP-V 4498, 30 April, 1934.
[183] Ibid., 22 April, 1934.

conflict. It was everything Goldwasser might have wanted the state to say about his party.[184]

This is no coincidence. In a striking display of the degree to which some Jewish groups could succeed, at least for a time, in shaping the state's ideas about them and their opponents, much of the police document is a copy or a paraphrase of Goldwasser's letter from the previous November. The description of Zionism as "the national renewal movement of the Jewish people" is a direct quote from Goldwasser's letter. The hope expressed in Goldwasser's letter that Jews in Palestine will be able to have "a normal and peaceful life in constant contact with the homeland soil and in healthy occupations as farmers, artisans and tradesmen" is replicated verbatim in the police document with the exception of the word "especially" before "tradesmen".

The list of distinctive Revisionist positions Goldwasser provided for the police was paraphrased through its first and second items, "the necessity of a united closed world view of all Zionists dedicated to a Jewish state (Monismus)", and "combat[ing] Marxism and class conflict as heresy , incompatible with reaching national unity." Goldwasser asserted that "it is clear that the outspoken oppositional position of the State Zionist Organization—fighting in the spirit of these Revisionist ideas, against liberal-democratic party confusion and against Marxism—has led to violent intra-Zionist fights and hostility", and went on to compare this with the hostility raised by the Nazis' unity and renewal movement. The police report echoed these assertions until that comparison. Goldwasser was getting most of what he wanted, and even if the police report did not follow him to his explicit conclusion, the implicit conclusions were obvious.[185]

[184] Ibid., 2 June, 1934.
[185] Ibid., 26 November, 1933, 2 June, 1934.

The degree to which Goldwasser and his compatriots had been successful in convincing the authorities of their ideological kinship can be seen in an extraordinary order by Reinhard Heydrich, from 31 March, 1935. Marked "Confidential", the order gave specific permission, revocable at any time, for "Herzlia", the SZ youth group, to wear uniforms at their closed meetings. The reasons were explicitly laid out; the goals of the State Zionists were consistent with state policy, and the use of uniforms might attract more members, and eventually lead to the emigration of more Jews from Germany.[186] Even more striking was the nature of those uniforms. Later, after the group had been banned, inventories of seized uniforms described brown shirts and pants, with blue trim. The police engaged in a protracted correspondence about the uniforms, asking that the color be confirmed.[187]

Goldwasser was effectively presenting the case for SZ-Nazi cooperation, for the time being. He understood, and perhaps shared, much of the Nazi world view in regards to politics and nationality. Like the Nazis, he believed that Jews were a distinct people, a nation. They ought to have a nation-state of their own, away from Europe. Up to that point, the SZ, the ZV, and the NSDAP were on the same page, and so, for that matter, was much of the western world. But Goldwasser went further: he used the same language of "useful work", an assumption that traditional Jewish trades were corrupting ones, and that a return to the soil was in order. The mainstream Zionists prepared their young people for work in the fields and shops in Palestine, but out of necessity, and they mourned the loss of a world of Jewish doctors and professors.[188]

[186] StAL PP-V 4451. Copy in note of 10 April, 1935 from Gestapa Sachsen to Leipzig police.
[187] StAL PP-V 4500, 31 August, 1938.
[188] StAL PP-V 4441, 11 December, 1934

Goldwasser and the SZ spoke the same political and cultural language as the Nazis. An insistence on a total state, on the corrupting nature of democracy and Marxism, and on the need to renew people along ethnic lines and through political movements was common to both movements. Most disturbing, perhaps, was Goldwasser's tendency to describe mainstream Zionists in terms identical to the ones the Nazis used for their own enemies. Goldwasser's apparent willingness to direct the hostility of the Nazi state toward his fellow Jews must be seen in context—the "Night of the Long Knives" and the concentration camps were still months away—but it is nonetheless difficult to excuse. Cold solace is found in the fact that the state's relative friendliness to State Zionism was short-lived.

Probably the worst example of the SZ attempting to direct the state's attention to their rivals happened in October, 1933. The police got an anonymous tip, saying that the headquarters of the *Jüdisches Handwerkersbund* (Jewish Craftsmen's League) in a building shared with a Zionist group were being used by young former KPD members to hold secret meetings. The police raided the building, and did find twelve young people, along with some literature, which they confiscated. The most incriminating piece was a pamphlet titled "The Jews Demand Hitler's Murder."

The youth protested that the pamphlet was in fact a Nazi anti-Semitic tract (it was), and immediately pointed the finger at Alexander Landau, leader of the SZ youth group, the *Herzlia* Landau, the young dissidents alleged, had called the police in an effort to secure the arrests of young Jews who did not share his philosophy, partly out of ideology, partly out of viciousness. The police concluded from Landau's whereabouts that he probably did place the call. Landau was brought in for questioning and denied it,

claiming to be elsewhere. The police, describing Landau's philosophy as "National-Zionist", found that his alibi was feasible, and that someone else could have made the call, but arrived at no final conclusions on the matter.[189]

The Leipzig followers of Goldwasser also heard of an enemy in Palestine. In contrast to the mainstream Zionists who were preaching some sort of symbiosis with the Arabs who were living in the region, Goldwasser told an audience of five people in October 1934 that "it is not permissible that the Arabs should have an influence on the Jews in Palestine. A people who stand high in culture, like the Jews, cannot allow that, since the Arabs are about 1,000 years behind in culture.[190]

A more conciliatory tone was struck in a larger meeting (attended by about 200 people) the very next month, Goldwasser asserted at this point that the Arabs were kindred people to the Jews, ought not fight with them, and would benefit from close proximity to the Jews. The big villain, as at so many Zionist meetings, was the British empire. Goldwasser told his listeners to emulate the German SPD in 1919—just declare a state in Israel, hold on and fight. (Despite this provocative ode to the old enemies of the new German regime, the reporting police office made no move to shut down the meeting.) Ernst Hamburger, a guest speaker from Berlin, brought up another German example. He pointed to case of the German-speaking peoples in Czechoslovakia and the Baltics. They had been out-procreated, and had ultimately lost the demographic battle, and with it their homes. This could not happen in Palestine.[191] If this sounds like a logic shared by Nazi theorists of racial conflict, it is. But, it ought to be pointed out, this logic was shared by many Europeans at this time, including Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, and

[189] StAL PP-V 4451, 31 October, 3 November, 1933.
[190] StAL PP-V 4498, 9 October, 1934.
[191] Ibid., 12 November, 1934.

German-speakers all over eastern and central Europe. The Zionists, and the state Zionists in particular, operated in an environment in which this was the rhetorical and logical norm.

A few months later Richard Pelz, leader of propaganda for the Leipzig branch of the SZ, brought the position of Arabs within a Jewish state into question again when he spoke to 120 people on "Palästina oder Erez Israel" ("Palestine or the State of Israel"). Pelz asserted that only fanatics could accomplish a Jewish state. He held out Josef Trumpeldor as a model. He criticized the mainstream Zionists for talking of community with Arabs. He asserted that the SZ wanted a Jewish national state, a state without Arabs.[192] Goldwasser struck a more conciliatory tone the following November, when he asserted that the goals of SZ were "liberty, equality and fraternity", and said that an Israeli economy would need Arab workers. There was a limit to brotherhood, of course. Goldwasser warned against intermarriage.[193]

The high point of attendance at a state Zionist meeting in Leipzig was in February, 1935, when eight hundred people came to a speech by Georg Kareski, with five hundred turned away due to a lack of space. Kareski, who had an ability to turn a phrase, said that "the Jewish question burns harder all over the world. Everywhere, the Jews were marked as homeless and without rights. Every people has a fatherland, and Israel is theirs." Perhaps the highlight of the evening was a short play, "*Makkabäer von Heute*" ("Maccabees of Today"), about three young men going to Israel without permits. One is shot, the others put on trial, and in the dock they reject the charges of illegal immigration—they disputed the notion that their actions were illegal. They had

[192] Ibid., 18 March, 1935.
[193] Ibid., 12 November, 1935.

"homeland rights" here. At this point, the police observer noted, "the play was interrupted for a long time by stormy applause." The characters asserted that they would keep coming, in mass numbers, until they filled the jails to bursting.[194] Again, the language is nationalist, the villain English.

The language of nationalism continued, sometimes spoken in forms that could have been prepared by NSDAP propagandists. In August, 1935, Kareski—whose frequent presence indicates the importance of Leipzig as a center for SZ operations[195]—spoke on "The Liquidation of German Jewry". Flanked on each side by uniformed Herzlia members, Kareski said that assimilation was dead. The current German government was serious about its plans, and a way had to be found to remove Jews from the German economy. The need for emigration was not new, only more obvious. The idea that Jews could ever really settle in the diaspora was a charade. The Jews needed not only a homeland, but a leader, who, along with armed Jewish legions in Palestine, would lead them to freedom.[196]

But by this time, as mainstream Zionists were growing in number, state Zionism's fortunes were beginning to flag. Fewer people were coming to the meetings[197], and organizers were continuing to have a hard time convincing Jewish landlords to rent halls for their meetings. The local state Zionists went back to their imagined ally, the Nazi state, for help. In a notice to the police for an upcoming lecture entitled "*Volksbewusster und assimilatorischer Zionismus*" (again, note the use of a label the Nazis would also

[194] Ibid., 25 February, 1935.
[195] If anything, Leipzig's importance as a center of State Zionism peaked during the break with Berlin and Kareski, but declined soon after as Goldwasser's maximalism—even compared to other Revisionists—seemed to wear thin with his audiences, as evinced by declining attendance at meetings.
[196] StAL PP-V 4498, 2 August, 1935.
[197] Organizers described the lack of adult participation in one rally in September, 1935, as "Especially displeasing". Only 15 people, all of them young, had come. Ibid., 10 September, 1935.

have used. "*Volksbewusster*" can be translated as "racially conscious", and is drawn as a clear contrast to the "assimilationist" Zionism of the mainstream ZV. Even if the racial element is removed from the translation, it is still a sign of a common language of nationalism), Goldwasser asked the police for help in finding a new hall, since, after all, the groups and the state shared the same goals.[198]

In October of that year, an extraordinary document made its way into the police headquarters, making clear the desire of the State Zionists to curry the favor of the state . A petition from the State Zionists to the national government, in six articles, made it clear that this group saw its Nazi tormentor as a natural ally. Article one demanded a "total solution to the Jewish question". The State Zionists, under their national umbrella, the NZO, said they had the answer. They claimed to be the strongest Jewish organization in the world, with 730,000 members, from orthodox and reform camps. Article two, perhaps the most shocking, recognized the right of the German people not to associate with undesired foreigners. The Jews of Germany, the SZ said, were guests in that country, and therefore in no position to resist the wishes of the German people. Article three called for the cooperation of Jews with the German government in facilitating emigration. Article four laid out what was necessary for that cooperation, including a government office for emigration to Palestine. The goal was 20,000 Jews a year leaving the country and the eventual emigration of everyone under 45 years of age. To do this, the German government would have to exercise its influence with the British government to encourage open Jewish emigration to Palestine.

Article five argued that with an end to the conflict between Germans and Jews, the international boycott imposed on Germany due to measures taken against Jews would

[198] Ibid., 3 September, 1935.

end. The SZ pointed out that they had already been working to end the boycott on behalf of Germany. The final article added that, if Germany did all of the things asked for in the petition, a normalization of the relations between Jews and Germans would develop. If the Nazis ended their defamation of the Jews, and sought to aid the movement of the Jews to Palestine, they would become associated with the aspirations of Jews, and a new warm relationship would develop between them.[199]

This would perhaps be humorous if it were not so sad. The state Zionists badly misunderstood the nature of Nazi anti- Semitism, reading only a reflection of their own nationalism. To be sure, there were real similarities between the programs of the two groups, based on ethnically-defined national group identity, and there can be no doubt that the SZ took some inspiration from the dynamism and language of fascism. But the SZ failed to identify the murderous intent at the heart of Nazism. (It should be said that this was in stark contrast to the realism of the founder of Revisionism, Vladimir Jabotinsky, who told a group of friends not long before Hitler came to power that he expected them to carry out their campaign promises only on the Jewish question.)[200] We should not expect them to have been prophets—very few people knew that a system of industrialized death was in the offing—but the desires of the SZ in Leipzig to achieve success in their own milieu of Jewish politics, at the expense of their rivals, led them to a sort of willful blindness about what was going on.

This could only last so long, of course. As Nazi policy grew more and more hateful toward Jews, it became harder for the SZ to build on their alleged partnership with the state. Membership in the *Herzlia* dropped, from forty-one in the fall of 1935 to

[199] Ibid., 29 October, 1935.
[200] Laqueur, 352.

fifteen in the spring of 1936.[201] The exclusion of the SZ from respectable Jewish life continued. In April, 1936, they were told by the *Gemeinde* rabbi that they had politicized a worship service and were not welcome to meet in any *Gemeinde* hall.[202]

A place for a meeting was finally found in May, but that meeting—attended by only twelve people—was the scene of a kind of implosion. Goldwasser took the opportunity to attack the "lukewarm" leader of the group in Berlin, Kareski, as insufficiently revolutionary. (In fact, Goldwasser and the Leipzig SZ had broken with Kareski and the national "New Zionist Organization" over the boycott of German goods and overall opposition to the Nazi regime—Goldwasser took the lead in cozying up to the state.[203]) Alexander Landau, leader of the *Herzlia* youth group , said "in a joking tone" that "if only the Gestapo weren't here, he'd send the whole group in Berlin to hell." He said that without the support of the state, the struggle was useless. The police observer thought that Landau's speech was intended "partly to raise fighting spirits, and partly to examine the collapse of the State Zionist movement." His overall impression was of a movement in decline, one whose members did not believe in its goals.[204]

The State Zionists' activity in Leipzig petered out over time. They continued to hold meetings and youth activities until their dissolution in August, 1938. Fewer and fewer people came, and the support of the state became less and less enthusiastic. When Polish citizens were targeted, as they were in all Jewish groups, the SZ was not

[201] StAL PP-V 4451, 6 April, 1936.
[202] StAL PP-V 4498, 29 April, 1936.
[203] StA: PP-V 4500, 31 August, 1938.
[204] Ibid., 5 May, 1936.

exempted, despite Goldwasser's explicit claim to special treatment because of the work the SZ was doing in encouraging emigration.[205]

In August of 1938, the headquarters of the Leipzig SZ were raided, and the homes of the leaders searched. Goldwasser and the other functionaries—including 24-year-old Margot Petzold and teenager Wilhelm Silberlust—were put under house arrest and questioned as espionage suspects. The state had decided that this group that wanted so badly to cooperate with them was "*Staatsfeindlich*" ("hostile to the state"). Their plans for military action in Palestine qualified them as a paramilitary group, and their ties to the NZO, long since severed, qualified them as a "boycott group", since, the police said, there was reason to believe those ties would be renewed in the future. Their official stamps were confiscated, the property at headquarters was taken, and their landlady was left asking for some of her furniture back.[206] Goldwasser left for Palestine the next February.[207]

The story of the state Zionists is a sad one, and in some ways grotesque. To encounter young German Jews aping the language and costumes of Nazis is not what one expects to find. There is more to it than shock value. The State Zionists represented something important. They stood for the degree of commonality which bound nationalists of many stripes in the 1930s in Europe. There was an increasing consensus that national lines drawn up in exclusionary ways—a repudiation of liberal nationalism, and therefore of a multi-ethnic community, and therefore of Jewish assimilation—represented the wave of the future. George Mosse's typically eloquent observation that

[205] StAL 4499, 11 April, 1938.
[206] StAL PP-V 4500, 28 August, 1938.
[207] StAL PP-V 4451, handwritten note in margin of SD memo dated 4 October, 1938.

this vision of community did not solve the problems of modernity so much as compound them is of little comfort.[208]

There is, of course, a difference between Zionists and Nazis. The vast majority of German Zionists pursued their agenda within the parameters of traditional liberal politics. As the early Nazi period passed, mainstream Zionism became stronger and stronger, as the evidence all around them—namely the increasingly cruel rejection they experienced at the hands of the new German state—confirmed everything they had believed about the need for a Jewish home. Many of these assumptions were shared by all nationalists, including National Socialists. But, as mainstream Zionists swept their assimilationist rivals away, they also retained important parts of the old liberal consensus they shared with their those rivals—democratic politics, and debate based on reason, within an open society. This is theZionism they wanted to take to Israel, and they did.

But, there was another Zionism, one that shared more of the radical sensibilities of racist, fascist nationalism. The State Zionists repudiated not just the old liberal ideals of national identity, but the bulk of liberalism as a social philosophy. They identified fascist movements as kindred spirits, and operated with many of the same techniques. So, we see mass meetings in uniform, an insistence on the authority of leadership and on the importance of the state, a willingness to subject rivals to violence, and explicitly racist rhetoric. There are two tragedies in this story: first, that these German Jews identified Nazis as people who shared much of their basic political world-view, and tried to play by the Nazis' rules. And, second, that they were so very mistaken about the desire of the Nazis to cooperate with them.

[208] Mosse, 59.

Chapter 3: "Regarded by the German Government as Undesirable": exclusion, deportation and murder, 1938-1945

Although the period of early Nazism resulted in the increasing exclusion of Jews from public life in Leipzig, it did not generally entail consistent physical violence against them. That changed dramatically, in Leipzig as it did all over the country, in November, 1938. *Kristallnacht* was the beginning of the end for the Jews of Leipzig, initiating a period that would not cease until virtually every member of that community was either dead or in exile. The certainly was some continuity in Jewish life in the city from 1933 through *Kristallnacht*: a dismaying degree of popular anti- Semitism, equaling and sometimes even surpassing the anti-Jewish fervor of the party and state; the overwhelming importance of the religious community, increasingly isolated as the only meaningful institution left to Jews in Leipzig, and the continuing importance of Zionism, now charged with saving as many Jewish lives as possible.

By the end of the Nazi reign of terror, and the end of the war, many of these themes seemed increasingly distant from the overpowering central fact of murderers hauling off more and more Leipzigers to their destruction. That one fact overshadows everything else; this is the time when the Jewish community of Leipzig dies, and it seems hard to imagine how it could ever live again. But it did, and the mass murder of the 1940s, initiated in the *Kristallnacht*, is in some ways the first act of that revival. Those few who survived went on to form a new community, and the same themes of Jewish life in the city—tensions between Jews within the community, the importance of Zionism as a real and rhetorical fact of political life, antipathy toward Jews by their fellow Leipzigers—

continued on surprisingly unchanged. The one thing that had changed, of course, was the fact that the vast majority of Jews had left Leipzig in this period. And they did not come back.

Kristallnacht in Leipzig

The turning point in Leipzig, as in all other German cities, was the night of the ninth of November, 1938. Jews in the city had been exposed to brutal exclusion from public life, and had been subject to a policy of strongly encouraged emigration, not least through the relative favor shown to Zionist organizations by the state, as we saw in the last chapter. From November of 1938, though, that policy was shifted toward one of deportations and murder. This was like any other German city.

Leipzig's experience in the *Kristallnacht* was marked by two major characteristics. First, the night of broken glass got a sort of head-start in Leipzig. The deportations of Jews actually began earlier than November, 1938, but not for German citizens. As we have seen, one of the outstanding characteristics of the Jewish community in Leipzig was its high proportion of foreign-born Jews, most of them Polish. Along with Berlin, Leipzig was a center of so-called "Ostjuden", and therefore the Jewish population of Leipzig was subject to an earlier process of exclusion from their neighborhoods and livelihoods, of arrest and deportations. Second, a disconcerting—though hardly unique—amount of popular anti-Semitic violence accompanied the pogrom in Leipzig, as can be seen in the examples of those Jewish Leipzigers who found themselves the subject of mob attacks in the hours after the assaults on the synagogues.

Leipzig was, after Berlin, the center of foreign-born Jews in Germany. In 1933, there were 11,564 members of the *Gemeinde*; it is very difficult to say how many other Jews were in town who did not choose membership in the religious community, but they were certainly a distinct minority. Of the 11, 564, only 3,847 were German citizens. 5,624 were Polish, and another 1,502 were from "the east".[209] This roughly 30/70 division between Germans and foreigners was roughly the reverse of the national ratio.[210] As we have seen, this makeup had had a profound impact on the nature of intra-Jewish relations in Leipzig. Now, as was about to become clear, it would define *Kristallnacht* in Leipzig.

As early as April of 1938, the German government had begun to demand that foreign-born Jews be excluded from their positions within the *Gemeinde*, and therefore from their jobs. Of the 149 total functionaries of the *Gemeinde*, including everyone from the chairman to the rabbis to the gardeners at the cemetery, 51 were foreign-born, a number not close to their overall proportion in the *Gemeinde*, but an improvement, considering their historically marginalized position in the community (see chapter 1).

One of the members of the *Vorstand*, Dr. David Kuritzkes, was "*staatlos*" ("stateless"). Of the eighteen members of the *Gemeinde*'s "*Ausschuss*" (a kind of representative committee, subordinate to the *Vorstand*), three were Poles. One of the religious teachers, Dr. Jacob Cohn, was from Austria. Eight deputies in the assembly were foreign born. Both of the overseers of kosher meat were from the east: Jacob Rosenzweig was Czech, and Moses Tykoschinski was Polish. All four of the gardeners were foreign-born. It would have been very hard for the *Gemeinde* to function if the

[209] Steffen Held, "Der Novemberpogrom in Leipzig und die Massenverhaftung Leipziger Juden 1938/39" in Manfred Unger, ed., *Judaica Lipsiensia: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, herausgeben von der Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung. Leipzig, 1994: Edition Leipzig, 195.
[210] Fred Grubel and Frank Mecklenburg "Leipzig: Profile of a Jewish Community during the first years of Nazi Germany", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XLII 1997, 167.

government had decided to expel foreign-born Jews from their employ.[211] That is exactly what happened.

On April 1, 1938, the *Gemeinde* was told to get rid of all of the non-Germans in their organization. The gardeners were immediately fired, as were those members of the leadership who were not German.[212] Over the next few days, and stretching on for the next several months, the *Gemeinde* asked for permission to hold onto various employees for particular reasons. The discussions with the Gestapo offer a record of a perverse negotiation. In the next week, the *Gemeinde* asked for special permission for foreign-born functionaries at private synagogues (that is to say, those that were directly supported and supervised by the Gemeinde), for irreplaceable religious functionaries, for workers at the Jewish rest home, for *Kindergarten* teachers, since most young Jews had emigrated. All these requests were denied by a Gestapo officer who noted that this all indicated to him the need for tighter control of the Jews on the part of the state.[213] The tone grew more threatening: Gestapo assessor Schindhelm told the *Gemeinde* that he expected action by the 10th of May, and that if he did not get it, measures would be taken.[214]

It went on: Hebrew teachers and messengers and cemetery workers. Some agreed to keep working for no pay, like the former cemetery worker Rudi Goldberg, who was needed to help in winter charity work.[215] A few got permission from the Gestapo to continue working, like Margot Kahane, a social worker who was needed to deal with

[211] StAL PP-V 4438, Polizeipräsidium Leipzig: Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizei Leipzig: Israelitische ReligionsGemeinde, 1938-1940. Undated, but supplement—obviously in the next few days—dated 15 April, 1938.
[212] Ibid., note of 8 April, 1938.
[213] Ibid., 6 April, 1938.
[214] Ibid., 12 April, 1938.
[215] Ibid., 6 September, 1938.

Jews from the east.[216] Sometimes individuals went directly to the Gestapo to ask permission to stay, like Simon Rimalower, who was born in Leipzig and did occasional work for the *Gemeinde* as a messenger. He had served on all fronts in the First World War, but his German citizenship had been revoked in 1933 because his parents had been born in Poland.[217] It is not clear from the records what happened to his request, but given the overall tendencies of the Gestapo, it is not likely it was granted.

At times, the cruelty of the Gestapo was pronounced, as in the case of their rejection of a request from the *Gemeinde* to hire a Polish citizen, Isaak Meier Prinz, to lead the prayers at the Orthodox Passover service.[218] Perhaps the cruelest aspect of the whole affair was that the *Gemeinde* had to do the firing throughout. Most of the notices were signed by Dr. Fritz Grunsfeld, who by now had taken over as business manager of the *Gemeinde*, and who would play such a large role in its life after the war.

Of course, this process of exclusion from employment—even within the Jewish community—would not justify describing treatment of foreign-citizenship Jews as a "rolling start" to *Kristallnacht* by itself. Not even the arrest and transport to Sachsenhausen camp of 45 Jewish Leipzigers in June of 1938 would justify such a description—they were arrested on grounds ranging from KPD membership to continuing activity in forbidden professions, and were released soon after, largely due to negative coverage in the émigré press.[219] This was bad, but not bad enough to justify the formulation used above.

[216] Ibid., 23 February, 1939.
[217] Ibid., 28 April, 1938.
[218] Ibid., 30 March, 1939.
[219] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom", 195.

Matters deteriorated in Leipzig in October of 1938. On the sixth of that month, the Polish government established the thirtieth as the last date to renew passports. Heinrich Himmler gave an order on the twenty-seventh to begin the deportation of Polish Jews. The next day, at five in the morning, Polish Jews in Leipzig were rousted from their beds and, allowed only to take a few belongings, were hustled off to the gymnasium at the Jewish high school. By nine, trains were headed for the Polish border.

Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman recalls his own family's experience the day the Polish deportations took place. His parents were from Galicia and had lost their Polish citizenship and were therefore considered stateless. This was to be a perilous condition later, but at this point left them out of the dragnet for Polish citizens. Wahrman explains that a rumor had made the rounds of the Jewish community that the nearby city of Halle had been the scene of a deportation of Polish citizens, in time for many in Leipzig to reach the safety of the residence of the Polish consul.

The consul, Chiczewski, had rented a beautiful villa from the Ury family, prominent Jewish department store owners and cultural patrons. Whether because of this fact, or because of his own ideals, he distinguished himself during the crisis by his humane behavior toward the Jews of Leipzig. Wahrman remembers expecting to see two or three hundred people at the villa, but in fact saw something closer to 1,500, a substantial portion of the total Jewish population of the city. They were all there to get special dispensation from the consul, and they all did, receiving passports, allowing them some hope of better treatment then "staatlos" people..

There was very little space on the grounds of the villa by the time the Wahrmans arrived, carrying food for the people there. It was the Sabbath, but Wahrman's mother,

assured by her rabbi that she was within her rights, had spent the day baking bread to bring to the villa. The food shortage was severe. Although Chiczewski had done as much as he could to bring in food, there was not enough for the huge crowd, and many unaffected Jews were doing the same thing the Wahrmans were doing.

Wahrman describes the two hours he spent at the consul's residence as a horror story, with terrified Leipzigers wondering what was going to happen to them. But by late that evening the crisis had passed, and the German and Polish governments had worked out a deal to allow remaining Polish citizens to return to their German homes, with an eye to a later registration.[220] Anywhere between 1,563 and 3,500 people were deported (Wahrman's number is higher—"approximately 5,000").[221] Those who made it to the Polish consul's office in time to get renewed passports were allowed to stay in Leipzig for the time being, as were 116 who were turned away at the Polish border. The Police President in Leipzig, Friedrich Stollberg, described the action as "successfully completed and going off without a hitch." Interestingly, the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung* only reported that "a few thousand Polish citizens, who were regarded by the German government as undesirable, were evacuated to the Polish border." No mention was made of Jews, though they were much the most affected group.[222]

So, we see that a full year before the pogrom began for Jews as a whole, the majority of Jews in Leipzig were already subject to much of the worst of what would befall all German Jews after November, 1938. They lost their jobs, they were limited in their role in public life, even within the *Gemeinde*, and in October of 1938, they were rounded up

[220] Shlomo Wahrman, *Lest we forget: Growing up in Nazi Leipzig, 1933-1939*, Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1991. 84-90. Of course, Polish citizens had already begun to be deported, but, as seen in the decision to let these people return to their homes, it was seen as a preferable condition to being without citizenship.
[221] Ibid., 90.
[222] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom in Leipzig", 195-197.

and put on trains headed east. And they were subject to this treatment not just because they were Jews, but because they were foreign-born Jews. Because there were more foreign-born Jews in Leipzig than in most other cities in Germany, we can say that some of the conditions sparked by *Kristallnacht* had already begun to affect many Leipzig Jews before *Kristallnacht* happened. A great many of them did not return, which was the beginning of the end of the Leipzig Jewish community. Perhaps ironically, it was this act, the expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany, that sparked Herschel Grynszpan—the son of two Polish Jews expelled from Germany—to go to the German embassy and ultimately to kill Ernst vom Rath, an act which would provide the pretext for the next stage, *Kristallnacht*.

And then, just after midnight on the 9th of November, party *Kreisleiter* Ernst Wettengel called the area *Gruppenleiter* into his office, told them to round up the SA and party stalwarts, and begin carrying out the orders from the national party to instigate a pogrom. The *Gruppenleiter* were told to have their men leave their uniforms at home, in order to make the demonstrations appear spontaneous.[223] The main *Gemeinde* synagogue in the Gottschedstrasse was attacked first. At 3:51 in the morning the fire department answered a call there, only to find the building engulfed in flames. The synagogue was too far gone; it remained only for them to prevent the fire from spreading to other buildings, which they were able to do. The fire department listed the cause of the fire as "unknown".[224]

In quick order, Bamberger and Hertz's department store, the *Höhere Israelitische Schule*, Ez-Chaim synagogue, Ury's department store and the chapel at the new Jewish

[223] Ibid., 198.
[224] Wahrman, 94-95.

cemetery were burned. In every one of these cases, the fire department reacted the same way, doing nothing to stop the fire, and only acting to prevent the fire from spreading or endangering non-Jewish homes and businesses. In fact, their actions reflected their orders, and those of the police, who were also given an order to do nothing.[225]

The authorities did prevent a synagogue from burning at the Keilstrasse. There, police had arrived early, to search and close down the offices of the *Zionistische Vereinigung*, on the third floor. They seized business equipment upstairs, and began to confiscate religious artifacts downstairs, when a mob began to form in the street, according to the Gestapo report. Because of the presence of gentile renters on the fourth floor of the synagogue, the mob was prevented from burning the building, but did succeed in looting both the synagogue and the ZV offices, before police could stop them. Finally, the police were able to secure the building, seizing books, files, clocks and four typewriters before locking the door and taking the key.[226] It is only because of the presence of the gentile neighbors upstairs that the Keilstrasse synagogue survived as the sole remaining synagogue in Leipzig after the war, and today.

Sometimes firefighters made the decision to halt fires within Jewish-owned properties, as in the limitation of the fires at Ury's department store and the *Höhere Israelitische Schule*.[227] But the more common pattern was seen all over the town: firefighters were assiduous about halting the fire before it got to gentile property. Shlomo Wahrman reported seeing "what amounted to a straight vertical line separating Bamberger and Hertz [department store, on the Augustusplatz downtown] from its

[225] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom", 198.
[226] StAL PP-V 3937/9 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on Zionistische *Verein*igung Leipzig, 1936-1939, 14 November, 1938
[227] Wahrman, 99.

neighboring houses. The destruction ended exactly at the very edge of the structure. It was truly an amazing performance of firefighting."[228]

The pattern of official involvement in the activities of *Kristallnacht* can be seen in the case of the criminal police at the synagogue on Farberstrasse. A policeman sent in the day after the pogrom reported having confiscated files and scrolls, and silver shields from the Torah, and some bells and coins.[229] Rabbi Rogosnitzky of the synagogue, who was trying to retrieve some of the holy objects, was arrested and subjected to a spontaneous beard-trimming. On the corner of Farberstrasse and Gustav Adolf Strasse, much of his beard was cut off, as Jewish neighbors were reduced to watching from behind their window shades.[230]

The toll for the night was staggering. In a city of roughly half a million people, 193 businesses were destroyed, along with thirty-four private homes, three synagogues, four smaller temples, the cemetery chapel, an old-age home (the Ariowitsch home, only open since 1931 and a showplace, with three separate kitchens for meat, dairy and Pesach[231]), and a school.[232]

Early on the morning of the tenth, "*Aufgebrachte Volksgenossen*" ("angry racial comrades")[233] went to an Nazi party *Ortsgruppe* meeting, and pursuant to the murder of vom Rath in Paris and the ensuing pogrom, divided themselves into troops, and headed to the neighborhood of Neu-Gohlis, where many Jews lived. Described in later court

[228] Ibid., 96-97.
[229] StAL PP-V 4406—Geheime Staatspolizei File on *Verein* Ahavas-Thora (Talmud Thora), 10 November, 1938.
[230] Wahrman, 100-101.
[231] Ibid., 48-49.
[232] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom", 200.
[233] Ibid., 199-200.

documents as mostly party members and true believers, they were out to "throw Jewish families out of their houses and take them into custody."[234]

When they got to the neighborhood, they split into smaller groups, and marched through the various streets, banging on the doors of Jewish residents, and shouting "*Juden heraus*!" ("Get out here, Jews!") and "*Raus ihr Judenschwein*!" ("out, you Jewish pigs!"). If the Jews did not come out of their homes of their own will, their doors were broken down. The Jews, who were still mostly in bed at this time, were forced to dress quickly, and ordered into the street. If orders were not followed quickly enough, individuals were "mishandled", and dragged into the street.

From there they were herded into a laundry-drying area, and then into the gym at a nearby catholic school. Some 90 people were collected in the gym. After a few hours, most were freed, and returned home, but a few men were immediately transported to a concentration camp. More were arrested later the same day, or in the following days by the SS, and were taken to a concentration camp. Several of those died of mistreatment.[235] At the same time, in the Northwest part of the city, citizens were subjected to mistreatment by a mob thatmarched some of them down the street to the area by the Zoological Garden, and threw them into the creek there.[236]

A full-blown *Aktion* against the Jews of Leipzig followed. Beginning at 7 a.m. on the tenth of November, led by *Regierungsrat* and SS-*Sturmbannführer* Hans Gerhard Schindhelm, SS, SD, *Kripo* police, and party members began rounding up Jews. Some Jews reported to the police themselves. 553 names were entered in the police records for

[234] Ibid.
[235] StAL Landesgericht Leipzig 7863, 10 May, 1947.
[236] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom, 199-200.

the day's work.[237] Working from a list of Jewish organizations, the authorities hunted down doctors, lawyers, members of the *Vorstand* of the *Gemeinde* and leaders of other Jewish groups.

While members of all social classes were targeted, the largest group (33%) gave their profession as "*Kaufmann*". Religious Jews—members of the *Gemeinde*—were arrested, as were non-observing ones. The wealthy were arrested, like Kurt Kroch, an attorney and scion of the Kroch dynasty, who had built the city's first skyscraper. Even some non-Jews were taken in, like Ilse Rothschild, a Christian wife who protested too vigorously at the treatment of her husband. The youngest was sixteen years old; the oldest was seventy-eight. These citizens were hauled off to the *Volksschule* on Hallischenstrasse.

Most of the men were sent to prisons or to labor camps, and then to concentration camps. By the next day, 151 Leipzigers were sent to Buchenwald. They were attacked by a mob at the main train station, and had to be sent to the camp via special train. On the 12th of November, another transport was sent with 119 victims. A third train was sent on the 6th of December. The first group returned in two weeks' time; by February, 1939, everyone had been released from this roundup, except for eight who were killed in Buchenwald, along 208 German Jews from other locales murdered in the camps in this period.[238]

The institutions of Leipzig Jews were devastated. If the events of the period between 1933-1938 had served to point out how illusory were the differences between foreign-born and German-born Jews or between Zionists and anti-Zionists, *Kristallnacht* made it clear that whatever relevance those divisions once had was going to be washed away in a

[237] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom", 202-203.
[238] Held, "Der Novemberpogrom", 203-204.

wave of government and popular hatred against the Jews. No matter the background, no matter how cherished was the Germanness, it was taken away in the clearest possible manner.

Kurt Sabatzky, the indefatigable *Syndikus* of the CV in Leipzig was out of town when the "Special Action" happened, but communication between the Leipzig and Dresden police led to his arrest in the Saxon capitol. His office was raided in his absence, and sealed, and the key sent to police headquarters. The office remained closed until December, when it was reopened, but only for housekeeping—paying bills, and so forth. In January, 1939, Sabatzky wrote to the *Gemeinde,* informing them of the impending dissolution of the *Verein* : "due to official pronouncements the pursuit of the purposes and goals of the *Verein* must cease". He used the forced middle name "Israel" for the first time in this letter, and his signature was shaky. The signature seemed that of a broken man when he wrote the *Gemeinde* in April that the CV in Leipzig was officially dissolved.[239]

The offices of the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* (the National Alliance of Jewish Front Soldiers)were sealed on the 24 th of November. In December, its leadership had to agree to limit their actions to necessary business, and the office was reopened. They were obliged to begin sending the Gestapo monthly reports, the highlight of which in most periods was paying the electric bill. In August, 1939, the *Reichsbund* was absorbed in the new *ReichsVereinigung,* part of a forced consolidation of Jewish

[239] StAL File PP-V 5007, 29 November, 1938; 6 December, 1938; 19 December, 1938; 24 January, 1939; 3 April, 1939.

organizations. In October of that year, the SD seized the files of the *Reichsbund*, and in November, the Gestapo was informed that the *Reichsbund* had shut down.[240]

Although the Zionist movement had enjoyed a relatively privileged existence in Leipzig, and in the country generally, due to the government's approval of their long-term goals, it shared equally in the misery of *Kristallnacht*. Their office was among those targeted on the first night of the pogrom. It was not until the first week of December that the eminent jurist Martin Alterthum, acting in his capacity as deputy chair of the Zionist Organization in Leipzig, asked for and received permission to reopen the office.[241]

The Zionist youth group was banned, and the leaders of Zionism in Leipzig obliged—like their assimilationist rivals—to sign an agreement to cease their essential activity. Their lease was dissolved, their office material sent to the *Gemeinde*, and their books sent to the national library in Jerusalem. Alterthum was made to provide periodic reports to the Gestapo, and by December of 1939 that office was able to report that the ZV had closed its doors in Leipzig, and that its leading figures had emigrated, including Wilhelm Dubiner, Louis Tumpowsky, and Walter Samuel, the men who had comprised the first board of directors of the *Vereinigung* in 1925.[242]

The institutions that brought all the Jews of the city together were shut down. The *Lehrhaus* made its last offering, for a Spanish course, the week of the pogrom.[243] The more divisive ones went quickly too, like the State Zionist Organization, gone by April,

[240] StAL PP-V 4508 "Reichsbund jüd. Frontsoldaten", 1935-1939, 2 November, 1939; StAL PP-V 4509 "Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten, Ortsverband Leipzig" 1938-1940, 25 November, 1938; 14 December, 1938; 24 December, 1938; 5 August, 1939; 19 October, 1939.
[241] StAL PP-V 3937/3939, 7 December, 1938.
[242] StAL PP-V 1339, 20 December, 1939.
[243] PP-V 4439, Polizeipräsidium Leipzig; "Israelitische ReligionsGemeinde zu Leipzig; Jüdisches Lehrhaus", 1935-1938, 1-12 November, 1938.

1939 (though correspondence between different elements of the police went back and forth for months about what to do with those brown uniforms—eventually they were given to an orphanage).[244] Some were incorporated into the *Gemeinde*; some into the new *Reichsvereinigung*; others disappeared entirely. *Kristallnacht* marked the effective end of organized Jewish life in Leipzig.

One of the questions raised by *Kristallnacht* in Leipzig is whether it was a popular event. Was it a case of a radical government driving hatred against some of its citizens, or was it, more sadly, the majority of Leipzigers happily persecuting their neighbors? Not surprisingly, this question raised some strong emotions among observers at the time, and has afterward.

A vivid account of *Kristallnacht* in Leipzig was provided by the American consul in the city to his superiors in Berlin. David H. Buffum offered a vivid and horrifying picture of the events of the *Kristallnacht* and the days after, including attacks on individuals, synagogues and homes. In an almost detached style, he described apartments being ransacked, art being destroyed, business owners being arrested on charges of arson against their own establishments and deportations of citizens to concentration camps. His report is an insightful and provocative image, one of the best pictures of these events.

Buffum argued in explicit terms that the bulk of the people of Leipzig were opposed to what happened in those days, and he scoffed at the claims of the government that what had happened was a spontaneous act on the part of the German people, outraged by the death of vom Rath: "So far as a very high percentage of the German populace is concerned, a state of popular indignation that would spontaneously lead to such excesses,

[244] StAL PP-V 4500—StaatsZionistische Organization, 1938-1940, 3 April, 1939; 27 July, 1939; May, 1940.

can be viewed as non-existent. On the contrary, in viewing the ruins and attendant measures employed, all the local crowds observed were obviously benumbed over what had happened and aghast over the unprecedented fury of Nazi acts that had been or were taking place with bewildering rapidity throughout the city."[245]

Describing the mob action that led to Jewish citizens being thrown into the creek bed at the zoo, he said that the perpetrators—who were, "according to reliable testimony", SS and SA-men not in uniform—commanded "horrified spectators to spit at them [the Jewish victims], defile them with mud, and jeer at their plight. The…incident has been corroborated by German witnesses who were nauseated in telling the tale. The slightest manifestation of sympathy evoked a positive fury on the part of the perpetrators and the crowd was powerless to do anything but turn horror-stricken eyes from the scene of the abuse, or leave the vicinity."[246]

Shlomo Wahrman, a witness to the events, took sharp exception to Buffum's description: "I discussed this subject with my parents over and over again. We all had witnessed mob scenes of Nazis participating in such atrocities as portrayed by the Consulate. Never had we noticed any spectators "benumbed" over any of the heinous outrages performed. The spectators generally chose to participate of their own free will, and they acted with much enthusiasm and fervor. None of the spectators had to be "commanded" to jeer, to deride, and to mock the plight of the victims. Any German, even one vehemently opposed to Nazi barbarism, certainly would not have displayed such opposition in public, thus jeopardizing himself and his family. To state otherwise,

[245] Cited in Wahrman, 104-107.
[246] Ibid.

and thereby whitewash and exonerate, even partially, some of the Nazis of the time, does not do justice to the historic record of that period."[247]

These accounts raise questions: who were the sources of Buffum's reliable testimony? Were they the same "German witnesses who were nauseated in telling the tale"? If so, how representative of German society were they? One can well imagine the motivations of a ant-Hitler German, speaking to an American diplomat, in minimizing the perception of popular anti-Semitism. In total, given Buffum's rather limited set of witnesses, as well as his failure to deal with some of the most egregious events of the pogrom, we must temper our reliance upon his account for interpretive purposes, though it loses none of its narrative power.

What do we do with Rabbi Wahrman's account? He was certainly privy to a distinct perspective of the events of the pogrom as a young Jew, dodging the Gestapo, trying to find his family. But Rabbi Wahrman is not a very objective voice (if anyone can be) on the question of popular anti-Semitism. Perhaps his conflation of "German" and "Nazis" in the previous selection might be overlooked, but the equation of virtually every German with a nasty anti-Semitism is a theme of his memoir, culminating in his "Personal Glimpse into Modern Germany". In this description of his trips back to Leipzig since the war, he is confronted with anti-Semites at every turn, and concludes that given the "German national character", it is "quite disturbing to see so many Jews returning to settle in Germany today."[248]

Almost certainly, the truth lies somewhere between Buffum's sanguine report and Wahrman's bleak assessment. It is certainly the case that large numbers of Leipzigers

[247] Ibid., 107-108.
[248] Ibid., 144.

took part in the persecution of their Jewish neighbors. The events of the days of November could not have happened otherwise. The mobs marching up and down the street in Neu-Gohlis, the attacks on the trains at the station on the way to the camps, the generalized unwillingness on the part of ordinary men and women to do anything to stop the attacks: all of these point toward a pervasive hostility toward the Jews of Leipzig, and away from Buffum's optimism.[249]

However, there can be little question that the vast majority of the attacks against the Jews of Leipzig were carried out by the apparatus of the state, and that the great majority of the gentile citizens of the town had little to do with it. At every turn, one sees men in uniform, or who should have been—Storm Troopers, policemen, Gestapo agents. It is certainly clear that the events of *Kristallnacht* would never have happened had a radically antiSemitic government not been in place. No one would argue differently. Does this mean that the events of November, 1938, were strictly a top-down phenomenon, and by extension that the Holocaust was the act of a government acting almost in complete detachment from its citizens? Sadly, no. The fact is that not only did some non-party members, non-government agents, take part in the pogrom, but that the vast majority did nothing, and this is the key. We can chalk some of this up to simple fear.

But in the final analysis, there was very little opposition to what happened on the 8th of November, even from those with a history of resistance to authority and to the Nazis. Apart from a few comments disparaging what was happening, no action was taken. The communist underground did nothing, and neither did any other resistance movement.

[249] There has been a general move away from the model of a party/population split in the November pogrom, which was seen clearly in works like Yehuda Bauer's *History of the Holocaust*, NewYork: 1982, 108. More recent studies, like Dwork and van Pelt's *Holocaust: a History*, New York: 2002, 101-102, have emphasized popular participation to a greater degree. This dissertation comes down more on the side of the latter.

The unavoidable conclusion is that for the vast majority of Leipzigers, Jews might not have been worthy of persecution, but neither were they worthy of rescue. And it is this indifference, as Elie Wiesel and countless others have pointed out, that is the crucial ingredient in genocide. There were Jew-haters in Leipzig, some who were in the party, and others who were not. There were people who would write to the government and complain that Jews were sitting in the park, or having services in the washroom. These were the people who made the pogrom, and then perpetrated the genocide. But they were not alone. As Christopher Browning has made clear, the active complicity of "neutral" Germans was indispensable. This standing by, doing nothing, was the first step for ordinary Germans on the road to participation in genocide, in Leipzig as in other German cities.

The Dwindling of Jewish Life

Emigration of Jews from Leipzig had been heavy up until 1938, but the events of *Kristallnacht* were a major turning point. Any continuing illusions about the viability of a Jewish role in German national life were shattered by the pogrom. While the period before November, 1938 had seen a growth in the stature and power of the Zionists—and a concomitant diminution of the formerly predominant assimilationist position—the period after the riots saw a free-for-all, as Jewish Leipzigers of all political stripes did the best they could to get out. Some went to Israel, some to the USA, some to England, and even a few to Shanghai.[250] This was a time of crucial transition, before the deportations,

[250] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14569—VdN file on Bruno and Gertrud Alexander, Lebenslauf from 1 March, 1951.

but during which the untenability of a continuing Jewish presence in Leipzig was made crystal clear.

One by one, the institutions of Jewish life emptied out, as their leaders, members and employees fled the country. It was no surprise to see Zionists leaving the country, certainly. They had been predicting, if not this level of catastrophe, then the necessity of facing up to the long-term prospect of exclusion from the German community. Indeed, they had been going for years, and *Kristallnacht* only hastened the process. Leo Goldwasser had gone that February, and the local *Staatszionisten* organization was in shambles.

The leadership of the mainstream *Zionistische Vereinigung* followed suit. By January of 1939, the *Vorstand* of the local ZV reported that their activities had ceased, that their lease was to be dissolved, and that Wilhelm Dubiner, leader of the ZV since its founding in Leipzig in 1925, was sending its library to the National *Bucherei* (library) in Jerusalem.[251] That December, in response to a query from the *Amtsgericht* (local court), the local Gestapo asserted that the ZV had not existed for several years [sic], and that the leadership—including Wilhelm Dubiner, Louis Tumpowski and Walther Samuel, the original *Vorstand* from 1925—had emigrated. The Gestapo recommended that the *Amtsgericht* remove the ZV from its rolls, which the *Amtsgericht* did.[252]

None of this is surprising. A clearer indication is the movement of assimilationists out of the country. If anyone was going to stay in the country, it would have been Karl Sabatzky, the leader of the local *Centralverein*, and also an important figure in the integrationist *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* (*RBjFS*). Sabatzky had

[251] StAL PP-V 3937/9 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig files on Zionistische *Verein*igung Leipzig, 1936-1939, 8 January, 1939.
[252] Ibid., 20 December, 1939.

been fighting for his position against Zionists and against Nazis for years. Though he had since come to acknowledge the correctness of the need for emigration, he apparently had made no move in that direction himself until after *Kristallnacht*, his arrest, and the closure of his offices. By January of 1939, he notified the government of his intent to emigrate.[253]

Sabatzky was also the officer of the *RBjFS* responsible for aid to war victims, and the final sign of him in the archives comes with his resignation of that office in July of 1939 due to his impending emigration.[254] This was the last sign of Sabatzky in Leipzig, perhaps the most influential and fearless proponent of the integrationist position in the city. The *RBjFS* was not long in following him out of Leipzig: in June, it had told the Gestapo that emigration had sapped its membership to 35 paying and 80 nonpaying members.[255] This organization—the bulwark of integrationist Jewry in Leipzig, which had boasted 278 members as late as October, 1935, including the Held brothers, owners of the department store bearing their names; the cantor Max Jaffé, and the Chairman of the *Gemeinde*, Dr. Conrad Goldschmidt[256]—was absorbed into the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* (National Representation of Jews in Germany, the Nazi-supervised umbrella group for Jews) that Fall.[257]

Organizations that had no particular stake in the argument over nationality lost members and employees too. The *HilfsVerein Israelitischer Gewerbetreibender Leipzig* (aid society of Jewish tradesmen) was obliged to make the same sort of monthly reports

[253] StAL File PP-V 5007 "Akten des Polizeiamts der Stadt Leipzig, betreffend den Zentral*Verein* [sic] deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens Ortsgr. Leipzig, 1911-1940, 24 January, 1939; also on 15 February, 1939.
[254] StAL PP-V 4509 "Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten, Ortsverband Leipzig" 1938-1940, 22 July, 1939.
[255] Ibid., 30 June, 1939.
[256] Ibid., October, 1935.
[257] Ibid., 26 October, 1939.

to the authorities as the more political organizations were. It reported that its employees were emigrating, including their office manager Thekla Feiner.[258]

Emigration of members and leaders was part of an overall change of character, function and personality for the *Religionsgemeinde*—as for the Jewish community as a whole—after *Kristallnacht*. Financially devastated after the destruction of its synagogues, its numbers ravaged by emigration, its leaders increasingly gone, it turned in a new direction, trying to provide help for members when it could, seeing to their spiritual needs as much as possible, and seeing the emergence of a new generation of leaders, some of whom would stay in the city throughout the dark days to come and provide the core of leaders for the postwar period.

The Jewish population of Leipzig had been cut from over 11,000 in 1933 to around 9,000 in 1938, a drop of about 22% that was one of the lowest among big Jewish communities in the country.[259] The 1939 census reported 4,470 Jews in town. This drop, according to a statistical analysis, was largely the result of the expulsion of the Poles.[260] This all points to a distinctive characteristic of the Jewish community in Leipzig and their experience in the Holocaust: it became more German. The ration of 70/30 in favor of foreigners—taking into account emigration, expulsion and an influx of rural Jews into the city—was cut to about 55/45.[261]

Whether this would have had an effect on the politics and society of the *Gemeinde* is difficult to say, because emigration picked up from 1938 and there was very little

[258] StAL file PP-V 4436, *Hilfsverein Israelitischer Gewerbetreibender Leipzig*, e.V.], 1938, 39, 2 May, 1939.
[259] There is no definitive answer why Leipzig should be different in this regard. The distinctive characteristic of Jewish life in Leipzig, its foreign-born population, does not lend itself immediately or clearly to any such explanation.
[260] Grubel and Mecklenburg, 166.
[261] Ibid., 167.

stability among leadership, religious or political. The leading rabbis of the community, Felix Goldmann (Reform) and Ephraim Carlebach (Orthodox), had been replaced earlier. Goldmann had died in 1934, and had been with Gustav Cohn,[262] and Carlebach had emigrated in 1936, replaced with David Ochs.[263] The elected leadership of the *Gemeinde* turned over rapidly, including *Vorsitzender* (Chairman)Carl Goldschmidt (emigrated in 1940, and replaced by Paul Michael[264]), Wilhelm Breslauer (replaced by Samuel Hodes, who died in August 1940, and was replaced by Fritz Grunsfeld and Bernhard Weissmann[265]), the jurist Martin Alterthum, also a former leader of the Zionists in Leipzig, Dr. David Kuritzkes.

The management of the *Gemeinde* changed, too. Fritz Grubel, the business manager of the *Gemeinde* since his expulsion from the practice of law in 1933, left soon after his internment in Buchenwald. He eventually became a very important figure at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, and then President of the Ephraim Carlebach *Stiftung* (foundation) in 1991 and a leading figure in the 1995 foundation of the Simon-Dubnow-Institut in Leipzig. He left early in 1939 for England and then the USA, but not before he had arranged for the appointment of Fritz Grunsfeld, another jurist whose legal career had been interrupted, and who would be a central figure in the postwar history of the *Gemeinde*.[266]

The New Realities

[262] StAL file pp-v 4437, Polizeipräsidiums Leipzig file on "Israelitische ReligionsGemeinde zu Leipzig", 1935-38, 29 October, 1935.
[263] Ibid., March 7, 1936.
[264] PP-V 2265, Polizeipräsidium Leipzig; *Verein*sregister des Amtgerichts Leipzig, Israelitische ReligionsGemeinde zu Leipzig, e.V., 30 May, 1940.
[265] Ibid., 10 October, 1940.
[266] Grubel and Mecklenburg, 164.

The appointment of Grunsfeld to the managerial post was the central element in the emergence of a new group of leaders for the *Gemeinde*. With the traditional leadership emigrating in droves, those who were left were a different group: they tended to be younger, they were often poorer, or dealing with older relatives (one possible reason why Grunsfeld did not emigrate), and often they were married to non-Jews. To call these people marginal in the community would be too strong—a man like Alfred Muscattblatt had been active in the community for years, despite his having married a gentile (albeit one who had converted).[267]

But people like Alfred Muscatblatt and Fritz Grunsfeld were not the kinds of people who had run the *Gemeinde* before—they were not wealthy businessmen or professionals. Muscatblatt was an electrician who had been reduced to working in another shop and teaching for the *Gemeinde*. Grunsfeld had seen his law career end before it had begun, when his studies were interrupted. Salo Looser, another leader who would emerge at the end of the war, spent the bulk of this period in jails and camps for his underground work with the socialist-Zionist youth group *Habonim*. These were not the traditional elites, and when they took command of the *Gemeinde* at the end of the war—Alfred Muscatblatt's name is the first on any document issued after the collapse of the Nazi regime—it signaled a shift in power.

The old divisions—foreign born vs. German; Zionist vs. assimilationist; rich vs. poor—were rendered meaningless by the events of the genocide as they gathered momentum. The bulk of the foreign-born Jews were deported early on, and most Zionists left, and the rich had more of the resources needed to leave. The single brutal fact about

[267] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 15418—VdN file on Alfred and Margarete Muscatblatt, 25 May, 1949.

the *Gemeinde* is that it was decimated by the efforts of the Germans: by 1945, the community had been reduced from 11,000 souls to 86 persons, only 24 of whom had been members of the religious community.[268] The simple fact of survival by those who were fortunate enough to do so meant that the *Gemeinde* would have a ready—and utterly different—elite coming out of the genocide than that that which had headed it before.

"Aryanization"

The process of expropriation of Jewish property was as thoroughgoing in Leipzig as anywhere in Germany. After 1933, German Jews were systematically coerced into giving up their possessions in Leipzig, a process that intensified dramatically after the pogrom of 1938. A good example of systematic deprivation is Alfred Muscatblatt, the "Jüdischer Elektromeister". Having run his own shop for 25 years, he was forced to sell in 1938, and reclassified as an unskilled laborer. In 1939, he and his wife Margarete were obliged to turn over their radio, and later that year to vacate their apartment and move into a so-called "Judenhaus". Their coal ration was cut 90%. Despite Margarete's racial status, they were obliged to use a Jewish ration card. Their typewriter, furs, jewelry, carpets, and—perhaps most painfully for Alfred—their electrical appliances were taken away. When their apartment was bombed out in 1945, they were denied access to any other shelter, and had to sleep outside for 2 weeks. They tried to move into Margarete's brother's empty apartment but were denounced. Eventually they found long-term shelter in a soup kitchen.[269]

[268] Held, *Zwischen Tradition und Vermächtnis*, 8.
[269] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 15418—VdN file on Alfred and Margarete Muscatblatt, 25 May, 1949.

The case of the Muscatblatts points out the variety of economic attacks on Jews—businesses, homes, property, all lost. Many others lost their businesses, to be sure. The big department stores owned by Jews suffered through the boycott and, one by one, were sold off to gentile profiteers. The Held brothers, Albert and Moritz, sold off in 1937 and got out of the country, settling in London and prospering. Their brother Max, who had owned a separate store, ended up in Chile working as a janitor. The Ury brothers' store near the Roßplatz was aryanized in 1938, but not before it had burned in the *Kristallnacht* riots.

Perhaps the most shameless expropriation of a big department store was that of Samuel Hodes, the "Große Feuerkugel" on the Neumarkt. In 1937, a man named Reinhold Bock secured the store through Aryanization, and began advertising what he had done in the papers, pointing out to customers that the store was finally German, that it was "yours again". Not willing to go too far in suggesting a break with the past, he also assured customers that it was the same store they had patronized for all those years, just with a new name. The tone was utterly without remorse. It is perhaps to the credit of the people of Leipzig that Hodes outlived the new incarnation of his life's work. The store folded in March, 1938, while Hodes survived—able for some reason to keep access to some of his money—until 1940, as a highly honored member of the Jewish community and an important figure on the board of directors of the *Gemeinde*. The beautiful baroque building that was the store's home was destroyed in bombing during the war. Before he died, Hodes paid off the bill from the fire department after the *Kristallnacht* burning of the Ez Chaim synagogue he had founded. He was also personally responsible for paying

what amounted to a bribe to the Gestapo to keep a Jewish school open during his lifetime.[270]

Others lost their businesses: Richard Frank's textile factory was placed in receivership in 1937, and finally aryanized in 1939. Frank was one of the lucky few in that he survived and his property was returned to him after the war, albeit with "nine tenth's of the buildings and machines destroyed due to the war."[271] The Zellner family had owned a restaurant for "many decades" in the Brühl fur-dealers' district downtown, which had been an important Jewish meeting place. It was taken from them in 1938.[272] The entire Brühl district changed hands, as fur firms—the pinnacle of Jewish commerce in the city, along with the department stores—were stolen from their owners. Josef Margulis had founded his firm on the Brühl in 1913. In 1940, it was taken from him without even the fiction of compensation.[273]

Publishing houses, a prestigious industry in Leipzig, were taken away one by one, including the famous music publishers C.F. Peter, Thalia, and Ernst Eulenburg, though some held out until after the beginning of the war.[274] The delay is perhaps attributable to the international prestige attached to such firms. Indeed, when one new proprietor tried to change its name of his business, he was admonished by the authorities that such a move was unnecessary and undesirable, since a) the name (Eulenburg) was not an exclusively Jewish one, and b) overseas customers might think the company was not the

[270] Andrea Lorz, Suchtet der Stadt Bestes: Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer aus Leipzig, 1996: Pro Leipzig, 137-149.
[271] StAL, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14198—VdN File on Richard Frank, undated postwar Lebenslauf.
[272] LGA 315, 27 May, 1946.
[273] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14032—VdN file on Martha & Josef Margulis, Lebenslauf from 25 May, 1950.
[274] StAL #4100—Musikverlag C.F. Peter, 31 October, 1940; StAL #19328—Börsen*Verein* der Deutschenbuchhändler zu Leipzig—Thalia Musikverlag, Rudolf Erdmann, 7 May, 1942; StAL 12262—Börsen*Verein* der Deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig—Sander, Horst, 26 May, 1937.

same: “If the company of the music publisher who is still in Leipzig were to change its name, the market—namely the overseas market—would take the impression that the firm had moved to London [where Eulenburg had set up a new company under his own name] and that the publisher’s materials were only to be had in London. As has been reported to us, the former owner is doing everything he can to give the public that impression.”[275]

The publishing houses also point out the degree of squabbling among potential beneficiaries of aryanisation. Not content to despoil their Jewish neighbors, some Germans made it their business to profit by taking from their “racial comrades.” The Thalia *Verlag* was taken from its original, Jewish owner and placed under the trusteeship of Nazi *Standartenführer* Gerhard Noatzke, who was called into *Wehrmacht* service in 1942. A round of disputes went on about the appointment of a new *Treuhander* (trustee) when a party official questioned the appointment in the course of obtaining the position on behalf of a party comrade whose son wanted it.[276]

And, of course, people’s homes were taken from them. The Margulises were forced to sell their home on the Nordplatz, close to downtown and the site of a large Lutheran church, because it was not appropriate “that a Jew lived so close to an evangelical church and a pastor’s house.”[277] Samuel Hodes was allowed to live in his home in the Beethovenstraße for a relatively long time, before he had to move to a Jewish old age home, where he died in 1940.[278] Moses Fisch, a textiles salesman, and his wife were evicted from their house in the Humboldtstraße, where they had lived for 24 years,

[275] StAL 12262—Börsen*Verein* der Deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig—Sander, Horst, 16 February, 1940.
[276] StAL #19328—Börsen*Verein* der Deutschenbuchhändler zu Leipzig—Thalia Musikverlag, Rudolf Erdmann, 7 May, 1942, 18 August, 1942, 2 December, 1942.
[277] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14032—VdN file on Martha & Josef Margulis, undated Lebenslauf.
[278] Andrea Lorz, *Suchtet der Stadt Bestes: Lebensbilder jüdischer Unternehmer aus Leipzig*, 1996: Pro Leipzig, 137-138.

in 1941.[279] Some of these homes went directly into the hands of party leaders, including Gestapo leaders, a propagandist for *Der Stürmer*, and a holder of a major decoration from the National Socialist Party.[280]

When Jewish Leipzigers were evicted from their homes, some emigrated, but for many that option was no longer available, and they were obliged in 1939 to move into so-called "*Judenhäuser*", group homes that formed a kind of internal ghetto. The newspaper "Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten" newspaper announced the new policy: Jews who were too old or too poor to migrate would be moved into centralized houses. "One wants to avoid the development of a new ghetto. But, at the same time, one wants to avoid scattered herds of Jewish residences with a presence in the entire city. The law allows the necessary authority over Jewish tenancies." This, of course, meant that the authorities now had the power to break Jews' leases and ownership of homes in order to evict them. "If the war had not hindered the atmosphere and possibility of emigration, the questions of residence would have been settled by the end of the year. One awaits the end of the war and the opening of borders, so that the problem can solve itself." There were to be 47 houses made available, for about 3,800 people.[281]

By the end of the next month, the press was able to proclaim "North and West suburbs almost Jew-free: the quartering of the undesired guests makes good progress." There had, the paper said, been 42 Jewish families in the Neu-Gohlis neighborhood, even after the waves of emigration. Now there were only six, and ought to be none by the end

[279] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 15812—VdN file on Moses Fisch, Lebenslauf from 17 October, 1948.
[280] LGA 319, 12 July, 1945.

[281] *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, 31 October, 1939, in SAL, Kapital 1. #122—files on Maßnahmen gegen jüdischen Bürger, 1935-43.

of the year. "If a large part of the shifty [*mauschelnden*] co-habitants have—finally!—emigrated, there are still many Jews in the *Reichsmessestadt,* and they were distributed partially in good and reasonably priced housing over the whole city…over 300 empty houses have been won in this way by the householders for German families." *Ortsgruppenführer* Furst, in charge of the project, said "it is an unusual task for a National Socialist, creating Jewish old-age homes. But the work is joyous if one keeps the goal in mind: meticulous separation between Jews and Aryans!"[282] As the news story made clear, the goal was not only the separation of Jews and gentiles, but the possibility of profit by ordinary Leipzigers through the dispossession of their Jewish neighbors.

Martha and Josef Margulis had to leave their home on the Nordplatz and move to a Judenhaus after shuffling between homes for a couple of years. Their home was eventually bombed out.[283] The wholesaler Moritz Engelberg had to give up his apartment and live in a succession of *Judenhäuser* while doingforced labor in sand pits.[284] Factory owner Richard Frank, salesman Moses Fisch, business teacher Fritz Cohn, bakery supply seller Heinrich Rosenthal, electrician Alfred Muscatblatt—all of them found themselves with their families cheek-by-jowl in these new dwellings. As in so many other cases of Nazi persecution, the relocation of Jewish Leipzigers had the effect of a drastic social reordering: rich and poor, Orthodox and reform, religious and non-religious, Jews of all kinds now saw their previous social standing rendered irrelevant. The Nazis did not care who they were, or what they had done for a living. They only saw Jews.

[282] Ibid., 22 November, 1939.
[283] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14032—VdN file on Martha & Josef Margulis, undated Lebenslauf.
[284] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 12971—VdN file on Moritz Engelberg, Lebenslauf from 7 August, 1952.

Those who stayed in the *Judenhäuser* were a shrinking minority—deportations of the 2,000 remaining Leipzig Jews began in January, 1942. When the first train left, the houses they stayed in were emptied and offered to gentiles. What had been 38 houses was reduced by the end to two, including the remains of the Talmud-Thora synagogue on Keilstraße.[285]

Deportations

Deportations of Jews from Leipzig had begun in 1938, with the expulsion of Polish Jews from the city before *Kristallnacht*. Organized by the Gestapo and its head of the *Judenreferat* (Jews Office), Paul Zenner, deportations began in earnest with one to Riga on 21 January, 1942. 559 Leipzig Jews were taken—127 men to 346 women and 86 children.[286] The youngest was Gittel Freier, 9 weeks old, and the oldest was Else Wachsmann, who was 69. Wachsmann would have been left along with the other over-65 year olds, but did not want to be separated from her family. Among the deportees was the former *Staatszionist* Margot Petzold, unable to follow her mentor Leo Goldwasser into emigration in Israel.[287]

After a stay in the *Volksschule* on Yorkstraße, the 559 were put on trains on a very cold day; all of their warm clothing had long since been confiscated. The train, full by now with passengers from a previous stop in Dresden, consisted of unheated cars. After a three-day ride, the deportees were put off near Riga, and made to walk the 15 kilometers into town to join the ghetto. Most of the 30,000 residents of the ghetto had

[285] Ellen Bertram, *Menschen ohne Grabstein: die aus Leipzig deportierten und ermordeten Juden*. 2001: Pro Leipzig, 17-18.
[286] It is difficult to say with any certainty why more men than women were taken at this point. Perhaps the labor value of the men was still perceived to be greater.
[287] Adolf Diamont *Deportationsbuch der in den Jahren 1942 bis 1945 von Leipzig aus gewaltsam verschickten Juden*, 1991: Frankfurt a/m, self published, 19.

recently been taken into the nearby woods and shot to make room for the new arrivals from German cities.

A rudimentary self government was set up, and some Leipzigers took part, like the Körners: the husband was in the ghetto police, and the wife worked in job placement. The ghetto was depleted by occasional massacres of thousands at a time until June 1943, when Himmler ordered the closing of the eastern ghettos. The residents of the Riga ghetto were moved into the Kaiserwald concentration camp in another part of the city, where things were much worse than they had been in the ghetto. Selections claimed most of the old and the children at this time.

In August and September of 1944, Kaiserwald was evacuated in the face of the approaching Red Army, and the remaining inmates marched into Germany, to the Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig. Selections, starvation and an epidemic of typhus claimed many of those who had survived thus far. When the Red Army began making its way close to the camp in January of 1945, it was liquidated and its inmates marched west into Germany, hundreds starving along the way. On the 14th of April, Himmler ordered that the inmates be allowed to fall into Allied hands, and a few survivors began to trickle home, except for those who were murdered on the initiative of their guards. Nineteen of the original deportees from Leipzig survived the war.[288]

Several months later, a second major transport was undertaken from Leipzig, this time to the ghetto in Belzec in Poland. This transport carried 287 men, women and children to their fates, including nine children from the Jewish orphans' home and five of their caretakers. Also on this train were former members of the *Vorstand* of the

[288] Bertram., 30-34.

Gemeinde Wilhelm Nemann and Dr. Rudolf Neumann and their families.[289] Typhus, starvation and SS brutality whittled down their numbers in the ghetto, until October, when the young people were sent to labor in Majdanek, and the rest subjected to deportations to the Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka camps.[290] Of these 287 deportees, only one survived: Emil Wittman, a former SPD and Habonim underground worker whose entire family was killed, but who survived twenty-one camps doing illegal political work before liberation and return to Leipzig, where he remarried.[291]

There were two more deportations from Leipzig in 1942: one to Auschwitz on July 13 with 170 people, and one to Theresienstadt on September 19 with 440. The Auschwitz transport was devastating to those still working in and for the *Gemeinde*. Cantors Max Jaffé and Samuel Lampel, with their families, were deported, along with Jenny Landsberg, the nurse for the *Gemeinde,* and Josef Silberberg, its gardener.[292] This was the first of two direct deportations to Auschwitz: the other came on 18 June, 1943, with eighteen people, representing the last of the Jews of Leipzig who were not protected by non-Jewish spouses or children. There were no known survivors from either of these deportations.[293]

The rest of the deportations from Leipzig went to Theresienstadt, representing about 700 people, all told. Most of these were old people, the last line of those working for the *Gemeinde* and, at the very end, Jewish partners in mixed marriages. The largest of these deportations was the first one, in September, 1942. 83% of the 434 adults and six children crammed into the *Volksschule* on Yorkstraße were over the age of 60. At

[289] Diamont, 85, 75.
[290] Bertram., 35-37.
[291] Ibid., 37; Wittmann's Lebenslauf in StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 13204—VdN file on Ella and Emil Wittmann, 15 May, 1948.
[292] Diamont, 104-106, 109.
[293] Bertram, 37-39.

least fourteen employees of the *Gemeinde* were on this transport, including the former Chair of the *Gemeinde* Paul Michael, who survived. Ludwig Bamberger, of the store Bamberger and Hertz, went to Theresienstadt, where he died with his wife. Of the 440 deportees from September 1942, 293 died in the ghetto. Forty-two survived until the ghetto was liberated, eleven managed to escape to Switzerland in February of 1945, and the rest perished in deportations to other camps.

There were smaller deportations to Theresienstadt in 1943 and 1944, including the head of the University Women's clinic since 1909, Prof. Dr. Felix Skutsch and his wife, Helene in February, 1943. She died in the camp, but he survived, and was reappointed as the head of the clinic. He died in 1951. Max and Fanny Muscatblatt were also in that transport, along with their two teenaged children. Max was the brother of the electricians Albert and Alfred. All three brothers had been arrested after *Kristallnacht*, and Albert had died in a camp shortly thereafter. Max died after deportation from the ghetto to Auschwitz, along with his wife and daughter Ruth. His son Heinz was one of the few survivors from that transport, and his brother Alfred survived the war in Leipzig, protected by his marriage to a non-Jew. Alfred became a prominent re-founder of the Leipzig *Gemeinde*.

On 18 June, 1943, twelve Jewish Leipzigers were deported to Theresienstadt at the same time that 18 others were sent to Auschwitz. Included in these was Fritz Grunsfeld, the former business manager of the *Gemeinde*, saved this long by his status as *Geschäftsführer* of the regional branch of the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland*. Grunsfeld survived—one of four who did—to play a very important role in Jewish life after the war. In January, 1944, thirty-six more Jews were deported from

Leipzig, mostly those whose non-Jewish spouse had died or divorced them, leaving them without protection. Of these thirty-six, twenty survived.

This left about 275 Jews and their children in Leipzig, still protected by their marriages to non-Jews. When it became clear in January of 1945 that they, too, were to be deported, a rash of suicides swept through those left, including a 65-year-old woman who jumped from her balcony and an entire family who feared that the mother and a daughter were about to be deported. On the 14th of February 143 men and women and 5 children—about half the remaining Jewish population of the town—were deported to Theresienstadt. That ghetto was saved from mass murder only by the intervention of the International Red Cross, which sent representatives in April who were there when the Red Army arrived on the 8th of May. 147 of the 148 people on this last transport survived.[294] A second transport, presumably for the remaining Jews in the city, was organized, but the authorities were unable to carry it out because of the collapse of the government and the occupation of the city by Americans.[295]

Of the 1,831 Jews deported between January 1942 and February 1945, 253 survived, or 14%. If the last transport to Theriesenstadt is excluded, the survival rate drops to 6%.[296] The Nazis had been largely successful in ridding Leipzig of Jews. Of the 11,564 members of the *Gemeinde*—plus an unknown number of Jews who chose not to hold membership in the *Gemeinde*—less than 300 remained. Through emigration, the young and well-off had left. Through terror and expulsion, the Polish Jews had left. Through deportation, the old and poor and the few remaining to serve the rest in the

[294] Ibid., 43-47.
[295] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14198—VdN File on Richard Frank, Lebenslauf from 1950.
[296] Bertram, 27.

Gemeinde had largely perished. Now, all who remained were those who were married to non-Jews, and those who had managed somehow to survive the camps. It would be from this point that the Jewish community of Leipzig would rebuild.

Chapter 4: A Phoenix in Saxony: the Revival of Jewish life in Leipzig after the Second World War

The earliest days of the re-establishment of the Jewish community in Leipzig after the end of the war were filled with confusion, as different people sought to present themselves as the legal heirs to the *Gemeinde,* and at the same time began to reclaim what had been theirs, whether homes or jobs or a place in the life of the city. These early stages were marked by close and often fairly friendly cooperation between the city and the few Jews who remained and who began to return home.

Refoundation

A list in the archives gives the names of 86 Jewish people living in Leipzig in February, 1945. The majority of these were members of mixed marriages, who were spared deportation until the very end because of their gentile spouses. They were joined by a steady stream of returnees, led on May 17 by a bus full of political prisoners, around 80 former Communists and Social Democrats, including four Jews. When the Red Army liberated Theresienstadt that month they found around 200 Jewish Leipzigers among the 17,000 survivors, including those deported on the last train from Leipzig to the camps, on February 14, 1945. These began arriving in June. These numbers were augmented by about 62 people who had survived transports further east, to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka and Majdanek, the last of 2,300 Jews from Leipzig who had been deported to

the camps between January 1942 and February, 1945.[297] By 1946, there were a total of 250 Jews in Leipzig.[298]

The first question to be settled was the simple one of who represented Jews in Leipzig. Ernst Goldfreund, a former member of the *Zionistische Vereinigung* in Leipzig[299] and a journalist who edited the *Gemeindeblatt* after 1933, wrote to the new *Bürgermeister* Dr. Vierling. He had heard that a new Jewish office was going to be set up, and he thought he, Goldfreund, was the appropriate candidate, given his breadth of experience.[300] Vierling wrote back, saying he had no intention of setting up a new office for Jewish affairs, "especially since I must reduce the administration [of the city] as drastically as possible." At any rate, he said, it wasn't up to him. He said that the *Reichsvereinigung* had already appointed Heinrich Dziubas to represent the interests of Jews in Leipzig.[301] If this is true, it represents an interesting institutional continuity, since of course the *Reichsvereinigung* was a Nazi-era creation.

Another contender, a lawyer named Hans Brickner, sent his claim in around the same time. He told the city that he wanted to represent the interests of people of mixed heritage, and the relatives of Jews. Apparently, the city had already told him of Dziubas' appointment, but that did not matter, since "we [people of mixed heritage] are not Jews, and have completely different interests." He claimed to already represent 200 people, with another 200 waiting to join. He also asked for help in the matter of a circus he was

[297] Steffen Held, *Zwischen Tradition und Vermächtnis. Die Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig nach 1945*, 8.
[298] Source: Ausschuß der Deutschen Statisker, P 136-142. In Lothar Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel: Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ-DDR und ihre Behandlung durch Partei und Staat 1945-1990*. (Haskala, 18) Hildesheim, 1997. 30.
[299] StAL PP-V 3937/9**,** January 1, 1936.
[300] SAL Stadtbezirksammlung und Rat der Stadt Leipzig 1945-1970 (1) Nr. 7868, 9 May, 1945.
[301] Ibid., 11 May, 1945.

managing, which perhaps did not help to impress his seriousness upon the officials who read his request.[302]

Brickner was later to ask for recognition of a new organization he was founding for all victims of racial discrimination, which would represent all persons of Jewish heritage, not just "*Mischlinge*", or those with some Jewish and some "Aryan" heritage.[303] It later turned out that Brickner had been a member of the NSDAP, active in the *Stahlhelm*, and a participant in the boycott of Jewish businesses, before he was expelled from the party for being a half-Jew. He fled to the west, and was exposed in Württemburg.[304] He was certainly not the ideal candidate for representing the interests of Jews in Leipzig.

But none of this was known to the city when they rejected his requests. Instead, the *Bürgermeister* told him that these matters had to be "addressed through resolution of the legal foundations".[305] This raised an interesting question: who could found institutions, who had legal authority, in a society where all institutions had been shattered, and in which legal authority was very much an open question?

Richard Frank, along with Heinrich Dziubas, Alfred Muscatblatt and Leo Teichtner, had the answer to the question of legal authority, and had asked the short-lived American military government (the US occupied Leipzig briefly, from April to June of 1945, before turning over authority to the Russians), in English, for recognition of their claim to re-establish the *Gemeinde*.[306] The narrative of the re-establishment of the community is found in an activity report prepared by the *Gemeinde* at the end of 1946.

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[302] Ibid., 17 May, 1945.
[303] Ibid., 13 June, 1945.
[304] Ibid., 14 March, 1948.
[305] Ibid., 28 May, 1945.
[306] Ibid., 9 May, 1945.

"Immediately after the liberation from the yoke of the Nazi criminals the fourteen Jews remaining in Leipzig constituted an *Israelitische Religionsgemeinde* [a Jewish religious community]. This *Gemeinde* was made larger and larger by the return of inmates from concentration camps until in September of 1945 it was possible to form a board of directors. Already permission had been given for the *Israelitische Religionsgemeinde* by the then-existing American occupation."[307]

Only 24 of the surviving Jews of Leipzig had been active members of the *Gemeinde*; the rest were members of Christian churches through their spouses, or officially without religion. As we know from a growing literature on the subject, Jewish men who were married to non-Jewish women were much more likely to survive than those from traditional marriages. Such work includes Nathan Stoltzfus' studies of the Rosenstraße protests in Berlin of "Aryan" women demanding the release of their husbands[308], as well as the diaries of Viktor Klemperer, married to a non-Jew. Certainly, such men constituted a disproportionate number of the Jewish survivors of Leipzig.

From these twenty-four, fourteen reconstituted the *Gemeinde*. They elected Frank, Muscatblatt and Teichtner as the *Vorstand* (the board of directors), with Dziubas added later. The Red Cross put the *Vorstand* in touch with the Americans, and the Allies took a step toward restoring the position of the *Gemeinde*—and all Jewish organizations in Germany—with the Allied Control Council's Law Number 1, which overturned all laws discriminating against the Jews. The *Vorstand* then approached the local German authority, the *Landesverwaltung Sachsen*. On 29 January, 1946, the *Gemeinde* was reinstated as a quasi-official public body according to the Saxon law of 1906, under

[307] LGA, undated "Tätigskeitberich des *Vorstand*es der Israelitischen Religions*Gemeinde* zu Leipzig für die Zeit der Wiederöffnung 15. Mai 1945 bis zum Schluss des Kalendarjahres 1946".
[308] Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, WW Norton, 1996.

which it had originally been founded.[309] That same year, the Leipzig *Gemeinde* participated in a *Vorbereitendes Landesausschuß*, which led in 1949 to the founding of the *Landesverband der Jüdischen Gemeinden in der Russischen Okkupationszone* [later *in der DDR*].[310]

The New Leaders

The early efforts of the refounded *Gemeinde* were focused on the many thousands of Jewish returnees moving through Leipzig on their way home from the camps. Feeding these refugees and finding them help on their way home took up much of the early energy of the *Gemeinde*. As these refugees dwindled, business took on a more normal tone. The *Vorstand* was expanded to include new members, housing was provided for members of the *Gemeinde*, liaisons were appointed to deal with the city, and transportation and medical care was provided for those few who were still trickling in from Theresienstadt.

The men who recreated the *Gemeinde* represented a particular segment of the old Leipzig Jewish population. An examination of the biographies of Frank and Muscatblatt can give us some idea of the kind of people who were remaking the *Gemeinde*. Richard Frank was born in Halle in 1870. He moved with his parents to Leipzig in 1875. He stayed in school through his *Abitur*, taking it at the King Albert Gymnasium. He then served a two-year apprenticeship at a canvas factory in Kassel, after which he did his two years of military service with the 134th infantry regiment in Leipzig, reaching the rank of *Unteroffizier*.

[309] Held, 8-11.
[310] Mertens, 36.

He traveled, and trained in London and Paris, and in 1893 went to work at his father's textiles factory. In 1896, he built his own factory, and went into partnership with his father the following year. Thus established, he married Elise (whose last name and religious background are not known) in 1898, with whom he had two daughters, and from whom he separated in 1926, because Elise had been forced to take up residence in a sanatorium. The same year, he married the former Amanda Lawrenz, a Lutheran.

He studied national economy and statistics at the University of Leipzig for two years in the 1890s, and his success and prominence in the field was made clear by his service as a trade judge [*Handelsrichter*, a referee within a guild-like structure] from 1920 until the Nazi takeover. In 1937, his business was taken over by a trustee, and in 1939, it was completely aryanized. His troubles were lessened somewhat by his marriage to a gentile, as he acknowledged after the war. Although he did have to wear a star, and carry a Jewish ration card, and live in a *Judenhaus*, he was spared from the mass transports to the death camps, along with others living in mixed marriages.

When his number was called for deportation in February, 1945, he was held back from the first transport because of illness. By the time the second transport was ready, the allies had occupied Saxony. His holdings were returned to him by the Soviet authorities, although they were greatly diminished by the damage of the war.[311] His prewar prominence as a leader of industry—apparent again after the war by his appointment to a prominent position for the industry and trade chamber of Leipzig in 1946—made him a natural choice for the post of chair of the *Gemeinde*.

[311] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14198—VdN file on Richard Frank. Lebenslauf submitted in 1950 as part of application for "Victim of the Nazi Regime" status.

Alfred Muscatblatt had advertised himself as the "Jewish *Elektromeister*" before the Nazi takeover, a serious presence in the Jewish artisanal community and an independent businessman for 25 years. He had been a member of the SPD, and had been active in the *Gemeinde*. He had married his wife Margarete, in 1927, at which point she had converted to Judaism. Muscatblatt's business began to disintegrate in 1933, when the Nazi-influenced city government ceased to send contracts his way. He was hauled off to Sachsenhausen after *Kristallnacht*, but released shortly afterward, and allowed to go to work as an unskilled laborer in a shop, and ordered to keep to himself. As he insisted in a later questionnaire, he did not keep to himself, and in fact took every opportunity to try to influence the apprentices in the shop against the regime. For this, he claimed the status of "illegal worker"—resister against the Nazi regime—for himself after the war. There is no evidence that he received this recognition, which would have come with significant material benefits.[312]

When he came back from the camp, it was with a severe diabetic condition, which would eventually kill him. He and his wife were then subject to the usual deprivations: their radio was taken away, their ration for coal was cut by 90%. In December of 1939, the Muscatblatts were forced to move from their apartment into an overcrowded "*Judenhaus*". Margarete was offered her own apartment if she would leave Alfred. She refused. From 1941, they were subject to frequent house searches by the Gestapo, and their remaining possessions were taken away, including their typewriter, bicycle, electric appliances, furs and carpets.

[312] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 15418—VdN file on Alfred and Margarete Muscatblatt. Letter from AM to Kommunalabteilung, 6 February, 1946.

They were bombed out of their *Judenhaus* in April, 1943, were denied access to a shelter as Jews, and tried to move into her brother's empty apartment, but were denounced. They ended up with six other families in an emergency kitchen [*Notküchen*]. In February, 1945, Alfred was designated for deportation to Theresienstadt, a trip his wife later said they both knew he would not survive. They were able to save him from one transport, but he was designated for the next.[313] The end of the war came before that, and saved his life.[314]

Alfred Muscatblatt and Richard Frank represented the kind of people who were able to survive the war, and who began to reconstruct the *Gemeinde* afterward. Of the four new leaders, only Muscatblatt was even slightly prominent due to his activism in the prewar *Gemeinde*. These men survived because they had married gentiles, and because they were lucky. They were not Zionists; they were more or less prominent and successful businessmen, whose marriages to gentiles clearly marked them as people who shared the ideal of integration. These men thought of themselves as Germans.

But, at the same time, they were also clearly self-identifying Jews. Muscatblatt's wife made the effort to convert, he was active in the *Gemeinde,* he advertised in the Jewish directory, and he taught in the *Lehrhaus*. All four of the new leaders, whatever their prewar commitment to the *Gemeinde*, had made the decision to take leadership roles afterward. This mix of Jewish identity, integrationism, and some degree of prominence

[313] Ibid., 25 May, 1949. Margarete reported after the war: "I immediately spoke to the Gestapo and begged them not to send my husband—so sick from diabetes—back to the concentration camp, because he would certainly not survive the transport. I had to repeat all of this in writing and attach a sworn statement, and after six days of the most frightening commotion, the train left without him, and he was rescued for now." This is a clear reinforcement of Stoltzfus' heroic image of the non-Jewish spouses of the Rosenstraße, willing to risk their own lives in confrontation with the authorities on behalf of their Jewish spouses.
[314] Ibid.

in business establish Frank and Muscatblatt as a sort of model for the kind of people who would participate in the early reconstruction of the Jewish community after the war.

They were not the only ones, of course. Their great advantage as rebuilders lay in their presence in the city throughout the war, or for most of it. Others came later who would have a huge impact. Salo Looser and Fritz Grunsfeld, the future leaders of the *Gemeinde*, were among those coming back from the camps. Both of them, especially Looser, were politically motivated and had very strong antifascist credentials.

So did a number of Jews who came back in the period following liberation. Some of them were motivated to come specifically to the Soviet zone, where their political ideals would flourish under a government dedicated to anti-fascism. Some were Communists who had been in exile: Alexander Abusch, later Culture Minister of the GDR, Albert Norden, who would become a member of the state council of the GDR, and Hermann Axen, later a member of the Politburo of the SED.

Along with them came Jewish German intellectuals devoted to the construction of a democratic and socialist Germany: Anna Seghers, the writer, Helene Wiegel, the actress, Leah Grundig, the graphic artist, Ernst Bloch, the philosopher and Hans Mayer, the literary critic, the last two of whom took up positions at the University of Leipzig in 1948. Bloch stayed at the University of Leipzig until 1961 and the construction of the Berlin Wall, after which he relocated to the Federal Republic and the University of Tübingen. He was joined in 1963 by his friend Mayer, who went to work at the Technical University in Hanover. Even some foreign Jews came, mostly from Poland,

ironically seeking refuge from anti-Semitism. Eugen Gollomb, later longtime chair of the Leipzig *Gemeinde*, was one of these.[315]

It is difficult to generalize about the kinds of people who came to take part in the construction of the new Germany. Some were businessmen who had been able to stay in town. Some were prisoners of the Nazi regime who had returned. Some were old political professionals, returned from exile in Russia or Mexico. What held them together was less ideology, or even memory of what had happened, than optimism. There was a startling amount of good will and hope granted to the GDR by those Jews who came or stayed home. They seem largely to have believed that the Russian occupiers and the new regime had their interests at heart, and were reasonable partners in the reconstruction of a place for Jews in Germany. At first, the evidence seemed to affirm their optimism.[316]

What these people were not, was Zionists. That might seem to go without saying. There were certainly opportunities to go to Israel after the war, and many German Jews took those opportunities, but these did not. They bought into an identity as Germans and socialists, as well as Jews. Some of them had married gentiles. Some were religious, but some were not, including Albert Norden, the son of a rabbi. This is worth pointing out. The hard times still to come for Jews in Leipzig were based largely on charges of

[315] Siegfried Hollitzer, "Die Juden in der SBZ und ihr Verhältnis zu Staat wie Kirche" in *Judaica Lipsiensia: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, herausgeben von der Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung, Redaktion: Manfred Unger. Leipzig, 1994: Edition Leipzig, 218.

[316] Lothar Mertens' work is clear in this—until the "flight wave" in the early 1950s, cooperation between state and Jews was more or less the order of the day. The point is also made in Karin Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt: Jüdische Kommunisten in der DDR*. Köln, 2000. Hartewig's work is mainly about the place of Jewish communists in the new regime, but she paints a picture in which traditional Marxist and German ambivalence toward all Jews is reproduced in the DDR. In the early years, exemplified by Wilhelm Pieck's famous claim that the DDR could be a homeland for the Jews on a par with Israel, the new regime was mostly benign toward its Jewish citizens. It is much more complicated than this, as Hartewig points out, and reality did not always match up to rhetoric.

espionage on behalf of Israel, and much of the coming anti- Semitism was to be masked as anti-Zionism. While the use of anti-Zionism to cover anti-Jewish actions against genuine Zionists would be heinous enough, what was to come in 1952 and 1953 would not even meet that low standard. These people were, by definition and by dint of the choices they had made, distinctly not Zionists.

New Priorities

The first and in some ways the hardest problem was the restoration of Jewish citizens to their former state of material well-being. This effort went through two stages. The first, from the end of the war roughly through the establishment of the GDR, concentrated on immediate concerns—a place to live, warm clothing, a place to pray. This initial stage was marked by fairly close cooperation between the authorities and the Jewish community. But once the immediate and institutional demands of the *Gemeinde* had been met, and the question moved toward restitution to individuals, the state grew less friendly and relations between the state and the Jewish community in Leipzig began to suffer.

The first official communication between the refounded *Gemeinde* and the city government was a request for an address where leaders of the *Gemeinde* could send a list of things they wanted returned to their members, like apartments, radios, bicycles, typewriters, to their members.[317] Lists of families who needed homes, including three members of the *Vorstand*, were prepared before the *Gemeinde* even had its own stationery ready, on letterhead from a Nazi-era regional organization.[318]

[317] SAL Stadtbezirksversammlung und Rat der Stadt Leipzig: 1945-1970 (1) Nr. 7868, 26 May, 1945.
[318] Ibid., 7 May, 1945.

In June, the *Gemeinde* sent a set of demands, written in German and English, to the city authorities. These demands set the whole program of *Wiedergutmachung,* or restitution. These were the battles that would be fought for the next few years. Over time, though, the debate changed, and cooperation turned into confrontation. The straightforward tone of the demands, and the expectation that they would be met, lasted for some time, but eventually that tone and those expectations faded away, to be replaced by increasingly hostile legal action.

These demands were all economic: double rations for food and tobacco, the immediate replacement of houses lost to aryanization or bombing, ideally via the confiscation of Nazis' houses. Stolen personal items—radios, jewels, furs—should be paid for in cash. The *Gemeinde* itself wanted a starting credit of 100,000 RM, and reminded the city that it had always received a state subsidy like every other religion, and expected to do so again now. The most ironic demand, perhaps, was for new, preferential ration cards, to compensate for the old 'J' cards.[319]

Within the week, the *Gemeinde* laid claim to the old synagogue in Keilstraße, asking the city to dissolve the lease with the chemist who was there. The city found the chemist another place to do business, but was asked several months later by the landlord to convince the *Gemeinde* to pay the rent. The city ultimately compromised, in view of the financial condition of the *Gemeinde*, and "the murder of thousands of your members", and agreed to pay the back rent, if the *Gemeinde* would then resume payments.[320] The *Gemeinde* later asked for the temporary donation of benches so that it could celebrate the

[319] Ibid., 10 June, 1945.
[320] Ibid, 16, 30 June, 24 October, 1945; 18 January, 1946.

high holidays; the benches were to come from the bomb shelters from which Jews had been excluded only a few months earlier.[321]

Later in June, the *Gemeinde* asked permission to call for donations from all Leipzigers in the city's official newsletter. In a note to the military government, the *Gemeinde* acknowledged the occupation's position that restitution was for a German government to decide, but in the interim said that they wanted help from "those who were accomplices to the misery of the Jews", that is, ordinary Leipzigers.

But the tone of collective guilt did not find its way into the appeal that was issued. "Help sought: a shock regime, built on bloody terror, has collapsed." It pointed out that Jews were the first of the many victims of the regime, and closed with this appeal: "we would be grateful if you would make it possible for us to help these people who were barely able to escape the concentration camps and the inferno of the ghetto barracks, with their lives. We believe that *now you know* [emphasis mine] the horror of the camps, and hope that no one will be denied the requested aid."[322] The gap between the righteous anger of the appeal to the military occupation and the more forgiving tone of communal suffering in the notice to be published suggested a very acute sense of the political realities of life in post-war Germany. Non-Jewish Leipzigers were in no mood to consider themselves as accomplices to the murders of their neighbors in 1945, and the leaders of the *Gemeinde* knew it.

The drive for restitution was generally not, however, about appeals to individual Germans. Much more work was devoted to convincing the authorities to help Jewish Leipzigers reclaim what was theirs. Housing had to be made available for individuals

[321] LGA 319, 2 August, 1945.
[322] SAL Stadtbezirksversammlung und Rat der Stadt Leipzig: 1945-1970 (1) Nr. 7868, 25 June, 1945.

within the *Gemeinde*—many Jewish homes were now occupied by prominent Nazis. The *Gemeinde* sent a list of such homes to the city, including one occupied by the leading local propaganda official, and another in which a holder of a high decoration of the National Socialist party resided.[323] The *Gemeinde* also made it their business to provide temporary accommodations for refugees, as in the case of David Berger, a concentration camp survivor on his way home to Bamberg to find relatives.[324]

Another prime concern was the restoration of Jewish cemeteries. The *Gemeinde* had asked very early after its reestablishment for the restoration of the main cemetery on Delitzscher Landstrasse, demolished by the Nazis.[325] To its credit, the city government ordered 100 men to the cemetery to clean it up.[326] By December, 1946, the *Gemeinde* announced that the cemetery had been restored, and noted the assistance of the city government.[327]

The municipalgovernment was helpful in the early years after the war, although it did not always act as Jewish citizens wanted. When 80 Jewish Leipzigers asked the city for fur coats to keep them warm over the winter, on grounds that they had been forbidden to own warm clothing under the Nazi regime, the reply was not very warm, either. The city agreed, but only after recognized anti-fascists had been accommodated. "These furs were not taken away from the Jews on political grounds, but solely because they were Jews. On the whole, Jews cannot be seen as "anti-fascist". They were, on the whole, passive victims."[328] This tortured logic hinted at unpleasant things to come, in a rivalry

[323] LGA 319, 12 July, 1945.
[324] Ibid., 17 October, 1945.
[325] SAL Stadtbezirksversammlung und Rat der Stadt Leipzig: 1945-1970 (1) Nr. 7868, 31 May, 1945.
[326] Order from Stadtdirektor Ott, Ibid., 6 August, 1945.
[327] LGA 484, "Tätigskeitberich des *Vorstand*es der Israelitischen Religions*Gemeinde* zu Leipzig für die Zeit der Wiederöffnung 15. Mai 1945 bis zum Schluss des Kalendarjahres 1946".
[328] Hollitzer, 223.

between "active anti-fascists" and "passive victims". But in comparison with the Nazi years, and with the era of the early 1950s, relations between the state and its Jewish citizens were quite warm in these early days.

Cultural Conflict

But it is also clear that there were instances of popular anti-Semitism in the first years after the war, in which the role of the authorities—whether Soviet or East German—can only be described as erratic. In 1948, a play, "*Rufer vor dem Tore*", was withdrawn by the city theatre of Leipzig, following protests by the *Gemeinde*. The *Gemeinde* wrote to the Soviet Administration of the city, complaining that the play, with a Jewish leading character, reinforced negative images of Jews, and particularly of Jewish refugees. The *Gemeinde* concluded that the play was "not recommended for our contemporary anti-fascist state."[329] At the behest of authoritiest he play ended its run in early April.

The author, K.G. Fischer-Föbus, issued a protest, addressed to the domestic and foreign press, claiming that the SMAD had oppressed free artistic expression. The Berlin magazine "*Theaterdienst: Informationsblätter für Bühne, Film und Musik*" investigated the author's complaint, and debunked his assertion that the SMAD had ordered the revocation of the play. The magazine asserted that the play had been withdrawn due to public protests, most prominently from the *Gemeinde*. Unnamed "representatives of public life in Leipzig" also argued that the play "called forth an anti-Semitic Nazi reaction in part of the audience."

[329] LGA, 314, 2 March, 1948.

The magazine described the lead character, Simon Wolf, as a portrayal of Jews in line with those of the Nazis in their anti-Semitic plays and films, and asked "what kind of creative freedom can the speech in "*Rufer vor dem Tore*" be? Of the freedom to create anti-Semitic plays?" "*Theaterdienst*" concluded that the methods of the author in protesting the withdrawal of the play were not democratic in nature, and were more suited to the Nazis and their reactionary successors. Interestingly, the magazine was forwarded to the *Gemeinde* by the SMAD.[330] This incident shows that there was still an active remembrance of pre-1945 images of Jews, and that the state in its several forms, and in this case the Soviet occupation, could play the role of ally to the Jews just as comfortably as it could that of their persecutor.

Legal Action

One of the most striking expressions of good will by the state in Leipzig toward its Jewish citizens was its energetic prosecution of their former oppressors. Nazi criminals were brought to trial in Leipzig with the cooperation of the Jewish community and with their participation. Many of the trials pointed out the degree to which persecution of Jews had been a popular activity. The existence of the trials and their outcomes tend, though not without exception, to show a genuine attempt on the part of the state to redress the wrongs done to Jews, if not to address wholesale popular anti-Semitism.

[330] "aber—so wurde gefragt—von welcher Schaffensfreiheit kann die Rede beim "Rufen vor dem Tore" sein? Von der Freiheit der Schaffung antisemitischer Stücke?" "Theaterdienst: Informationsblätter für Bühne, Film und Musik", 7 June, 1948, in LGA, 314.

The trials began in earnest in 1946.[331] In July, four men were convicted of crimes during *Kristallnacht*. "B", a truck driver, was convicted of leading the burning of the Gottschedstrasse synagogue, showing up with 20 liters of gasoline. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Wilhelm Kempeni, a former KPD member who had joined the NSDAP in 1933, was convicted of participating in the looting of the synagogue, where he had commented "The Jewish swine could still get in a position to take our money". He then went to the Jewish cemetery, beat up the cemetery inspector, and stole the cashbox. He was sentenced to ten years. Hans Straube, an SA man since 1930, was convicted of joining with Kempeni in vandalizing the cemetery, after which he burned the inspector's house and the *Festhalle*. He was sentenced to 15 years.[332]

In October of 1946, Fritz Müller was convicted of denouncing a Lutheran *Mischling* fellow employee, Gerhard Rieß, with whom he had had a fight. Rieß died in Auschwitz in December of the next year. Müller was sentenced to five years in prison.[333] The following month, "H", an assembly supervisor, was convicted of having denounced a friend of his wife for being critical of the 1938 pogrom: "What would you say if your workplace was burned?…first the Reichstag burns, and now the synagogues. Is there any law left in our country?" "H" denounced her to the Gestapo, and she sat in jail for a month and a half. "H" was sentenced to two years in prison.[334]

In June of 1947, a salesman of fruit oils named Leo Tuscher was convicted of having denounced a competitor. Tuscher and Max Schall had been in a feud since 1922

[331] The trials were held in the *Landgericht*, a reconstituted court roughly equivalent to a state district court. All of the trials mentioned were held under the auspices of the Soviet Occupation, which lasted as the sovereign political authority in Leipzig from the turnover of authority from American liberating forces in June of 1945 until the founding of the GDR in October of 1949.
[332] StAL Landgericht Leipzig 7863, 3 July, 1946.
[333]Ibid, 18 October, 1946.
[334] Ibid., 25 November, 1946.

over the quality of some lemon oil Schall had sold. In 1941, Tuscher had confronted Schall, who was married to a gentile, as to why he was not wearing the star. Schall replied that "*Hüten Sie sich, einmal kommt die Zeit!*" ("Watch out, the time is coming!", meaning Hitler can't last forever).

Tuscher denounced him to the Gestapo, which picked Schall up in January of 1941. He was told that he would not see his family again, and was sent to Sachsenhausen and then to Auschwitz, where he died in November. Tuscher insisted that he could not have known the Gestapo would do this. The court did not agree, and he was sentenced to ten years in prison and ten years loss of civil rights.[335]

An opportunity to confront mass popular anti- Semitism seemed to present itself to the authorities in May of 1947. Sixteen defendants went on trial over riots the day after *Kristallnacht* in the neighborhood of Neu-Gohlis. After meeting at a party*Ortsgruppe* assembly on the morning of the tenth, at which they discussed the murder of vom Rath and the events of the previous day, they proceeded to Neu-Gohlis. There, they marched through the streets, demanding that Jews present themselves, and breaking down the doors of those who refused. About 90 people were ultimately herded into a gymnasium at a nearby Catholic high school. Most were released a few hours later. A few were immediately transported to a concentration camp. More were arrested again in the next few days and sent to camps or to prison. Of those, several died.

The court went to great lengths to point out how disappointed the Nazis had been in the small number of ordinary Germans who had taken up their call to abuse Jews during *Kristallnacht* and its aftermath. Rather than take the mass of participants to task and deal with the lingering legacy of German anti- Semitism, the court insisted that "the

[335]Ibid., 18 June, 1947.

action against the Jews was broken off for the time being in the morning of November 10, and indeed on orders from higher up, because the mass of people held back and the action did not become, as Goebbels had hoped, a demonstration ("Kundgebung") of the entire German people; many more in broad circles of the German people spoke out against it."[336]

This is no doubt a generous interpretation of the actions of the German people, either as a whole, or in the city of Leipzig. Why would the authorities say this? It was at the heart of the ruling mythology of the GDR that the mass of Germans were essentially good working class people and had been duped by the Nazis. The SED traced its roots to the German Communist Party, of course, and both of those parties claimed to be the spokesman of the majority of Germans. To admit the culpability of the German people as a whole would have run counter to the notion, important to the leaders of party and state, that the German people and working class, as a whole and through their representative parties, were a progressive force.

So, it was very uncommon to hear an East German leader discuss the guilt of the German people as a whole, while in the West, political leaders began to grapple with the problems of collective guilt (albeit not very successfully until much later).[337] As far as the East German leadership was concerned, the Nazi period was an aberration, detached from true popular sentiment, and the leading role of the German working class among the people was the historical rule. To admit otherwise would have been to compromise the logic of the ruling party. As time would prove by the early 1950s, this logic would eventually lead to the historical dismissal of anti-Jewish activity altogether. For the time

[336] Ibid., 10 May, 1947.
[337] The comparison between the two is very effectively laid out in Jeffery Herf, *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies*. Cambridge, MA: 1997.

being, though, this was a subtle prevarication, within a relationship between Jews in Leipzig and the leadership of the DDR that was mostly positive. The willingness of the courts to go after Germans who had committed crimes against their fellow citizens of Jewish heritage was a sign of generally good ties between the state and its Jewish citizens.

One curious sign did come in this early period of judicial cooperation, albeit in a major trial whose outcome was still positive from the point of view of Jewish victims. A man named Gustav Melzer, who had been a prominent lawyer in town as well as a city councilman, was tried in 1948 on charges of having written books that were sympathetic to Nazism, and hateful to Jews, as well as having participated in anti-Semitic activity as a lawyer. Melzer was a complicated figure. He had been a founder of the *Stahlhelm* in 1919, and had led the organization in Leipzig from 1924 until he was expelled in 1926 for working against that body's opposition to the republic. He had been the local leader of the right-nationalist *Alldeutscher Verband* from 1920 until it was dissolved in 1933. From 1929 to 1933, he had been the leader of the right-nationalist "*Volksrechtspartei*" in the city council.

But many people had been involved in rightist politics, and in fact Melzer had never become a member of the Nazi party, or of the organization of National Socialist lawyers, or given the Hitler salute, according to the findings of the court. He had been held by the Gestapo for a month and a half in 1939 "because of his oppositional attitude." He had even been a member of the *Goerdelerkreis*, the circle of conservative opposition to Hitler that formed around the mayor of Leipzig. Yet, he had also been an anti-Semite, and had made anti-Semitic arguments in his books, including his most inflammatory,

"*The Nationalist State of the Germans*" [1926], in which he argued against liberalism, democracy and socialism, and for a "*Führerstaat*". In that book he insisted that "Germany must contend with the Jews, if it wishes to endure." He called for a savior for the race: "Germany needs a Siegfried today, who will save her from the dragon "Jew". Tomorrow it will be too late, and the poison from the dragon will spread through the body of the German people." He also demanded euthanasia for those "unworthy of life".

This was pretty rough stuff, as were his actions as a divorce lawyer in 1935. He represented Frau Frieda Lenhoff in proceedings against her husband, and based his case on the infidelity of the husband. Not stopping there, he pointed out that the third party was a gentile, while the Herr Lenhoff was a Jew, whose real name was Lewinsohn.[338]

What separates these proceedings from other more straightforward trials of persecutors of Jews—and might hint at changes in the official relationship between Jews and the new state—was the decision of the lead judge in the court to remove himself from the proceedings because he was a Jew. The appellate body to seem to agree with his decision. Hölzer, the Chairman of the Court, made the decision to recuse himself from Melzer's trial because "as a Jew, whose race and heritage had been attacked, he did not believe it possible to form an objective opinion ". The Senate of the higher regional court hastened to assert that it believed that it was possible for a Jew to form an objective opinion, but accepted Hölzer's withdrawal on the grounds that he had had dealings with the defendant in the past. [339]

It would have been difficult for Hölzer not to know the defendant—both men were active in local politics and jurisprudence. The trial went on, under a substitute

[338] StAL Landgericht Leipzig 7784, Strafsache Dr. RA Gustav Melzer, 5 April, 1948.
[339] Ibid., 27 February, 1948.

judge, and Melzer was found guilty of "common" support of the regime. He was not found guilty of higher-grade support because his works were distributed to a small audience, mainly former *Stahlhelm* men. He was fined 10,000 Marks, along with the forfeiture of two of his seven properties and two years in a work camp. The relative leniency of the sentence was attributed to his age and physical condition. The seizure of his property was only right, according to the court; he should contribute with a portion of his wealth to "*Wiedergutmachung*".[340]

The trial was a public sensation. The VVN—the organization responsible for representing the interests of victims of the Nazi regime—wrote the judge, asking that the trial be moved from the main hall of the courthouse to a larger auditorium, reflecting the VVN's recent resolution to "do everything to see that the Melzer trial take place with the greatest possible public participation."[341] A decision was made to keep the trial where it was, due to expense, but tickets were given out, and the judge ended up asking the police for units to deal with the crowds that showed up.[342]

When tickets were made available, the VVN requested half of them.[343] It is not clear whether they got the tickets. Two were requested by another semi-official agency—the information division of the local SED.[344] It is clear from the public interest in the trial—Melzer had been a prominent man, and his crimes had clearly touched a nerve—that it presented an opportunity to engage in some useful public education. Certainly the SED and the VVN felt that way. But why was a decision made to allow the Jewish judge slated to hear the case to recuse himself?

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[340] Ibid., 5 April, 1948.
[341] Ibid., 1 March, 1948.
[342] Ibid., 25 March, 1948.
[343] Ibid., 10 March, 1948.
[344] Ibid., 9 March, 1948.

Even if we take at face value the assertion that it was Hölzer's idea to recuse himself this case was clearly of interest to the local powers of the SED, and no serious decision would have been made without their input. At the very least, the SED believed that some harm could come of a Jew presiding over this trial. Whether they were worried about public reaction to the sight of a Jew taking vengeance on a German anti-Semite, or engaging in a kind of anti-Semitism of their own, the fact is that the SED oversaw a decision to exclude Hölzer from the process.

Restitution—with limits

The decision, explicitly asserted, to take from Melzer and give to his Jewish victims was part of a continuing debate about restitution. Early after the war, the *Gemeinde* had met with success in reclaiming much of its communal property. But the issue grew stickier over time, as individuals began to demand the return of what had been taken from them. For the time being, though, at least until the early 1950s, the state was still cooperative. We can see this in the publishing industry. Leipzig was and is a major center for publication, bearing the honorific title "City of Books", or "*Buchstadt*". During the war, many of the more important publishing and book distribution houses, including C.F. Peter and Thalia music publishing, were seized through the aryanisation process, one in which avarice and the seamy side of the racial dictatorship were on prominent display.[345]

Josef Ardel was a bookseller in Leipzig. He did a lot of business in eastern Europe, traveling to Sofia on occasion. During the Hitler period, his business was taken

[345] The latest work on this topic is from Frank Bajohr: *"Aryanisation" in Hamburg ; the economic exclusion of Jews and the confiscation of their property in Nazi Germany*. New York: 2002.

away from him in the process of "aryanization". By 1941, the firm had been dissolved. But in 1949, Ardel applied to the new authorities for permission to reopen. Three months later, Ardel was back in business as sole proprietor.[346] The process worked more or less as it was supposed to, from the perspective of the Jewish victim.

Thalia was a publishing house for music and theatre. It was taken away from its Jewish owner and passed through several hands until settling in those of Rudolf Erdmann in 1943. Erdmann was able to hang onto it until 1948, despite widespread knowledge of how he had come by the business. He had answered questionnaires about his holdings, had admitted to being a member of the *Reichsmusikkammer*, *Fachschaft Musikverleger* [the Music Retailers' trade group of the Reich's Music Chamber]. In early 1947, he was asked, finally, whether he had a permit, and by the next year was out of the business. It is not clear whether Thalia made it back to its rightful owner, but Erdmann faced criminal charges in 1952, when he was convicted of contributing to the persecution of the Jews by buying the business for much less than it was worth, and hanging on to it until 1948. His sentence is not in the files—the note from the court to the editor of the professional booksellers' newsletter said that interested people could come to the courthouse to find out. The reasons for his sentencing were withheld on "grounds of state security."[347]

C.F. Peters was a prominent music publishing house owned by a Jew, Dr. Henri Hinrichsen. In 1939 it was transferred to a gentile German, Dr. Johannes Petschull. The contract allowed for the transfer of 12,000 Pounds Sterling to Dr. Hinrichsen, who had by

[346] StAL 12405—Börsenverein der deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig—Josef Ardel, 17 August, 1938; 15 December, 1949, 9 March, 1950.
[347] StAL 19328—Börsenverein der deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig—Thalia Musikverlag, Rudolf Erdmann, 25 April, 1944; 7 January, 1947; cutting from *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 7 May, 1952; 28 June, 1952.

then left the country.[348] C.F. Peters was given back to its rightful owner in 1947. But, it was seized by the state in 1952 and made into a "*Volkseigenener Betrieb*", a nationalized enterprise.[349] This happened to other business owners, to be sure. But the timing—1952 was to be a peak of government hostility against East German Jews—brings into question the possibility that the nationalization was not a coincidence.

Ernst Eulenburg was a publisher of music, too, and was reasonably well known. Enough so, at any rate, that when the new gentile owner, Horst Sander, asked to change the name of the firm, he met with some resistance from the authorities on the grounds that the old name was useful in attracting overseas customers. After the war, the business was run by a manager, Erich Otto, in place of Sander, who was missing and later turned out to have been killed. In 1948, the firm told the financial authorities that a transferal of the business back to Eulenburg was in progress, and that after it was complete, the name would revert back from Horst Sander to Ernst Eulenburg.[350]

The next year the firm's publishing permit was revoked, and only restored when it was made clear that the case was still in process.[351] Two years later, it was still pending.[352] The following spring, the local government asserted that nothing could happen with the case until a general restitution law was passed.[353] That October, notice was given that the firm no longer existed, that it had ceased to operate when Erich Otto had fled the country with his family, moving to Stuttgart, where he had opened the business under the same name, a name to which he was not entitled.[354]

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[348] StAL 4100—Musikverlag C.F. Peters, 26 October, 1940.
[349] Hollitzer, 225.
[350] StAL 12262—Börsenverein der deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig—Sander, Horst., 12 October, 1948.
[351] Ibid., 19 April, 1949.
[352] Ibid., 2 May, 1951.
[353] Ibid., 27 March, 1952.
[354] Ibid., 12 October, 1952; 11 June, 1956.

The case points out several of the salient facts of restitution in the GDR. One was that individuals had a harder time reclaiming their property than groups did. Another was that physical presence in the country was crucial. Eulenburg's chances were greatly reduced because he was in London. The most typical reality was the refusal of the government to do anything until a law on restitution was passed. This was to become the great recurring refrain of the drive for restitution.

We can conclude that the early years of the postwar era were distinguished by a degree of relatively humane cooperation between the new German authorities and the remnants of the Jewish community. Though there was certainly still evidence of popular anti-Semitism, and the reluctance of the state to deal with the broader history of anti-Semitism was unsettling, the new East German state did not itself seem to be an anti-Semitic one.

But this would change dramatically in the early 1950s. Demands for restitution would be met then not with indifference or pleas for patience but with open hostility. Those Jewish Leipzigers who had come back to town because they believed in their Germanness, or because they believed in socialism, were soon to be sadly disappointed.

Chapter 5: The New Terror—the purge of 1952-53

The years 1952 and 1953 witnessed a radical shift in the relationship between the Jewish citizens of the DDR and their leaders in the state and party. Former tendencies toward cooperation and tolerance, with a measure of co-optation of Jews for political purposes, were replaced by a barely concealed and growing hostility, a willingness to sacrifice those relationships in favor of the use of Jewish citizens as scapegoats. The context in which these phenomena took place was of several sorts: this shift occurred at a time of increasing paranoia and anti-Semitism in the USSR and—not coincidentally, to be sure—the rest of the socialist countries in the Soviet sphere of influence. Also, it happened concurrently with the emergence of east-west hostilities as the defining fact of life in European politics. Finally, this was a time during which the upper levels of the SED sought to ground the legitimacy of their leadership in their imagined history as the martyred opposition to Nazism. This section will examine all of these forces in turn. To give a hint at the direction of the theme: the purges of 1952-53 happened in a Europe riven by Cold War, in the context of Stalinism, and in the shadow of German history.

Slansky and Show Trials

It would hardly be original to point out that the period of the early 1950s was a time of profound governmental paranoia in the socialist nations of eastern Europe, accompanied by accusations of treason, wrecking, and espionage. In fact, these were the kinds of accusations faced by identified opponents of the regime in the GDR both before and after the show trial of Rudolf Slansky, the Jewish former General Secretary of the

Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Whether the accused were Jehovah's Witnesses[355] or black marketeers[356], they could expect allegations of treason, sabotage, and service to the Western security apparatus. What distinguished the Slansky trial was the high position of the accused, and, especially, the fact that the leading defendant was a Jew. The Slansky trial set off a series of anti- Semitic actions in several countries of the eastern block.

The obvious importance of larger, pan-Stalinist causes to these events is related to the doctors' trial in Moscow. Generally described as Stalin's last spasm of terror, the plot was an accusation of sabotage against some of the physicians in the Kremlin, alleging that some of the doctors were in league with western intelligence, seeking to injure the health of the leading figures of the Soviet Union.

Any straight causal relationship posited between Moscow's demands—expressed through the doctors' plot—and central European responses like the Slansky trial and the German purge is problematic, not least since the Slansky trial predated the doctors' plot by at least a month. This discrepancy suggests that there was more to these expressions of anti-Semitism than a simple command from Moscow, and in fact there is evidence of building tensions in Germany well before not only the doctors' plot, but the Slansky trial itself.[357]

In addition to the context provided by the Slansky trial and other anti- Semitic spasms, it is worthwhile to remember that this was a time generalized political show trials and purges in the GDR. Most of these were accusations of sabotage and economic crimes.

[355] Leipziger Volkszeitung., 21 October, 1952. Page 2.
[356] Ibid., 16 December, 1952. Page 1.
[357] Mario Keßler especially asserts a close tie between the Slansky trial and the wave of anti-Semitism in the GDR. No doubt, there was a connection, but the evidence here indicates that there were also causes having more to do with events in East Germany than just the pan-Stalinist context. Keßler, *Die SED und die Juden: zwischen Repression und Toleranz.* Berlin, 1995. 85.

On 1 March, 1952, the owner and top officials of the Mende glass work in Leipzig were sentenced to terms ranging from 2 to 6 years for sabotage and dealing with a cartel, punishable under order 160 of the SMAD, and article 14 of the GDR constitution. The charges arose from the company's continued contact with companies in the Federal Republic.[358]

In June, Alfred Mahn and Uhlich Zimm, two workers in their twenties, were sentenced to 8 years in prison each for distributing literature critical of the government. This charge evolved into one of sabotage and espionage, though, as the two were accused of being in the pay of the American security agency, preparing to tear down telephone poles and burn centralized machine repair and distribution centers. The report said that the two had been led down the road to crime by listening to the American radio station RIAS, taken in by its "systematic war propaganda."[359]

In August, the Leipzig state court sentenced 24 people, including 5 who had fled to the Federal Republic, to terms ranging from 2 to 15 years for smuggling 460 textile machines to the west, from 1949-51, in order to "found a new textile industry, which would benefit the west German army above all." [this despite the lack of a West German army for several years to come.][360] These were just in Leipzig. In Dresden, Halle, and of course Berlin, East German citizens faced accusations and trials, some of which ended in life terms and even death.

Over the course of April and May, 1952—that is several months before signs of the worst anti-Semitic activity to the east—there was a trial in Leipzig of 3 immigrant Jews on charges of black market activity. The trio, Robinsohn, Schapiro, and Schröder, were

[358] Ibid., 30 April, 1952.
[359] Ibid., 10 June, 1952.
[360] Ibid., 7 August, 1952.

the last of twenty "stateless people of the Jewish faith"[361] charged with moving large amounts of illicit tobacco, cocoa and coffee. The accused had been part of a smuggling ring, moving up to 15 million cigarettes, eventually broken up by Soviet authorities. All three had been victims of the Nazis. All three had been held in detention since 1950, except for Robinsohn, who had been in jail since 1949. The leader of the group, Josef Bodak, had been a partisan leader near Bialistok. These were Jews, but they were held on charges of illicit economic activity like many others. Was there something different about their case?

The Jews of Leipzig certainly seemed to think so. Robinsohn, and then later Schapiro, received supplemental food from the *Gemeinde* while in prison, as early as December, 1950.[362] The two, and especially Robinsohn, became something of a cause celebre within the *Gemeinde*, requesting and receiving visits from Cantor Werner Sander and gifts of clothing and cigarettes on birthdays, and matzos at Passover.[363]

Of less immediate but perhaps more significant use to Robinsohn was the assumption of his legal defense by Fritz Grunsfeld, by this time perhaps the most prominent figure in the Leipzig Jewish community. Grunsfeld was in correspondence with Robinsohn from at least April, 1951, answering his inquiries about his case, and forwarding some of his requests to the *Gemeinde* directors.[364] It was Grunsfeld who raised the issue of anti-Semitism in the courtroom.

Everyone involved seemed to recognize that something important or at least sensitive was happening. Several representatives from the VVN observed the proceedings, and the

[361] Staatsarchiv Leipzig [StAL] IV/5/01/523. 15 May, 1952.
[362] Leipzig Gemeinde Archive, 352, 27 December, 1950
[363] Ibid., 13 April, 1951.
[364] Ibid., 13 April, 6 June, 1951.

judge recognized that from the beginning, "due to an understandable feeling of mistrust, the accused were strongly predisposed against the court, despite thorough instructions."[365] The judge recognized that not only the very long period of detention suffered by the defendants, but the realities of the Hitler period, meant that a German court trying these Jews was a tricky business.

The defendants certainly recognized this, too. Presiding Judge Pfifferling put it this way in a report to the VVN: "The accused therefore only partly confessed and kept seeking to place the blame for their charges on anti-Semitism."[366] Not only the defendants, but Fritz Grunsfeld and the Chairman of the Leipzig *Gemeinde*, Salo Looser, who was there as an observer from the VVN, both cried foul. Judge Pfifferling wrote "The court had the impression that they [the defendants] were strengthened in this [impression of anti- Semitism] by Dr. Grunsfeld and Comrade Loser [sic]. An ill-advised remark by state attorney Uhlmann, referring to the defendants as being of the Jewish race, was construed by Dr. Grunsfeld as an anti-Semitic remark, with which he wanted to prove the prejudice of the judicial organs. This is unthinkable, because as Dr. Grunsfeld knows, Uhlmann is himself a recognized victim of the Nazi regime. Comrade Looser conducted himself similarly."[367]

The court, in rejecting the charges based on the resume of the accused anti-Semite as a victim of Nazism, was pursuing the basic rhetorical strategy of the SED: It was by definition impossible that they could be seen as anti- Semitic, or fascist in any way, because they were the representatives, and indeed in many cases the individuals, who suffered under and fought against the Nazis. Beyond this basic defensive posture,

[365] StAL, IV/5/01/523, 39-40, 15 May, 1952.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid.

the court went so far as to blame the defendants' crimes for fanning a potential new wave of anti-Semitism, as well as jeopardizing the GDR's relationship with the USSR and weakening the development of the GDR's economic structure.[368]

This was clearly a national issue as well, involving not only the Jewish leadership of Leipzig, but also the leadership of the Jews in the GDR, in the person of Julius Meyer, president of the *Verband der Jüdischen Gemeinde in der DDR* [Association of Jewish Communities in the German Democratic Republic, the national umbrella organization]. Meyer, attending in his role as a leader in the VVN, was present at the trial, along with Looser and Grunsfeld [the latter, incidentally, was Vice-President of the *Verband*] Meyer, like both Looser and Grunsfeld, was an emblem of early Jewish-state cooperation, a member of the SED, who later fled the country along with the Leipzig leadership.

This case is interesting, in that it well illustrates the regime's objectives as they were often pursued by the courts. The goals were political (the maintenance of ties to Moscow), economic (the development of industrial capacity, and a concomitant frenzy of trials for economic crimes), and ideological (the establishment of the legitimacy of the SED government, based on its historical position in regard to the Nazi past). At the same time, it provides ample evidence, well before the Slansky episode and the rest of the East European anti- Semitic purges, that the Jews of Leipzig, through their leadership, were expressing real concern over what they considered to be official anti- Semitism. The question is how does anti- Semitism fit into the list of motivations?

[368] Ibid.

The Rhetoric of Philosemitism and the West

It is certainly the case that a kind of philosemitism—or at least accusations of anti-Semitism against identified enemies—was a staple of GDR discourse in the period leading up to the Slansky affair. The most important use of such pronouncements was almost always negative and comparative—that is to say, that East German philosemitism in this period served as a mechanism for pointing out that their Germany was the one that had learned the lessons of the Nazi era, the one that represented the victims and opponents of fascism, and, crucially, that the FRG had not learned these lessons. In order for the GDR to be seen as the hero in the inter-German conflict over legitimacy, it was necessary to paint the FRG, and its ally, the USA, as the villain, and attitudes and actions toward Jews, at least at a visible level, served that purpose.

This policy can be clearly seen in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* in the early 1950s. In January 1952, one could read an article in the LVZ proclaiming that 354,159 Israelis had signed a petition for the conclusion of a final settlement in Germany between the five major powers, a call that echoed Stalinist policy.[369] This use of Jews as justification for Soviet and GDR policy was mirrored in a series of official pronouncements that designated the FRG and its allies as fascists.

In November of that year, just ten days before its readers heard of the Slansky trial, the LVZ announced a major commemoration of the 14th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. Participants included "hundreds of Leipzigers, members of the VVN, and of the Jewish community." The participants marched to the Jewish cemetery, to "mark the fall of the victims of Nazi barbarism in that sacred site." A circular sent to "progressive organizations" from the VVN made the intentions of the rally clear: to combat tendencies

[369] LVZ, in StAL, 16 January, 1952.

toward a new fascism from American world imperialism, above all in West Germany. The denunciation of Americans and West Germans as fascists came immediately following an uncharacteristic description of *Kristallnacht* as an event affecting Jews. Usually, *Kristallnacht*—if it was discussed at all—was talked about in the context of a larger, more significant attack on socialists, and had nothing to do with the larger, socialist-minded population of Leipzig. More in character was the circular's insistence that the pogrom came only after "*eine grosse angelegte Provokation*" [a large-scale provocation] from the Nazis, emphasizing the agents in brown, rather than the proletariat of Leipzig.[370]

The march was at once a memorialization and a warning against racial hatred and war. Salo Looser, along with Hans Siegewasser from the local leadership of the National Front, spoke to the crowd of the equality of all races and peoples, and of the debt all peoples owed to the Soviet Union. The speakers emphasized that the struggle continued, notably against the Ku Klux Klan and the American Legion, both of which were, they said, successors of bloody fascism.

The use of Jewish sites, Jewish speakers, and commemoration of events affecting Jews to justify the positions and legitimacy of the East German ruling party was exemplified by the slogan on the poster announcing the rally: "*Rassenhetze ist Hetze gegen die Sowjetunion*" [Racial agitation is agitation against the Soviet Union].[371] Racial hatred was not something to be combated—or even remembered—on its own terms, but a tool for appreciating the legitimacy of the East German ruling party, and a focus for hostility toward the western allies. The story concluded with a Thälmann Pioneer [the

[370] StAL, IV/5/01/523, 30 October, 1952.
[371] StAL, IV/5/01/523.

SED's organization for elementrary-age children] thanking the government for its wise policy, which guaranteed racial equality, and the passage by the assembled of a resolution calling for the liberation of the Rosenbergs from the "fascist, anti- Semitic USA judges."[372]

The Rosenbergs provided a powerful conduit for criticism of America on antiracist lines in the days around the Slansky affair. Nowhere is there any sign that the editors of the LVZ, or those above them, appreciated the irony of this juxtaposition. On the 28th of October, 1952, the LVZ carried a denunciation of the US justice system, describing the FBI as "the American Gestapo", and claiming that the true grounds of the "fascist, anti- Semitic" case against them was the "*Kreuzzug*" [crusade] by the American warmongers [*Kriegstreiber*] "against all communists and democrats".[373] Two days later, the paper called for the rescue of the Rosenbergs, and the Jewish Professor Hermann Budzislawski of the University of Leipzig (soon to be *Karl-Marx-Universität*) asserted that "All America knows that Ethel and Julius Rosenberg are no spies, but honorable people, who must be murdered as victims of the increasing "*Faschisierung*" [becoming fascist] of the USA, in order to intimidate [*einzuschüchtern*] the fighters for peace in America."[374]

Nor were the LVZ's denunciations of the western allies as fascists limited to the Rosenberg affair. In early 1952, the paper reported that Senator Eastland wished to build concentration camps for the imprisonment of "all progressive Americans".[375] In April of that year, Leipzigers were told that General Hays and his clique of "khaki browns"

[372] LVZ, 12 November, 1952.
[373] Ibid., 28 October, 1952.
[374] Ibid., 30 October, 1952.
[375] Ibid., 25 January, 1952.

wished to "begin a new mass murder."[376] Perhaps most grotesque was the characterization of an alleged US massacre in Korea as "the American Auschwitz": "whoever still doubts that the USA-Imperialists have taken over as the heir to Hitler Fascism and have even surpassed it must now recognize: the brutal actions against unarmed Korean and Chinese POW's on Koje island are a repetition of the Nazi crimes at Auschwitz." [*Wer bisher daran geweifelt haben sollte, daß die USA-Imperialisten das verbrecherische Erbe des Hitler-Faschismus übernommen haben und noch überbieten, muß jetzt erkennen: Die brutalen Aktionen gegen wehrlose koreanische und chinesiche Kriegsgefangene auf der Insel Koje sind eine Wiederholung der Naziverbrechen von Auschwitz.*][377]

The point of the description of the western allies and the FRG as fascist was clearly to bolster the legitimacy of the SED and the government of the GDR as the successors of the opponents to and victims of Nazism. To support the SED was to support a defense against the return of fascism. In a speech entitled "Learn from the Heroes of the Antifascist Resistance", Wilhelm Pieck warned the faithful on the fifth anniversary of the VVN that they had to work against "every effort to organize a new fascist terror regime and against the preparation and pursuit of a new war." Julius Meyer, President of the *Verband der Juden in der DDR*, was one of the featured speakers, and his presence lent the imprimatur of the DDR's Jewish community to that regime's attempts to paint its western rivals into a corner of revanchism, if not fascism.[378]

The use of Jews as a rhetorical device by the regime to label their capitalist rivals as fascists was unsavory in and of itself. But it was also the preface to much worse

[376] Ibid., 24 April, 1952.
[377] Ibid., 15 June, 1952.
[378] Ibid., 22 February, 1952.

developments to come. For the moment, Jews were a useful tool, a club with which to beat the west. But by late 1952, Jews were something else. Jews in Leipzig and in all of East Germany became not an aid but a hindrance to the use of the fascist past to legitimize the communist government. The needs of the state shifted from basing their right to rule on opposition to the Nazis to placing themselves in a tradition that most Germans could relate to, and a language of anti- Semitism was useful. At the same time, the leaders of the SED needed to play to their most important constituency, in Moscow—Jews were an enemy Moscow had already recognized. A key term, as it had been before the war, was Zionism.

The Anti-Zionist Campaign

A series of purges of Jews in 1952 and 1953 swept through Eastern Europe. In Russia, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary and in the German Democratic Republic, Jewish citizens, some of them highly placed in the state and ruling party, faced persecutions, criminal charges, show trials and death. Certainly, this phenomenon must be seen in the context of larger international trends, but the case of East Germany raises some questions about national specificity and the degree to which this was a Stalinist trend or one that also reflected German traditions of anti- Semitism.

The eastern European context should be addressed first. The inauguration of the anti- Semitic purges came in November, 1951 in Prague, where Rudolf Slansky, Jewish former Secretary General of the Czech Communist party was put on trial, along with 13 other co-defendants, including the former foreign minister and several deputy ministers. The charges included treason against the Czechoslovak people by forming an espionage

center in the service of the USA. The accused also faced charges of trying to disrupt the construction of socialism by sabotage and trying to weaken the unity of the Czechs and Slovaks. Ultimately, it was alleged that the Slansky band was trying to weaken Czech-Soviet friendship and return Czechoslovakia to the capitalist camp.[379] These were accusations that would reappear in East German trials.

More importantly, the whole affair assumed a tone of intolerance regarding Jews that would lead to the emigration of many, including leaders of the national and local Jewish communities. To what extent did the hostilities around the Slansky affair and its aftermath in the German Democratic Republic represent a continuation of a specifically German anti- Semitism? Or, to put it another way: what place did these hostilities between Jews and the state in East Germany occupy in a larger Eastern European phenomenon?

The initial state reaction to the Slansky affair can best be read in two sources: the state-controlled press and the internal communications of the SED. The press, in its Leipzig daily, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, changed its coverage as the story unfolded. The first mention of the story, on page two of the edition of 22 November, 1952, was a straightforward description of the trial, with some unsurprising allegations. There was a list of the accused, and of the charges against them ["*der Hochverrats, der Spionage, Sabotage, und des militärischen Verrats*." "High treason, espionage, sabotage, and military treason"]. The correspondent noted that the courtroom had been filled with the "*Vertretern der Werktätigen sowie von in- und ausländischen Journalisten*" [representatives of the working class, as well as domestic and foreign journalists] since well before the proceedings began. The general tone was like that of other show trials of

[379] Leipziger Volkszeitung, 22 November, 1952. Page 2.

the period—the rhetoric would not surprise anyone who has read accounts of those trials or even the short references to them above:

> "The accused are shown to be traitors and enemies of the Czechoslovakian people, of the people's democratic regime, and of socialism, and of having formed a subversive center of conspiracy in the service of the USA-imperialists. Further, of having undermined the people's democratic regime, disturbing the socialist reconstruction, engaging in espionage, in order to weaken the unity of the Czechoslovakian people and the defense capacity of the republic. Thereby the CSR would be ripped from the close ties and friendship of the Soviet Union, the people's democratic regime liquidated, capitalism reestablished, and the Czechoslovakian Republic dragged anew into the capitalist camp and robbed of its autonomy and independence."[380]

The charges are ideological, and sound much more like other late Stalinist show trials than they like legal treatments of Jews anywhere in Europe during the Hitler period.

This is very different language than that used during the National Socialist period regarding Jews. Gone are the references to Jews in biological terms, or nationalist terms, or any terms at all, as a matter of fact. Despite the fact that the lead defendant was a Jew, and despite the fact that this episode is generally described as an anti-Semitic event, there

[380] Ibid. "*Den Angeklagten wird zur Last gelegt, als Verrräter und Feind des tschechoslowakischen Volkes, des volksdemokratischen Regimes und des Sozialismus im Dienste der USA-Imperialisten ein staatsfeindliches Verschwörerzentrum geschaffen zu haben. Weiterhin das volksdemokratische Regime untergraben, den sozialistischen Aufbau gestört, Spionetätigkeit getreiben, die Einheit des tschechoslowakischen Volkes und die Verteidigungskraft der Republik geschwächt zu haben. Damit sollte die CSR von dem festen Bündis und der Freundschaft mit der Sowjetunion losgerissen werden, das volksdemokratische Regime liquidiert, der Kapitalismus wiederaufgerichtet und die Tschechoslowakische Republik erneut in das Lager des Imperialismus hineingezogen und ihrer Selbstständigkeit und Unabhängigkeit beraubt werden.*"

is no sense from the proceedings thus far that the defendant is Jewish. From the sense of things thus far, one could indeed be forgiven for getting the sense that this is a Stalinist show trial, not substantially different from others of wreckers, ideological enemies, intraparty rivals, or any other identified enemy of the regime.

However, despite the formal similarities to other Stalinist attacks on the citizenry, this was something different, something entirely distinct in its origins and effects. The accused were said to be in the pay of the American spy service, to have sought the reestablishment of a capitalist regime, to have undermined socialist reconstruction from the war, to have pursued espionage, and to have endangered the nation's friendship with the people of the Soviet Union and the unity of the Czechoslovakian people. The first charges could certainly have come from a show trial in any of the nations of the Socialist bloc; the last was a meaningful and particular concern of the people who ran Czechoslovakia—the unity of the Czech and Slovak peoples was not a given. In a similar way, we will see reactions to the Slansky case in the GDR reflecting a similar mix of concerns both historic and contingent, including the necessities of the cold war, a Soviet patron, and the specific demands of running East Germany.

What we will also see, of course, is anti-Semitism. In the Soviet Union, in Czechoslovakia, and the GDR, there was still rampant hostility toward Jews qua Jews. The key to Stalinist anti-Semitism was in the rhetoric of anti-Zionism. Antipathy toward the Jewish state was certainly not a given. One might indeed expect some warmth toward the remnants of organized Jewry on the part of those claiming to be the heirs to German opposition to Hitlerism, and in fact there were some meaningful signs of pro-Zionism in the days after the foundation of the state of Israel. An essay prepared for the VVN—

"*Der Neue Staat Israel*"—spoke in a positive tone about Israel, identifying Zionism as a progressive movement. The essay identified Israel's struggle with anti-imperialism, held that the Arabs were hurting their own cause by fighting the Jews, who were in turn fighting the imperialists, and insisted that Israel meant a strengthening of self-determination for all peoples. The VVN itself was charged with the responsibility "to resist the prejudice that the Jews were a race…[that] they are responsible for their own misfortune." "The Jews are not a race—they are a people [Volk] and wish to become a nation in the State of Israel."[381] In fact, though, Zionism was the rhetorical key to the Stalinist assault on Jewish citizens. The most important episode in the state's attack on "the Zionists" in the GDR came directly after the Slansky trial, and was placed in the context of German Jews and their presumed loyalty to the Israeli state, and presumably also to the USA.

The official state reaction to the Slansky trial leaned heavily in the direction of watchfulness, self-criticism [meaning a ritualized self-abasement, in the interest of maintaining one's standing in the party or state, or even one's life or freedom], and patriotism. Meetings were held to discuss the "lessons" at different levels of the Party, at which promises were made to combat "the enemies of our socialist reconstruction". At one local meeting, the participants decided to put up a "*Kritikwandzeitung*" [a sort of bulletin board] to facilitate self-criticism, and to unmask the American radio service RIAS to the population as a warmonger.[382]

The official reaction of the cadres was not discernible on its face, then, from other Stalinist show trials. For example, in April of 1953, Leipziger Hans Leipner was

[381] StAL SED-Stadtleitung Leipzig IV/5/01/523. Unnumbered, undated—says published same year of Israel's founding.
[382] LVZ, 24 February, 1953, pg 2.

sentenced to death, his brother to life, and six others to terms ranging from 10 to 15 years, for "sabotaging the provision of food for our republic with the support of the American intelligence service, forging and putting into circulation large quantities of ration cards, and engaging in war agitation against the German Democratic Republic and all nations of the "peace camp" [the eastern bloc]."[383] The next day, the LVZ ran an editorial saying that crimes like those of the Leipners could only be combated if "our working people, our state organs, and our Party organizations", learn the lessons of earlier trials "and especially the trial against the Slansky plot."[384] Seemingly, the lessons were based not on anti-Semitism or even anti-Zionism, but on Cold War concerns like sabotage, political resistance, and the cause of the socialist bloc.

But there was other evidence to the contrary. An ominous wave of anti-Zionist—and anti-Jewish—rhetoric was filling the papers. On January 14, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* reported the uncovering of the Doctors' Plot in Moscow, emphasizing the plotters' ties to the Jewish Joint Distribution committee, and asserting that one of the accused had received his instructions to kill off Soviet leadership from Solomon Mikoels, the murdered leader of the Jewish Antifascist Committee, a group under extremely severe oppression itself.[385]

This was part of a generalized antagonism in the Soviet block, and especially in the GDR, against Jews and Zionists. Despite early enthusiasm for the founding of the state of Israel, by the early 1950's, the socialist camp had begun to court Arab support, had decided that Israel was not going to be their kind of socialist state, and had jettisoned

[383] Ibid., 16 April, 1953, pg 1. "mit Unterstützung des amerikanisches Geheimdienstes die Lebensmittelversorgung unserer Republik sabotieren, große Mengen Lebensmittelkarten fälschten und im Umlauf brachten und Krieghetze gegen die Deutsche Demokratische Republik und alle Länder des Friedenlagers betreiben."
[384] Ibid., 17 April, 1953, pg 1.
[385] Ibid., 14 January, 1953.

the idea of individual restitution to victims of the Nazi regime as part of the first 5-Year Plan of the GDR.[386] All of this—combined with the overall sense of paranoia sweeping the society— placed the Jews of the GDR in a precarious position, exposed more than they had been since liberation to the whim of German anti-Semites, in government and out of it. The anti-Jewish hostility in the whole bloc revolved around the doctors' plot, the trials of Slansky in Czechoslovakia and—two years earlier—the trial of the Hungarian foreign minister, in which Jews were prosecuted and implicated, including some in Germany, for cooperating with Zionist spies.[387]

Merker and the Jews

In the German Democratic Republic, the campaign took the form of a battle for supremacy within the party between two groups: those who had been in exile in Moscow, led by Walther Ulbricht, and those who had been in exile elsewhere, especially Mexico, led by Paul Merker. The conflict went on for some time, and western émigrés (and Jews) found themselves on the outs from the early 1950s, including the head of GDR radio, the foreign policy editor of the *Neues Deutschland* newspaper, and Alexander Abusch, a member of the politburo. Merker was himself expelled from the SED in 1950.[388] At around the same time, the Jewish editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* was arrested at his office as a Zionist spy and sentenced to 8 years in prison.[389]

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[386] Esther Ludwig, "Die Auswirkungen des Prager Slansky-Prozesses auf die Leipziger Juden 1952/53" in *Judaica Lipsiensia: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, herausgeben von der Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung, Redaktion: Manfred Unger. Leipzig, 1994: Edition Leipzig, 229.
[387] Günter Fippel, "Zum Schicksal Leipziger Juden in der Sowjetunion nach 1933 und in der DDR bis 1953" in *Judaica Lipsiensia: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, herausgeben von der Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung, Redaktion: Manfred Unger. Leipzig, 1994: Edition Leipzig, 213.
[388] Mario Keßler, *Die SED und die Juden—zwischen Repression und Toleranz: Politische Entwicklungen bis 1967*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995, 70-78.
[389] Ludwig, 214.

Jews served multiple rhetorical functions for Ulbricht and his colleagues. Merker had strongly advocated individual restitution to Jewish victims from the time of his repatriation, and attacking Jews was a way to attack him. Jews were visible recipients of western aid—in the form of packets from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—that set them up as objects of resentment from East Germans suffering through material deprivation. Though they never admitted it, Jew-hatred was a good way for East German leaders to connect to a broad German population that was not already tied to the SED regime by ideology. Those East Germans who would not be seduced by language of a working-class paradise might vest more legitimacy in a government that set itself up in opposition to Jews. Finally, according to Mario Keßler, the Ulbricht leadership of the GDR thought themselves to be in a weak position vis-à-vis Stalin, and saw persecution of Jews as a way to curry favor with Moscow. The fact that a non-Jew—Merker—was at the middle of it provided plausible deniability of anti- Semitism, per se.[390]

The Purge

The next wave of persecution of Jews was touched off in November, 1952 by the Slansky trial, and by the Doctors' plot. This one was more explicitly anti- Semitic, in which Jews were attacked not just as agents of the west, but as agents of Jewish-nationalism, and their Jewish heritage was increasingly mentioned. A Leipzig editorial denied hotly that the trial had anything to do with race, but seemed to endorse the idea that Jews were somehow protected or privileged: "if anyone is uncovered as an agent of

[390] Ibid., 89.

the American warmongers, their Jewish heritage will not protect them from punishment."[391]

Over November and December there was a growing sense that Jews were to be the focus of a new purge. In December, the VVN was ordered to compile lists of all loyal and non-loyal Jews, as well as a list of all those who received packages from the Joint [the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, generally referred to in the GDR as simply "the Joint"]—a way to assert foreign contacts. All leaders of Jewish communities were ordered to break off contacts with the west, as well as sign letters defaming Israel and the Joint.[392] The same month, Leo Zuckermann, a Jew and the President of the Legal Academy, former chief of staff to the President of the GDR, and co-author of the republic's constitution, fled to the west.[393] He found himself in this position despite having proven his loyalty to the regime by authoring an article in which he denied Jewish victims the same level of claim to restitution as active opponents of the regime.[394]

The most important sign of the danger to Jews came with the development of the "Lessons from the Slansky Trial", a long essay in which Jews and Zionists were attacked by the SED as part of a general insistence on defense of the socialist state against spies and saboteurs and those who had emigrated to the west during the war. The Slansky trial—it was asserted—had done a great service to the GDR in uncovering the role of Zionism as an agent for the Americans in their goal of restoring a capitalist-imperialist regime in Prague. Something called the "Morgenthau-Acheson Plan" was cited as the roadmap to such restoration. Jews were set up as the villains of their own persecution: a

[391] *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 4 December, 1952.
[392] Ludwig, 233.
[393] Ibid., 232.
[394] *Die Weltbühne*, 27 April, 1948

"method of these criminals was to render watchful, progressive comrades impotent and harmless through accusations of anti- Semitism. Zionism has nothing in common with the goals of humanity or with true humaneness. It is controlled, directed and commanded by USA imperialism, and exclusively serves its interests and the interests of Jewish capitalism."

The old accusations against Paul Merker were recalled as further evidence of treason both by Jews and by Merker: "the uncovering of Zionism as an enemy agent of American imperialism uncovers at the same time the hostile role of the agent Paul Merker in the German émigrés' group in Mexico from 1942-1946. During this time, Merker worked closely with Andre Simon, [a Jew] accused in the Slansky trial." Merker's (and the Jews') crimes included denouncing the appropriation of German-Jewish business, when he knew that the real value of these businesses was being stolen from the German people by monopolists, and that only the profit had changed hands, from "'Jewish' monopolist-capitalists to 'Aryan' monopolist-capitalists".

In describing Zionism as a "national movement", Merker had opened the door for "the recognition of its spies and diversionists as a national minority" in East Germany. Advocacy of restitution from Merker and others was "nothing but a glorification of Zionism", which would damage relations with the USSR. He had accused the German working class of complicity in the crimes of Hitler, while he had absolved German Jews of all blame. He had continued his work in Germany, encouraging Jews to join the religious communities so that they would receive Joint-Packages and in this way become indebted to the imperialists.[395]

[395] "Endgültige Fassung" of "Lehren aus dem Prozeß gegen das Verschörerzentrum Slansky", in BA-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/4/124—SED ZPKK, 19 December, 1952.

Clearly, these were dangerous times for Jews in the German Democratic Republic. It is possible that this was part of a larger drive within East German and Eastern Block politics, and that Jews were an incidental victim. In fact, a note from Herman Matern, leader of the Central Party Control Commission, to Walter Ulbricht the next month scarcely talked at all about Jews, and warned that the "Lessons" might be mistaken by less-enlightened comrades. His example was the case of some peasants who had called some Polish comrades "Polacks", and who might therefore still be under the spell of the fascist ideology of racial hatred.". However, it is worth noting that before he sent the memo to Ulbricht, Matern crossed out "racial", and wrote "national". It was clearly of more concern to the leadership of the SED that the comrades acted respectfully toward Poles than toward German Jews.[396]

The publication of the "Lessons" in Leipzig came on the same day as the story of the doctors' plot.[397] It would have been very hard not to conclude that the Jews of the city were under attack. Indeed, they were. Beginning on the 8th of January, at least 100 Jewish Leipzigers, including 42 SED members, were subjected to interrogation from State Security. 28 were made to answer for deviation from the party line, including members of the *Vorstand* of the *Gemeinde* and two professors at the University, including Hermann Budzislawski.[398]

From Berlin, the representative of the American Jewish Congress told the Jerusalem Post that the state had placed 912 Jewish and 1,098 mixed families on a blacklist, in an effort to keep "all non-aryans and people living in mixed marriages under control," and that 114 men, 134 women and 85 children had been placed in detention.

[396] BA-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/4/124—SED ZPKK, 13 December, 1952.
[397] *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 14 January, 1953.
[398] Keßler, 103.

The Post also reported that the list was a precursor to the expulsion of all Jews from government.[399] The state had Jews under close surveillance. The all-Berlin Jewish magazine *Der Weg* was being read closely by the inquisitors at the Central Party Control Commission, with marks next to stories about returnees from exile in Shanghai, a visiting US congressman, and large pink marks next to advertisements for Zionist organizations and a notice for a memorial service for Chaim Weizmann, recently deceased president of Israel.[400]

Prelude to Flight

Jewish leaders found themselves under increasing suspicion of disloyalty and feared the worst. They may have had good reason to do so. According to "The Daily Express", they were tipped off. According to the newspaper's report, Fritz Grunsfeld, a prominent leader of the Leipzig *Gemeinde*, was notified by a Jew in the state bureaucracy who came to his home late in the evening. This anonymous informant told Grunsfeld that he had been recruited by the secret police to infiltrate the Jewish *Gemeinde* in order to "arrange" incriminating evidence of links between Jewish leaders and Zionist organizations, like the Jewish Agency and the Joint Distribution Committee, but was compelled by personal loyalty and gratitude to Grunsfeld to let him know about it.[401]

The "Daily Express" said that Grunsfeld immediately told his colleague in the leadership of the *Gemeinde*, Salo Looser, who then relayed the information to Julius Meyer, President of the Jewish *Gemeinde* in the GDR. Meyer crossed the border to West

[399] Ludwig, 232.
[400] *Der Weg*, 28 November-26 December, in BA-SAPMO DY 30/IV 2/4/404—SED ZPKK.
[401] This could have been for any number of reasons, reflecting Grunsfeld's service in helping Jews find jobs, shelter, clothing and restitution both as official of the Gemeinde and the leading attorney working for restitution for Jews in East Germany.

Berlin and consulted with Jewish leaders there. It was decided that the Jewish leaders of the East should stay where they were, but that an escape plan should be formed. The code signal was "*Großmutter im Sterben*" ["Grandmother is dying"]. The code was not acted upon for some time [we do not know when the original warning came], until Meyer was called in to state security offices on the 6th of January for an interview.[402]

The interview was a 48-hour interrogation of Meyer covering all of the topics fueling the current purge, and was led by Günther Tenner, who, according to the "Daily Express", had been slated to replace Hermann Matern as "Purgemaster" [*Saüberer*], but who had since fallen under suspicion himself.[403] Meyer was asked about contacts with party members who had been jailed or expelled. He was asked about contacts with Zuckermann and Merker, and any others who had pressed for restitution of Jewish property. His interrogators wanted to know whether the Americans wanted anything in return for the charity of the Joint Packets. They asked whether the *Gemeinde* supported emigration to Israel. They wanted to know how often he went to West Berlin, and, most ominously, they wanted to know—at the time of the Slansky trial—whether he had been to Prague.

Meyer handled it as best he could, trying to deflect suspicion from himself and the communities he headed. He had had contact with disgraced former comrades, he admitted. He had meetings with Zuckermann and Merker about restitution, but he had also been present at meetings on the same topic with Otto Grotewohl, Prime Minister of the GDR. On the subject of the Joint Packets, he told his inquisitors that the distributors

[402] "Der Mut des Herrn Meyer", translation of article from "Daily Express", 2 February, 1953, sent to Hermann Matern and Franz Dahlem by Fritz Beyling, General Secretary of the VVN, BA-SAPMO DY 30/IV 2/4/124—SED ZPKK.
[403] Ibid.

of the packets might address their concerns better than he could. He gave the name of a woman who had been expelled from the*Gemeinde* as a possible contact.

He also said that he had not been to West Berlin in several weeks because he was called a murderer and an NKVD man when he went. This was an explicit lie—he had just been to West Berlin to arrange escape for himself and the other leading Jewish personalities in the country. He had been to Prague several times, but had nothing to do with "these Slansky people", and had not been in the company of Paul Merker or Leo Zuckermann. When asked if he had read the "Lessons from the Slansky Trial", he said that he had studied the article and the whole affair very closely, and that he was convinced that there was a big espionage ring in Prague. He went on: "for me there is no racial question, only a class question. To me there are no Jews, only comrades and traitors. We must also differentiate in the *Gemeinde*. Here there are also people who represent the state of things in the West. The consciousness of our people is still not great. There are those who would sell themselves for a big packet just like before." He was told he would have to return in a few days with minutes from meetings that had been discussed, and then he was released.[404]

It was a skillful performance, ranging from shading the truth to evasion to outright deception. He said exactly the words that his interrogator wanted to hear. He spoke exactly the language that he was required to speak as a loyal member of the state and party. He said the only thing he could say as the leader of the Jews of the GDR in early 1953: Jewishness means nothing compared to the class struggle. He tried to defend

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[404] BA-SAPMO DY 30/IV 2/4/404—SED ZPKK, 6 January, 1953. "Aussprache mit dem Genossen Julius Meier [sic], Präsident der jüdischen Gemeinde am 6.1.53"

his institution from suspicion, even to the point of directing blame toward someone who was no longer a member, and hinting at an internal purge.

The most brazen move of all was the decision to return for his follow-up with the interrogators. As soon as he was released, Meyer went across to West Berlin to report to his colleagues there. Despite the protests of his appalled Western friends, he decided to go back to the East and deal with Tenner. It was the only way he could warn the other leaders and draw attention from their imminent flight.[405] He did go back, and he did deal with Tenner on the 8th of January, supplying him with minutes from meetings and explaining a trip to Israel, as requested.[406] The next day he went to Leipzig, made contact with Looser and Grunsfeld, and warned them that anyone who had had contact with western Jewish organizations or had championed restitution to Jews was subject to arrest as a spy. A few hours later, Looser, Grunsfeld and their loved ones were on a train for Berlin and the western sector.[407]

For all the protestations by the party that the Slansky "Lessons" had nothing to do with Jews, per se, some SED members understood those lessons has having everything to do with Jews. The SED in nearby Herzberg reported that the comrades there had held a thoroughgoing discussion about Zionism, characterized by the greatest unclarity. The opinion emerged that Zionism represented a union of the Jewish people, an attitude that surely would lead to hostility toward all Jews as Zionists.[408] At one *Ortsgruppe* meeting in Leipzig held on the 16th of January to address the issues around Slansky, the chair held forth not only on Slansky, but also on Jews in general. According to Frau Elsa Klinke,

[405] "Der Mut des Herrn Meyer". This decision was the "Mut", the courage, of the title of the article.
[406] BA-SAPMO DY 30/IV 2/4/404—SED ZPKK, 8 January, 1953.
[407] Steffen Held, *Zwischen Tradition und Vermächtnis: Die Israelitische Relgionsgemeinde zu Leipzig nach 1945*. 1995; Hamburg; Dölling und Galitz, 41.
[408] BA-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/4/124—SED ZPKK, 30 March, 1953.

the comments of the chair on the intended theme were "quite poor, but his 'explanation' of Jewry was most expansive." He held that "Jews had never earned their living through work, and therefore Hitler should have destroyed them." He remarked further that one was obliged to leave the current Jewish communities.

This report came in a letter from Frau Klinke to the *Gemeinde* ["*zu Händen des Herrn Looser*"], asking that something be done about this evident lapse into the language of anti-Semitism. "We protest against this racial hatred and await action from the Jewish community, taking care to see that this Nazi-ideology is put to rest once and for all…It is the duty of every citizen to be watchful. We the racial victims have the added responsibility to nip racial hatred in the bud."[409] ["*Wir protestierten gegen diese Rassenhetze und erwarten von der jüdischen Gemeinde, dafür Sorge zu tragen, dass die Nazi-Ideologie ein für allemal beseitigen wird. Es ist die Pflicht jeden Bürgers wachsam zu sein. Wir die rassisch Verfolgte, haben darüber hinaus die Verpflichtung, der Rassenhetzte den Boden zu entziehen.*"] What's interesting here is the use of the language of the regime ["the duties of the citizen to be watchful"] by the Jews on one side, and a lapse into the language of Nazism [this sort of "unproductive Jew" rhetoric was a crucial element of the appeal of Nazism to a "less-enlightened" proletariat] on the other.

Frau Klinke's concerns were addressed, not by Salo Looser, but by the VVN, in the person of Herr Bayer, who reported a meeting with Frau Klinke and the leadership of the *Ortsgruppe*. Bayer concluded that a commission ought to be set up to look into the matter, "because it really is of wide-ranging importance to the *Ortsgruppe*."[410] We do

[409] Letter dated 23 January, 1953, in StAL SED-Stadtleitung IV/5/01/523.
[410] StAL SED-Stadtleitung IV/5/01/523, 29 January, 1953.

not know whether Looser ever got the note. We do know that he was seriously concerned—whether from the "lessons", or from the actions of the state at other levels—about the direction the Jewish policy of the GDR had taken by then, because Salo Looser had just fled the German Democratic Republic, along with Fritz Grunsfeld, Julius Meyer, and most of the other most prominent Jews in the country.

Looser and Grunsfeld and the Flight

Salo Looser was a textile dealer. His antifascist credentials were impeccable. He had been a member of the SPD since 1926, of the *Reichsbanner* anti- fascist paramilitary from 1931-33, and the SED after the unification of the socialist parties. From 1943, following the confiscation of his home, he was transported to Auschwitz, suffering imprisonment there and in other camps, including Bergen-Belsen, before being liberated by the British on 5 May, 1945[411]; he was the only survivor of 31 men in the 1943 transport that took him to Auschwitz. His wife was shot in Ravensbrück in February 1945. [412] Of equal importance from the perspective of the SED, he was a bona fide "*Kämpfer*" [fighter]: from 1933 to 1945, he participated in the *Habonim*, an underground left-Zionist youth group-turned-resistance group, printing subversive literature, and continued his work in the camps.[413]

On his return to Leipzig, Looser returned to business life and immersed himself in the affairs of the *Gemeinde*, serving first as *Gemeinde* liaison to the *Kommunalabteilung* [municipal department] responsible for coordinating social work with the city

[411] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes 14620—Leipzig, 25 September, 1945.
[412]Ibid., 13 June, 1945. Looser's questionnaire for Wiedergutsmachung Hilfsausschuss für die Opfer des Nazi-Terror.
[413] Ibid., 28 March, 1950. SED report on Looser

government for returning and transient Jews, and then on the community's economic board[414]. On 2 April 1948, Looser was appointed to replace the deceased Alfred Muscattblatt as a member of the *Vorstand*.[415] From an early point, he clearly enjoyed the confidence of the *Gemeinde* as well as the organs of the state. As early as December 1945, he was co-signing (on behalf of the *Gemeinde*) the necessary paperwork for *Gemeinde* members to be certified as victims of the regime.[416] As well, he served on the official governmental committee that certified those victims from 1950 through 1952.[417] He was trusted ideologically. On the 14th anniversary of the *Reichspogromnacht*, he was chosen to speak on behalf of the *Gemeinde* and the VVN about the lessons of *Kristallnacht*, and the debt owed by humanity to the Soviet Union for securing a part of the world against racial hatred and warmongering.[418] On 27 November 1952, his name was on a list sent to the SED, *Abteilung Partei und Massenorganisationen*, of candidates for the *Kreisleitung* of the VVN.[419] Two months later, he fled the country.

The other outstanding leader of the Leipzig *Gemeinde* in the early 1950s was Fritz Grunsfeld. He appears for the first time in the archives in his work with the *Gemeinde* in the period of Nazi persecution. As early as December 1939, he was writing to the local administrative court, seeking to re-register the *Gemeinde* under a name reflecting the national law of 3 August, 1939, degrading Jewish organizations from public to private

[414] Leipzig Gemeinde Archive, 484, "Tätigskeitbericht des *Vorstand*es der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig für die Zeit der Wiederöffnung 15. Mai 1945 bis zum Schluss des Kalendarjahres 1946"
[415] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes 20664, 3 March, 1954.
[416] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 15812—VdN file on Moses Fisch, 8 December, 1945.
[417] e.g.: StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 17801—VdN file on Ernst Goldfreund, 14 April, 1950.
[418] LVZ, 12 November, 1952.
[419] StAL SED-Stadtleitung Leipzig IV/5/01/523, 27 November, 1952.

bodies, concerned only with cultural preservation.[420] He had, by this time, taken over the business of the *Gemeinde* as Administrator. The administrative court was notified in October 1940 that Grunsfeld had been elected to the *Vorstand* of the *Gemeinde*, replacing the beloved Samuel Hodes.[421] Grunsfeld continued to handle the business of the *Gemeinde* and eventually did so for other Jewish organizations, as they fell moribund due to the emigration or deportation of their members.[422]

It was Grunsfeld who had the thankless task of trying to keep the government happy in matters ranging from the number of non-German Jews working for the *Gemeinde* [423] to the name of the *Gemeinde*. From February 1939 through October 1942, Grunsfeld was the business and legal voice of the *Gemeinde*. It is not entirely clear how Grunsfeld spent the next three years, but we do know that he was arrested by the Gestapo on 10 June 1942,[424] and that he was deported that year to Theriesenstadt, where he said he spent a year.[425] He also stated that he had spent two and a half years in detention.[426]

Grunsfeld's service to the *Gemeinde* served him in good stead after his return from deportation, about which we know little. A report prepared for the Soviet occupation indicated that he was added to the *Vorstand* in 1945, and given direction of the legal affairs of the *Gemeinde*, including questions of reparations.[427] He became a leader in the Soviet zone and the GDR on the question of reparations, acting on behalf of

[420] StAL PP-V 2265 Polizeipräsidium Leipzig; Verinsregister des Amtgerichts Leipzig, Israelitische Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig, e.V., 15 December, 1939.
[421] Ibid., 10 October, 1940.
[422] As in the case of the sale in 1941 of the burned-out former synagogue belonging to Talmud-Thora in 1941 to a pharmaceutical company. Grunsfeld's is the name on the bill of sale. StAL PP-V 4406—Geheime Staatspolizei file on Verein Ahavas-Thora, 10 August, 1941.
[423] StAL PP-V 4438, Polizeipräsidium Leipzig; Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizei Leipzig: Israelitische Religionsgemeinde, 1938-1940. 30 March, 1939.
[424] CJA 5B1, # 59. 16. 9 December, 1949.
[425] CJA 5B1, #57. 187. 13 March, 1950.
[426] CJA 5B1, #59. 16 October, 1946.
[427] LGA, 484, "Tätigskeitbericht des *Vorstand*es der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig für die Zeit der Wiederöffnung 15. Mai 1945 bis zum Schluss des Kalendarjahres 1946".

the *Gemeinde*—as in the case of the back taxes due on *Gemeinde* properties, taxes he asserted were improper since the properties had always been used for religious purposes, and it was only due to the Nazis that were not now so used[428].

He also made reparations work a centerpiece of his private practice, employing a fierce rhetoric to justify the return of his clients' property. Demanding the return of property to Dr. Conrad Lewinsohn, he pointed out that the "anti-fascist state had distanced itself with repugnance from the terror, murder and thievery of the Hitler dictatorship," and did not therefore understand how the continued theft of client's property could continue in the finance office in Leipzig.[429] We know that this was not an unusual action for Grunsfeld because there is a letter in the archive from April of 1950 using precisely the same language; that a form letter was necessary suggests that he was doing plenty of this kind of work.[430]

Clearly, Grunsfeld did not enjoy unalloyed good relations with the Soviet occupiers or their DDR successors. In fact, Grunsfeld was in Soviet custody for a brief time in 1946, for reasons that are not made clear in the files (although there is a hint that "holding in the camps", i.e. being an inmate in a Nazi concentration camp, was often a cause) but was soon released and "fully rehabilitated".[431] Shortly thereafter, he began a campaign for the granting of his law license, even though he did not meet all of the requirements. "Because I was not active in the service of the law and could not stand for my examinations during the past Nazi period, I have the right to status as a lawyer as a

[428] CJA 5B1, # 57, 17 July, 1950.
[429] Ibid., 1 March 1950
[430] Ibid., 19 April, 1950
[431] LGA 315, 30 January, 1946; 10 April, 1946.

victim of and fighter against fascism". He pointed out in the same letter to the Saxon legal authority that he was the only Jewish jurist in Leipzig.[432]

Grunsfeld was not above pointing out the political benefits of admitting him to the bar. He asserted in a letter a month later that due to his political activities with the *Gemeinde* and other Jewish organizations, he was in touch with many German Jews living outside the country, and that, by the state granting him his license "the trust of Jews living outside Germany will be strengthened on the reparations question."[433] Given Grunsfeld's position as the leading authority on and advocate for Jewish reparations, this statement might be expected to carry some weight. As if to reaffirm Grunsfeld's position, the *Gemeinde* sent a supporting note the same day.[434]

A few months later, Grunsfeld received his reply from the Saxon board, saying that they were ready to give him his license if he would complete the standard one-year term of voluntary legal service.[435] Grunsfeld balked at this, pointing out in his appeal to the central German authority that he would have already done this service had the Nazis not removed him from his career path for twelve years. He also indicated that he had to take care of a father crippled by the SS and a mother made sick in the camps.

His indignation reached its peak when he pointed out that two similarly under-qualified gentiles had been given their licenses, and suggested that the Saxon board had not handled the case with the necessary objectivity or recognition of his status as a victim of Nazism. He closed the letter by pointing out that, due to his work with the *Gemeinde*, he was "—I can say this without overstatement—known in the whole world", and that his

[432] CJA 5B1, #59: 21 June, 1946.
[433] Ibid., 20 July, 1946.
[434] Ibid., 196.
[435] Ibid., 11 October, 1946.

admission to practice would make a big difference in foreign perceptions of reparations questions.[436] We do not know exactly what course things took from here, but we do know that Grunsfeld was eventually granted his license as attorney and notary, and almost always signed his name "*Rechtsanwalt und Notar*" [Attorney at Law and Notary].

Grunsfeld's good name was still open to question, even after the granting of his law license. In December 1949, Grunsfeld was the subject of a joint meeting of the regional leadership of the VVN, the President of the *Landesverband* [the national umbrella of Jewish communities], and the leadership board of the *Gemeinde* in Leipzig (in the persons of none other than Looser and Grunsfeld himself). The cause of the meeting was a charge leveled against Grunsfeld that he had, while active in the *Gemeinde* in 1942, involved himself in the deportation of Dr. Hans Singer to Theriesenstadt. In fact, the meeting concluded, Grunsfeld had been deported several days before Singer, and could have had no influence in that decision.[437]

Julius Meyer, President of the *Landesverband* informed the accuser, Max Bruno Engel, that Meyer was holding his options open for a suit against Engel for casting aspersions on the good name of the Vice-President of the *Landesverband*. The meeting concluded that Engel would be advised to send a series of letters admitting his mistake, letters he apparently did send, since a copy of his letter to the VVN found its way into the files of the *Landesverband*.[438] The quickness with which Engel complied (the letter is dated two days after the date of the meeting) indicates that, despite the difficulty in which he found himself, Grunsfeld was someone to be reckoned with, not least due to his position within the *Gemeinde*. It was, after all, a joint meeting of the *Gemeinde* board,

[436] Ibid., 16 October, 1946.
[437] Ibid., 9 December, 1949.
[438] CJA 5B1, #57, 8 December, 1949.

the *Landesverband* and the VVN leadership that expunged the record on Grunsfeld's good name, and that name was a constant presence on the forms required to vouch for the bona fides of applicants to "Victim" or "Fighter" status.[439] Like Looser, Grunsfeld was a considerable personage in Leipzig and GDR politics, travelling in his position as Vice-President of the *Landesverband* back and forth between Leipzig and Berlin, and even into the Western sector.[440]

His prominence notwithstanding, Grunsfeld can be described as having something of a thin skin. He was quick and severe in his reaction to the aspersions cast on his character by Max Engel, and the same concern for his dignity was apparent in his response to a misunderstanding about a meeting of the *Landesverband*. In October 1951 Grunsfeld read about a general meeting of the *Landesverband* in Berlin, to which he had not been invited. He immediately sent in his resignation as Vice- President of the national *Verband*, observing that "it would hardly be compatible with an orderly management to arrange meetings of which the Vice-President is surprised to learn of in the paper."[441]

Leo Eisenstadt of the *Landesverband* hastened to reply, but interestingly the letter was not handled directly by Julius Meyer, the president of the *Landesverband*, whose

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[439] E.g.: StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 15418—VdN file on Heinrich [& Manfred] and Johanna Rosenthal, 24 December, 1945.

[440] SAPMO DY 30/IV 2/4/404—SED ZPKK. 16 January, 1953, referring to trip in 1948.

[441] CJA 5B1, #57. 22 October, 1951. Jay Geller's new research is correct to emphasize the relative agency of Jewish politicians like Meyer, playing a game of patronage with the SED in order to appease both Communist and Jewish constituencies. His paper at the October 2004 German Studies Association, "East German Jewry and Patronage Politics in the Early GDR", makes this point well. It suffers, however, from a narrow focus on Meyer, to the exclusion of important leaders outside of Berlin, like Grunsfeld. Grunsfeld would no doubt resent this, as he did so much else. Lothar Mertens, in *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel*, also focuses on the relative agency of Jewish politicians. His focus on the individual communities results in a more balanced picture, as Peter Monteath recognizes in his review article "The German Democratic Republic and the Jews", *German History*, 1 August 2004, vol. 22, iss. 3, pp. 448-468. Geller, Mertens, and this work all emphasize Jewish agency, in contrast to Keßler's more top-down model of SED authority.

name was usually on correspondence to his deputy. Eisenstadt assured Grunsfeld that he had shown the letter to Meyer, and wanted to assure him too that the meeting was not a general meeting of the *Landesverband*, but a spontaneous meeting of *Landesverband* representatives in Berlin called at the last minute to discuss the latest appeal from Otto Grotewohl, the Prime Minister. Eisenstadt expressed regret that things had come to such a pass and sent along Meyer's wish to meet before further steps were taken.[442] There is no record of how that meeting turned out, but Grunsfeld remained at his post as vice president until he left the GDR. Relations between the two men may have cooled some over the incident: Grunsfeld, who almost never signed his name without his title, usually did so with Meyer,[443] but the first correspondence between the two after the abortive resignation is addressed and signed in the most formal way.[444]

Grunsfeld's relationship to the East German Jewish leadership in early 1953 was tense, and reflective of meaningful disagreements. The differences between them might reasonably be attributed to any number of causes: internal rivalry, Grunsfeld's thin skin, and competition over scarce resources. It is also true that East German Jews were functioning in an atmosphere of heightened anxiety: the rhetoric around the Slansky case was enough to worry some of the members of the Leipzig *Gemeinde*. Clearly, it was enough to worry its leadership, too. They were sufficiently concerned that they fled the country.

Reactions to the Flight

[442] Ibid., 30 October, 1951.
[443] Ibid., 24 March, 1951.
[444] Ibid., 24 January, 1952.

On the night of the 15th of January, 1953—five days after the flight of Grunsfeld, Looser and Meyer, Albert Goldschmidt, an SED member and later member of the *Vorstand* of the *Gemeinde*, called a fellow member and official of the VVN to express concern about the possibility of a forthcoming pogrom against the Jews. The official, Bayer, concluded (and reported to his superiors) that Goldschmidt and his wife—who had not been able to sleep for fear of a recurrence of the Nazi genocide—had probably been listening to propaganda on foreign radio, and that he reported that he had been able to calm Goldschmidt down.

But the next day, Bayer reported that he and another VVN functionary had discovered the flight of Salo Looser. Stopping by Looser's home to discuss preparations for a VVN conference with him, Bayer and Charlotte Wenzel were confronted by Looser's secretary, Edith Hönicke, who was sitting in her car, crying and asking why her boss would want to flee to the west. When Bayer asked why she believed that had happened, she said that an employee of another firm had reported it to her. When Bayer went to his own office, he was told that the upcoming conference of the VVN had been postponed without any replacement date.

Bayer—now taking the initiative on the part of the state to find Looser, or find out what had become of him—went back to Looser's office, but found that there was no evidence of flight. The records were in order, the money was in the drawer. He was told at this point that Looser had gone to Berlin to a meeting of Jewish leaders with Julius Meyer, and discovered that some documents—mostly those needed for export business—were missing, and that an orderly conclusion of business had in fact been undertaken.

A visit to the *Gemeinde*'s offices was not helpful. The stenotypist there could add nothing to the investigation, except to express her doubt that Looser really had left everything in such good order if he had really gone into exile. Bayer then went to question the mother of Looser's life partner (making note of the fact that their relationship was "*noch nicht gesetzlich legitimiert*", "not yet legally legitimate"), who denied that her daughter would leave the country, because her father was sick. She had only gone to Berlin, insisted her mother, to visit Julius Meyer, with whom she and Looser were very close, and to visit Meyer's sick daughter. She also insisted that there was no evidence in her daughter's business of anything irregular, and that she had left checks written for the days she was to be gone.

Bayer then tried to contact the Jewish community in Berlin, which did not answer the phone. Then a "representative of state security" entered the scene, arriving at Bayer's VVN offices to demand all documents dealing with Jews, which were delivered. Frau Wenzel was also directed to go to Berlin and call Meyer's house and report. Calls began coming in from the public asking about the rumored flight. The callers were told that an investigation was under way. Later that day, Bayer admitted to having heard that Hamburg Radio had reported the flight of Looser, Meyer and ten other Jews.

Bayer's report is an oddity, a mixture of police paperwork and friendly concern. His discussion of Goldberg's concerns—while it does implicate Goldberg and his wife for suspicious activities—continued by saying that everything must be done to see that more panic did not spread, and that the Looser case had to properly explained. He closed the report by talking about rumors in his office of popular anti- Semitism.[445]

[445] StAL SED-Stadtleitung Leipzig IV/5/01/523 SED party leadership files, 1947-1953, 17 January, 1953.

In so doing, he might have been trying to give the impression that any concerns Jews had were the result of an antagonism toward Jews that was coming from the ground up. His handling of the Klinke case (see above) also gives that impression, as does a follow-up a few weeks later, in which he expressed concern that the Looser case would lead to further fears and uncertainty.[446] In fact, though, what the Jews of East Germany feared most were not the actions of their fellow citizens, but the actions of the state. It is true that—as noted above—the GDR was in a state of flux, that spies and traitors were seen everywhere, but Jews had reason to believe that they were in for particular harassment and worse.

The purge continued, given more energy by the flight of the Jewish leaders. The Foreign Minister of the GDR, Georg Dertinger from the CDU, was arrested on the 15th, on suspicions of contact with former Czech ambassador to the GDR Otto Fischl—who was convicted in the Slansky trial and hanged. The CDU publicly thanked the organs of state security for having brought this traitor to their attention, and promised to have nothing to do with "*Kosmopolitismus, dem Neutralismus, und dem Objektivismus*." [cosmopolitanism, neutralism and objectivism][447] The reference to "*Kosmopolitismus*" is a more-or-less clear allusion to Jews.

A spasm of pre-emptive self-criticism often accompanied by denunciation of others—seized some Jews and party functionaries of the GDR, and especially some of those who were both. Anxious to defer suspicion, people wrote in to report that they had had contact with defendants in the Slansky-trial, or with Paul Baender. Often, they wrote in to describe Jews acting in suspicious ways. Sometimes, this was done by Jews, as in

[446] Ibid., 23 January, 1953.
[447] Ludwig, 233.

the case of Hertha Reder, who wrote a long letter to the control commission describing a years-long relationship with some people with whom she had been in a Zionist organization before the war. She was anxious to point out mistakes she had made, but seemingly more so to give names of people whom she had found suspicious before, but now, given the Slansky trial, she saw "in a different light".[448]

Sometimes, these letters were shameless attempts to shift blame and attention, as in the case of Reder or of Hilde and Rudolf Neumann, who had been in the Mexican emigration with Merker, and were therefore in a very vulnerable position. They wrote to point out that Leo Katz, the leader of the Austrian exiles in Mexico had "directed a very Zionist policy and had close contacts with Jewish economic emigrants…Katz also had contact with many *Ostjüdische* [Jews of Eastern European origin, often used as a slur by anti-Semites and some German-born Jews] businessmen, whose names escape us."[449] Not content to associate their erstwhile colleague with unpopular policies and people, they smeared him with the traditional "*Ostjuden*".

Other messages were much more honorable attempts to clear one's name in the face of suspicion, without calumny against someone else. Dr. Prof. Ernst Engelberg of the University of Leipzig wrote in to report on his long-term relationship with Slansky's brother-in-law Antonin Hašek. Hašek had aided Engelberg in his flight from Germany during the Nazi period and, through his contacts with Slansky, had helped him to get to Moscow, while his wife and child had stayed with Hašek for several months. The relationship had come up during his candidacy for a party leadership position at the University, and nothing had been made of it. He and his wife wanted to help the party in

[448] BA-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/4/124—SED ZPKK, 16 January, 1953.
[449] Ibid., 2 December, 1952.

its investigation, but could think of nothing to add. Engelberg was careful to say that he had nothing bad to say about Hašek—no doubts had ever been raised about his honor, and he came from a good proletarian background.[450] Given the danger in having the relationship with Hašek to begin with, insisting on his good character was a brave thing to do.

People wrote in to provide more ammunition against those who had already fled the country, like the telegraph employee who insisted that he had seen Leo Zuckermann's children playing with Yugoslavian children and slandering the police and Stalin. When confronted by this man, Zuckermann allegedly told him to mind his own business, that there was a good reason for his children's utterances.[451] This is almost certainly nonsense, and the degree to which it is evocative of the absurdity of other Stalinist show trials and purges is indicative of what was going on in early 1953. For Jews facing this kind of danger, awareness of their double vulnerability in the homeland of the holocaust must have been overwhelming.

The mood seemingly seized the whole party. SED members who were associated with Meyer or who were Jewish were open to suspicion. One friend of Julius Meyer was described as doing nothing for the party: "it is said of him: 'first a Jew—then a comrade'".[452] Alexander Katten was denounced for insisting that Meyer was innocent at a VVN meeting. His comrades also asserted that he had described himself as a member of a Zionist organization, and that he had gotten all of his information from Meyer. He was immediately reported to the police, along with a tip that he was travelling to Leipzig

[450] Ibid., 19 January, 1953.
[451] Ibid., 7 January, 1953.

[452]BA-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/4/404—SED ZPKK, 2 February, 1953.

the next day.[453] A leader in the Berlin SED was told by a friend that the Jews had a "persecution psychosis", and that a state-appointed *Vorstand* for Jews in the GDR was needed as a substitute for the elected one. He agreed.[454]

At the 5th Party Congress of the SED that July, concern was expressed that the propaganda work of the party had "decayed into dogmatism, minutiae and Talmudism." The composer Hans Eisler was accused in the national party organ "*Neues Deutschland*" of allowing "the influence of homeless cosmopolitanism" into his new opera.[455] Bruno Wolf, the Jewish director of education and religion in the Central Committee of the SED, was arrested and charged with aiding Jews in fleeing the country.[456] A full-blown wave of anti-Semitism had gripped the country.

The leaders of the Jewish community in Leipzig were not alone in leaving the GDR. Leo Löwenkopf, leader of the Dresden community, followed on the 12th or 13th of January, and sent his constituents a farewell letter explaining his flight.[457] From December of 1952 to the end of January 1953, about 500 Jews fled to West Berlin, about 15 a day. Of about 3000 members of *Gemeinden* in the GDR, 365 left.[458]

The repression did not let up in the spring of 1953. Several in Leipzig saw themselves charged with economic crimes. Manfred Rosenthal was charged with tax evasion and lost his textile dealership before fleeing with his wife in April to the west. Hans Zellner, who had fought off anti-Semites with the assistance of the party not long before, found himself charged with facing five counts of tax evasion, and lost his

[453] Ibid., 2 February, 1953.
[454] Ibid., 19 January, 1953.
[455] Ludwig, 234-235.
[456] Ibid., 234.
[457] BA-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/4/124—SED ZPKK, 7 February, 1953.
[458] Ludwig, 234. These numbers need to be understood remembering that the East Berlin Gemeinde was not part of the GDR *Verband* until some years later.

restaurant and café, and fled with his family to Frankfurt. The effects of the purge on the Leipzig *Gemeinde* will be fully explored in the following chapter, but for now we may note that membership dropped from 237 members in 1952 to 173 in August of 1953.[459]

[459] Held, *Zwischen Tradition und Vermächtnis*, 42.

Chapter 6: Construction Will Commence: after the purge, normalcy, and the *Wende*

The Uses of Jews

The period immediately after the flight of Looser, Grunsfeld and their colleagues saw a succession of purges directed at and within the *Gemeinde* in Leipzig and the Jews of the GDR, generally. One of the first victims was the VVN, the organization for victims of the Nazi regime, of which the fled had been leaders. A few days after the flight, the VVN sent out a circular to all of its regional leadership, announcing the "Expulsion of Zionist agents from the VVN!" The message is illustrative: a desperate VVN leadership, fighting for their political (and possibly their physical) lives, because of their association with the fled, hewing as closely as they can to the official line of the GDR. The episode and what follows present an excellent summary of the rhetorical position of the regime toward Jews.

The declaration went on: "At the same time that the fascist terror in West Germany West Berlin grows ever clearer, at the same time that the preacher of the Jewish community in Berlin, Martin Riesenburger, makes an appeal to all peace-loving Berliners against the war agitation and ever more brutal anti-Semitic activities in West Berlin: at this same time a few Zionist agents—among them the VVN members Meyer, Löwenkopf, Singer and Looser—have retreated to their clients in the West Berlin spy network, when it became clear that their double role—played in the Jewish community as well as the VVN—was to be exposed."[460]

Jews were a way to separate the GDR from its western rivals, both as victims and as villains. The GDR was the opposite of the Federal Republic, and the GDR was the

[460] StAL SED-Stadtleitung Leipzig IV/5/01/523 SED party leadership files, 1947-1953, 20 January, 1953.

opposite of the Nazis, ergo the Federal Republic was led by Nazis. And, when anti-Semitism gained currency throughout the eastern bloc, the GDR did not hesitate to identity Jews as spies of the west. The third step, perhaps too ludicrous for even the desperate men of the VVN to say out loud but made quite clear in implication, was that the Jews who had fled were Nazis themselves.

In fact, the party and state were following a strategy to appeal to a broad mass of East Germans and, like their opposite numbers in the Soviet bloc and their predecessors in the Nazi Party, they were able and willing to employ a language of anti-Semitism to at once appeal to their fellow citizens and establish their bona fines as the legitimate German state. Attacking Jews served many purposes at once: it separated the GDR from the rival West Germans; it affirmed loyalty to the USSR at a time when that was of overwhelming importance, and it allowed the SED—despite selling themselves to the left as anti-Nazis—to sell themselves to other citizens as a "real German government".

Indeed, as the leaders of the VVN made clear in their new "*Arbeitsplan*" [work-plan] immediately after the flight of the Jewish leaders, a major priority for the organization was to "win the broadest sections of war victims, new citizens, former [Nazi] party comrades, officers of the former Wehrmacht to the National Front."[461]

This was a far cry from the original purposes of the VVN, and an attempt to maintain the relevancy of the organization at a time when many of its leaders had shown themselves—as individuals and as a group—to be obstacles to the goals of the regime. It did not work. Within weeks the VVN suspended operations, and was replaced with a "*Komitee der antifaschisten Widerstandskämpfer*" [a committee of anti-fascist resistance fighters], which had no place for most Jews, and would certainly not be a platform for

[461] Ibid, 5 February, 1953.

restitution demands, or commit any other acts that might damage the purposes of the state and party.[462]

Changes in Jewish Life

The VVN was not the only organization to suffer from reorganization. The *Landesverband der Jüdischen Gemeinden in der DDR* was dissolved and replaced with a new *Verband*, with no components in Berlin until 1960, and therefore no regular contact with the west.[463] In contrast with the old organization in which Leipzigers were very prominent, nobody from the city was chosen to sit on the board of the new organization in its new headquarters in Halle.[464] This is not surprising, given the prominence of those Leipzigers in the list of those flown. Perhaps this was a sign that Leipzig was no longer seen as the home of reliable Jewish leaders.

The *Gemeinde* in Leipzig limped along as best it could. Its first public act after the flight of its leading members was the distribution of a circular to all members asking how much matzo meal they needed for the upcoming holidays.[465] Politics was out. Two days later, the *Gemeinde* sent a note to the regional government, the *Rat des Bezirkes* [Regional Council], announcing that "after the expulsion of Herrs Salo Looser and Dr. Fritz Grunsfeld from the *Vorstand* of the *Israelitsichen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig*, it [the *Vorstand*] has been newly constituted through co-optation. Now belonging to the *Vorstand* are Herr Richard Frank, Herr Ernst Goldfreund, Herr Heinrich Rosenthal and

[462] Esther Ludwig, "Die Auswirkungen des Prager Slansky-Prozesses auf die Leipziger Juden 1952/53" in *Judaica Lipsiensia: zur Geschichte der Juden in Leipzig*, herausgeben von der Ephraim-Carlebach-Stiftung, Redaktion: Manfred Unger. Leipzig, 1994: Edition Leipzig, 234.
[463] Steffen Held, *Zwischen Tradition und Vermächtnis: Die Israelitische ReligionsGemeinde zu Leipzig nach 1945*. 1995; Hamburg; Dölling und Galitz, 43.
[464] LGA 586, 14 February, 1953.
[465] LGA 307, 26 January, 1953.

Herr Moritz Engelberg."[466] It is worth noting that the letter in response from the Rat was written in a quite polite tone, announcing that a new *Referat* [department] for religious affairs had been formed in the Rat. It also asked, still in a cordial tone, "when we might meet with you for a short conversation in order to establish personal contacts."[467] Given what had just happened, it is impossible to know how the men who received this note read it, in its surface tone of cordiality, or with a mind to the very real and continuing threat that Jews faced from the authorities at that time.

Reorganization of the *Gemeinde*

There was no mention made in the minutes of the meeting that chose these men of what had happened to the former leaders.[468] Frank, Goldfreund and Rosenthal were holdovers from the old *Vorstand*, and therefore in a very precarious position as potentially suspicious former allies of Looser and Grunsfeld. And, in fact, Richard Frank resigned as Chair of the *Vorstand* less than two months later, and was replaced by Ernst Goldfreund. No reason was recorded for his resignation, but it was noted that the *Vorstand* appreciated those reasons. If this was an aftereffect of the flight of Looser and Grunsfeld, it was a fairly soft landing for Frank, who was made Honorary Chair.[469]

If it was a priority for the *Gemeinde* to appear reliable—if that was why they had hastened to reform their *Gemeinde*, and why Frank had fallen from his position—we should not be surprised that news of the death of Stalin in March met with the [scrupulously recorded] rising from the seats of the *Vorstand* when they heard. They

[466] StAL BT/RdB Leipzig 20664, 29 January, 1953.
[467] Ibid, 31 January, 1953.
[468] LGA 586, 24 January, 1953.
[469] Ibid., 14 February, 21 March, 1953

immediately dictated a letter of condolences to the *Rat des Bezirkes*.[470] The letter they sent was an extraordinary testimony to their desire to maintain their viability in the city and system in which they lived:

"The under-signed *Vorstand* of the *Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig* has received with shock the news of the death of J.W. Stalin, and allows itself to express its sincere condolence for this heavy loss. Exactly we Jews have every reason to remember the work of Stalin with great gratitude, who through the liberation of thousands and thousands of Jews from the concentration camps gave them back their freedom. The *Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde zu Leipzig* will always hold the memory of J.W. Stalin in high honor. We ask you to forward this letter and its contents to the responsible authorities."

It is hard not to contrast this cloying tribute with the persecution of the leading members of the community—and indeed of Jews all over Eastern Europe—that had just occurred at the behest of the anti-Semitic Russian dictator. Even given the spontaneous outbursts of mourning that occurred elsewhere on the death of Stalin, it is difficult to imagine that this was one of them. Placing it in its context—at a time when being a Jew was reason for suspicion, and leadership in a Jewish organization was tantamount to an indictment for treason—it is quite clear that this was an attempt to convey to the state and party ("forward this letter") the reliability of the *Gemeinde* and its leadership.

Despite the unanimity of this action it quickly became clear—and was clear for some time—that the departures of Looser and Grunsfeld had left real divisions in the *Gemeinde*. These divisions would lead to the reconstitution of the *Vorstand* several times, to accusations of corruption and dictatorship, and ultimately to a requested

[470] Ibid, 10 March, 1953.

intervention by the state. That the leadership of the state and party would be asked by the *Gemeinde* to intervene in its internal politics makes clear just how divided the community was after the events of early 1953.

The internal purge

A few days before the end of the year, the *Gemeinde* abolished its *Vorstand* and replaced it with a "*Gemeindeleiter*" [community leader], Ernst Goldfreund, who had been the Chair of the *Gemeinde* to that point. He in turn appointed Moritz Engelberg and Martin Hahn as his deputies. The *Gemeinde* made explicit in its letter to the *Rat des Bezirkes* that this had come after a direct order to do so from the Deputy Minister President, Nuschke.[471] It quickly became clear that there was more to the changes than an order from the state. The religious officials in the *Rat des Bezirkes* immediately wrote to their counterparts in office of the State Secretary for Internal Affairs in Berlin, describing a bad situation in the *Gemeinde*. Apparently, the *Gemeinde* was seriously divided into two camps, around the persons of Heinrich Rosenthal and Ernst Goldfreund. An anti-Rosenthal campaign had sprung up in opposition to his religious ideas, though it is unclear what those ideas were. And Rosenthal himself—clearly the loser in the reorganization that had left him out of the new leadership—complained bitterly of Goldfreund's leadership.

This was in itself nothing new—the two had been divided for some time—but Rosenthal was now accusing Goldfreund of borrowing 60,000 Marks for his business, "*Tuchhandlung Gebr. Heine*" [Heine Brothers' Cloth Shop], from the *Gemeinde* without telling the membership, at a time when the *Gemeinde* was trying to borrow 130,000

[471] StAL BT-RdB Leipzig 20664, 28 December, 1953.

Marks from the government to build a new hall at the cemetery. Rosenthal had himself been confronted with an old tax debt, and the state had frozen his accounts and obliged him to go into bankruptcy. One can imagine his indignation at his rival using *Gemeinde* funds for his personal benefit.[472] The situation was grim in the *Gemeinde*. According to the government's report, Goldfreund's leadership was "*diktatorisch*" [dictatorial] and the leadership of the *Gemeinde* was avoiding elections in order to hang onto power. It was with this in mind that the local officials asked their national counterparts whether they had in fact given the order to dissolve the *Vorstand* and replace it with a single leader. It seemed to the local leaders that such an order would be a violation of the constitutional separation of church and state. The letter concluded that an investigation was needed to determine whether an order had been sent, and whether Goldfreund had taken the money, and that new elections and bylaws were needed.[473]

The State Ministry then asked for a copy of the *Gemeinde*'s statues by way of beginning such an investigation[474], but more important action was taking place within the *Gemeinde*. On the third of March, the *Gemeinde* sent the RdB [*Rat des Bezirkes*] their statutes, along with this note: "The *Vorstand* members Frank, Muscatblatt, Teichtner, Looser, Goldfreund, Dr. Grunsfeld, and Rosenthal are expelled. The *Vorstand* is now composed of Herren Moritz Engelberg and Martin Hahn."[475] This extraordinary action meant that not only Ernst Goldfreund, but also the fled leaders of the *Gemeinde* and the honorary chair, Richard Frank, had been expelled, along with the late Alfred Muscattblatt!

[472] Held, *Tradition*, 42.
[473] StAL BT-RdB Leipzig 20664., 5 January, 1954.
[474] Ibid., 25 February, 1954.
[475] Ibid., 3 March, 1954.

Eight days later, the two remaining members of the *Gemeinde* met with representatives of the *Gemeinde* membership, including Eugen Gollomb, a Polish immigrant who had founded a personnel agency and quickly risen to a prominent position as the leading payer of *Gemeinde* taxes.[476] The whole group formed a provisional *Vorstand*, agreeing to form an election committee and hold elections no later than the end of April, to rewrite the statutes, and to investigate the *Gemeinde*'s finances and call a general assembly of the*Gemeinde* . They also notified Goldfreund that he was relieved of all duties.[477]

On the face of it, all of this might seem a straightforward process of the *Gemeinde* ridding itself of an authoritarian and possibly corrupt leadership. In the context of the purge against the Jews of late 1953, and the flight of the leaders of the *Gemeinde*, though, this probably was not the case. And in fact there is ample evidence of a "hangover" from that purge in the words and actions of the *Gemeinde* and the state.

To begin with, Goldfreund had been dealt with by the state in ways that recalled that purge. In October of 1953, the local Party Control Commission—the body that handled purges—reported to the local government's office for state-owned businesses that Goldfreund was a capitalist, and that his ties to the west and to capitalist society had left him rich and clearly on the side of capital and not of the working class.[478] On the same day that he was relieved of his duties in the *Gemeinde*, he was also relieved of his status as a victim of the regime—and the benefits and pension that went with that

[476] "Biogramme: Eugen Gollomb" in *Judaica Lipsiensia*, 310.
[477] LGA 586, 11 March, 1954.
[478] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 17801—VdN file on Ernst Goldfreund, 14 October, 1953.

status—because of his mishandling of the people's property.[479] The rhetoric employed against him could have left no doubt in the minds of the *Gemeinde* about the wishes of the state and party, and the simultaneous actions of *Gemeinde* and state in March are certainly suggestive of such a link.

The 1954 Assembly

The announcement of the decision to relieve Goldfreund came in the same sentence as the expulsion of the fled leaders of the *Gemeinde*. This is also suggestive of a need to make things good with the state and party by cleaning house, and this connection was made clearer at the general assembly of the *Gemeinde*. In early May of 1954 an outside chairman brought in to act as a disinterested party opened a general meeting of the *Gemeinde* at the Keilstraße synagogue, with 74 of the 145 voting members of the *Gemeinde* in place. Absent were the very old, the sick and invalids. The meeting was described by the representative from the state office for church affairs as "undisciplined", largely due, he thought, to the presence of an outsider in the chair.

Moritz Engelberg spoke first, and set the tone. First, he pointed out that this was the first general meeting since 1945, and had been called to deal with a serious situation. "In the past, through the actions of Herr Lohser [sic] a dictatorial regime developed. Herr Goldfreund too has done nothing different, so that in no way has he been able to exercise a meaningful authority."[480] The linkage between Goldfreund and the departed leadership of the *Gemeinde*—so thoroughly discredited in the eyes of state and party—was made explicit.

[479] Ibid., 11 March, 1954.
[480] StAL BT/RdB Leipzig 20664 [Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig files on the Israelitische *Gemeinde*], 3 May, 1954.

But, Engelberg said, they were there to deal with the future and not the past, and after savaging Goldfreund, he encouraged his listeners to remember that they were in a house of God and act accordingly. Twelve nominees for a new *Vorstand* were put forward, including a woman, Frau Spielberg. The observer noted some consternation over this, since a woman had never been in the *Vorstand*, but also noted that the majority concluded that women were equal now, and that the "new principles" should also be applied within the *Gemeinde*. Maybe, but Frau Spielberg was not elected.[481]

Another (unnamed) candidate was objected to on the grounds that he had been expelled from the SED, and was a sexual violator besides. The candidate withdrew, but maintained his option to sue Emmanuel Henik and Eugen Gollomb, who had made the accusation. Manfred Rosenthal was nominated, and was attacked, as Goldfreund had been, for "having worked under the Lohser [sic] era". Half of the nominees were members of the SED.[482] When the elections were done a non-SED member, a furrier named Heinrich Ardel, was elected Vorsitz. Both of his deputies, Albert Goldschmidt and Aron Adlerstein, were SED members, along with both of the members assigned to responsibilities for social affairs.

So, it would seem that a purge was carried out, and those members of the *Gemeinde* who were either members of the SED or acceptable to the party were put in power, at the expense of the holdovers from the Grunsfeld/Looser regime. Except that Heinrich Rosenthal survived. He was left on the *Vorstand* in charge of religious affairs,

[481]Ibid., 9 June, 1954.
[482] Ibid., 3 May, 1954.

along with the cantor Werner Sander. In fact, 10 of the nominees were elected, with only the conspicuous absence of the alleged sexual offender and Frau Spielberg.[483]

The situation was much more fluid and complex than a simple purge at the behest of the state and party, although both were involved. Clearly, the *Gemeinde* was anxious to illustrate its reliability to the party, and much of the rhetoric within the meeting reflected the language of the SED, and SED members were more prominent after this election than before. But the *Gemeinde* had more autonomy—and the issues around the election had more to do with internal concerns—than it seemed on the surface.

Eugen Gollomb and the Return to Normalcy

The limits and complexities of this semi-purge can be seen in the wildly vacillating position of Eugen Gollomb. Gollomb had been one of the leaders of the movement to call the general assembly and oust Goldfreund, and he had a very interesting biography. He had been born in Breslau in Poland to a commercial family, and had studied in Jewish schools and, for two years, in a rabbinical seminary. After military service, he had married and started a bicycle shop. He was arrested after the German invasion, and eventually made his way through a series of labor camps, and in August of 1943 found himself in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

He survived a year in Auschwitz, before escaping successfully because the troops looking for him had no spotlight. He linked up with the resistance, and by the end of the war was a lieutenant in the Polish army. Despite having lost 70 members of his family in the holocaust—including his wife and son—he made himself very unpopular with his

[483] Ibid., 9 June, 1954. Steffen Held's tables of the membership of the Vorstand actually include 11 members, but the archives that I have seen only indicate ten.

men by forbidding them to loot German property or violate German citizens. This, and the anti-Semitism around him, led him to leave the Polish army in May of 1946. In the meantime, he had met an 18-year-old (non-Jewish) German woman named Ingeborg Stahr, and in 1947 they were married. In the meantime, they had moved together to Germany in 1946. In 1949 they had a daughter, and by 1950, Gollomb had emerged as one of the most prominent Jewish businessmen in town.[484]

Gollomb called the responsible official for religious affairs in the local government just five months after the decisive general assembly, to tell him that he had been expelled from the *Gemeinde* in the name of "social and cultural necessity". This was quite serious, because leaving the *Gemeinde* was the equivalent of leaving Judaism, being excommunicated, at least according to the *Gemeinde* itself.[485] He said that he had been run off from the *Gemeinde* for allegedly trying to foment unrest and introduce undemocratic practices. The official took up the issue both with the local leadership, and with the leader of the *Verband des Jüdischen Gemeinde*n *in der DDR*, Hermann Baden in Halle.

Baden felt sufficiently well-positioned to remind the state official of his authority over Jewish communities in the DDR, and then reaffirmed Gollomb's expulsion. The government official accepted this, and observed that Gollomb had been expelled from the *Gemeinde* because he would not let go of recriminations from the Looser affair, at a time when the *Gemeinde* made it clear that they wanted the past to remain in the past.

He went on to note that he thought the *Gemeinde* would do what it had to do to maintain order. They had also expelled another man "because he continued to make

[484] "Biogramme: Eugen Gollomb", 309-310.
[485] LGA 307, letter to Mendel Löwenhof, 24 March 1954.

accusations against [leaders of the *Gemeinde*] within the community and encouraged unrest among its members." The bureaucrat closed by noting—with apparent satisfaction—that he believed the leadership of the *Gemeinde* would not tolerate any more economic irregularities and that Goldschmidt had told him "as a member of the SED that he would pursue a clean and correct path for the *Gemeinde* and all of its members."[486]

What had Gollomb done to deserve expulsion? A month after the General Assembly, he had begun demanding that Rosenthal be thrown off the *Vorstand*, claiming that his election was tainted because he had withheld information that he, Gollomb, knew of from his possession of the economic records of the *Gemeinde*. If he were not expelled from the *Vorstand*, Gollomb would go to the state authorities.[487] The *Gemeinde* replied less than a week later with a lawsuit, demanding that Gollomb turn over those financial records that had been given to him in preparation for the General Assembly, but which he had never returned.[488] Gollomb made it clear that as long as Rosenthal was still on the *Vorstand*, the matter was not closed as far as he was concerned, and he would keep the documents.[489] The court refused to rule for the time being, but Gollomb was ordered to pay the costs of the suit.[490]

Gollomb was then called before a special internal court convened by the *Verband* to address the charges of trouble-making. He refused to go, maintaining that he accepted the authority of the court, but because the leadership of the Leipzig *Gemeinde* had so "disgraced" [*verunwürdigt*] the Jewish tradition, he would have nothing to do with

[486] StAL BT/RdB Leipzig 20664 [Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig files on the Israelitische *Gemeinde*]., 3 December, 1954.
[487] LGA 634—Eugen Gollomb, Korrespondenz, 5 July, 1954.
[488] Ibid., 14 July, 1954.
[489] Ibid., 25 June, 1954.
[490] Ibid., 28 August, 1954.

them.[491] He followed up two months later by demanding a whole new election for the *Vorstand*, laying out a damning indictment of the *Gemeinde*.

He said that the current *Vorstand*—Rosenthal, especially—had engaged in a systematic forgery of documents in league with Goldfreund, that it had not fulfilled its responsibility in preparing a budget, that it had not been as transparent in its financial dealings as it expected members of the community to be, that it had ignored the direction coming from the chief rabbi in Berlin and "allowed itself to be led by the nose" by the local cantor, Werner Sander. Their worst sin had been "to disgrace the Jewish tradition" by calling him, Gollomb, into court. This was not like the old days, he warned, when people like Looser and Goldfreund could get away with whatever they wanted, and if the *Vorstand* was interested in having any semblance of community life at all, they must convene a general meeting of the membership.[492]

This was clearly the last straw for the *Vorstand*, which moved to expel Gollomb from the *Gemeinde* within the week.[493] He was sent a letter, explaining that the *Vorstand* had "expelled him unanimously, and expelled thereby his continuing damaging and provoking speech, as well as the continuing disruption to the membership of the *Gemeinde*."[494] This would be the end of the story—maybe Gollomb would come around periodically, but he would be reduced to the margins—had this been a simple matter. It was not. Gollomb was not the creature of the *Vorstand*, nor was he the creature of the party. If his expulsion were as simple a thing as cleaning up the last of the 1952-53 purges, he would have just drifted off into obscurity.

[491] Ibid., 30 August, 1954.
[492] Ibid., 26 October, 1954.
[493] Ibid., 31 October, 1954.
[494] Ibid., 1 November, 1954.

But he did not. In a sign that the *Gemeinde* was redeveloping a life of its own, even in the face of an emerging dictatorship, Gollomb's case seemed increasingly to be about the internal politics of the *Gemeinde*. This man, who had been expelled from the *Gemeinde*—and whose expulsion had been approved by the state and party—came back, and in a surprising way. The fact that he did, and the roles he played over the rest of life, indicate that there was a surprising degree of autonomy available to Jews in the German Democratic Republic, and that their relationship to the state was much more an ongoing set of negotiations and compromises than a simple matter of the state and party's wishes being carried out by a compliant Jewish population.[495]

It is worth noting here—by way of explanation of the relative autonomy of the *Gemeinde* and its members—that at least some of the debate between Gollomb and the *Vorstand* was religious in nature, and that this was one important angle for pressuring the state. In January of 1955, the regional government received a letter from Martin Riesenburger, the head rabbi for East Berlin and the DDR, and cosigned by the secretary of the Berlin *Gemeinde*. He said that the Cantor in Leipzig, Werner Sander, had tried to name the municipal baths there as a ritual bath, a *mikwoh*. There had been a meeting of the religious authorities in Berlin, and Riesenburger asked the state to intervene against this attempt, and that they do so through the person who had notified him of the breach, Eugen Gollomb![496]

[495] This is a continuation of the theme of Jewish agency developed in the previous chapter. Not least, this is in the context of re-imagining the nature of so-called totalitarian societies. This ranges from the work of Nathan Stoltzfus and Robert Gellately on Nazi Germany to that of Abbott Gleason on the Soviet Union to the wealth of scholars dealing with the place of Jews in the GDR. In all of these cases, there are indications of greater freedom of movement and agency than had been previously understood.

[496] StAL BT/RdB Leipzig 20664 [Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig files on the Israelitische *Gemeinde*], 28 January, 1955.

So, maybe what we see here is the return to something more like the experience of Jewish Leipzig had been during the Weimar Republic. The unity of the *Gemeinde* immediately after the war was in some ways a reflection of the unity forced on it during the Nazi period. Differences between Jews melted away in the face of the assertion by their enemy that they were all the same, and for Jews to survive at all, they were required to forget their differences and act together.

This had been true during the immediate postwar period, too, as men like Alfred Muscatblatt and Ernst Grunsfeld had led a community that was unified by the necessities of the moment. Certainly, they were all still under siege at important moments, as in the purge of the leaders of the community in late 1952 and early 1953. But that purge, and especially the reactions to it that came to a head in the general meeting in late 1953, seem almost to have awakened the Jews of Leipzig from a spell. All of the old antagonisms—differences between reformist, native-born elites (like Ernst Goldfreund and Werner Sander), and more orthodox and often foreign-born Jews (like Eugen Gollomb)—reemerged. Certainly, much was different. There were many fewer people than there had been, many of the most important players in the old debates were gone, and the all-important position of the government had changed drastically.

But there were continuities, too. And, as we emerge from the era of the purge into the mid- and late-1950's, we can see some of those continuities pushing to the surface. So, far from interpreting the community that emerges after 1953 as one of subservience, or even one whose most important fact of life was its relationship with the authorities, we see a group of people reclaiming their old arguments, reclaiming the right to fight with

one another, to define themselves and their community, and not just to deal with a repressive and monolithic government.

And the surest sign of this is that Eugen Gollomb did not go away. He kept coming to services, accosting one of the members of the *Vorstand* after the Thora reading one Sabbath, making disparaging references to his eyesight and hearing, demanding to know whether he had participated in his expulsion, and concluding with "you are all fascists, but this isn't over; I'm still fighting." The recipient of these remarks, Theodor Moses, remarked—understandably—that "as a victim of racial oppressio n, I took this as a particularly offensive affront."[497]

But then, some mixed signals began to emanate from the *Gemeinde*. The very next week, the *Vorstand* sent Gollomb a voucher for 25 DM to buy his six-year-old daughter a gift at one of a number of Jewish-owned shops.[498] He was almost certainly one of many to receive such a voucher, but the fact that he did—despite his lack of status within the *Gemeinde*—is interesting. The war between Gollomb and the *Gemeinde* went on for several more months, however. In February, D. Mendlewitsch, a *Gemeinde* member, testified that he and others had heard Gollomb "say the most slanderous things against the *Vorstand*". "Utterances such as 'chiseler', 'criminal' and 'fascist' are specifically in my memory."[499]

The relationship remained bitter for some time. Gollomb told some members of the *Gemeinde* that the head of the *Verband* of Jews in the DDR, Hermann Baden, was an

[497] LGA 634, 24 January, 1955.
[498] Ibid., 30 January, 1955.
[499] Ibid., 21 February, 1955.

"arch-reactionary".[500] The *Gemeinde* told Baden of this, and he responded to Gollomb, telling him that the days of people being able to slander Jews with impunity were ten years past, and if he did not cease and desist ["this is our last warning"] he would be reported to the state authorities.[501] This is a fascinating attempt by both parties to appropriate for themselves the language of victimhood and the memory of fascism, and a sign of the seeming surety of the *Verband* that the state would be on their side.

The irony in all of this—and the fact that makes it clear how high a degree of relative freedom of movement existed in the Jewish community so soon after the purges of 1953—is that Eugen Gollomb was destined to be the long-standing leader of the Jews of Leipzig, the man about whom the West German "*Allgemeine jüdische Wochenzeitung*" [General Jewish Weekly Newspaper] said "he was not only the center of his community, he was the community."[502] The state was not going to take sides, at least not in any predictable way. In August of 1955, the court oversaw a mediation, in which Gollomb withdrew his accusations, the parties split the costs of the suit, and the*Gemeinde* withdrew his expulsion.[503]

Early the following January, the *Gemeinde* sent out this fascinating announcement: "the expulsion of the*Gemeinde* member Eugen Gollomb declared by the *Vorstand* was a mistake, and after extensive mutual pronouncements has been revoked."[504] The declaration also noted that the costs of the suit had been split. It is not all clear what happened here, what the dealings behind the scenes were. But it is clear that there *were* dealings behind the scenes, that politics were at work. It was not a matter of a

[500] CJA 5B1, #37, 3 May, 1955.
[501] Ibid., 4 June, 1955.
[502] "Biogramme: Eugen Gollomb", 309.
[503] LGA 634, 2 August, 1955.
[504] Ibid., 21 January, 1956.

pronouncement of the state of party in favor of the SED leadership of the *Gemeinde* against the capitalist Gollomb.

This is something much more like life in the community before 1933. Even this soon after the purges of 1952-53, life for the Jews of Leipzig was getting back to something like "normal". *Gemeinde* members attacked each other; there was tension between foreign-born members like Eugen Gollomb and native-born Leipzigers, religious disagreements resurfaced. Though surely this was a very different time than before 1933—there were many fewer Jews in Leipzig, and there was a memory of genocide in clear view, and there was a frequently-hostile dictatorship to deal with—this is much more like the time before 1933 than we might expect.

And so, Jewish life in Leipzig settled into a new kind of normalcy. A new generation of leaders emerged in regular, even frequent, elections after a 1956 regulation was passed, which banned employees of the *Gemeinde* (most immediately, *Vorstand* members Theodor Moses and the Cantor Werner Sander, who had served since the troubles in 1954) from serving and allowed for elections every two years[505]. Aron Adlerstein, the Polish-born mason, businessman and SED member who had joined the *Vorstand* in May of 1954 (after having been given a loan for 3,000 Marks in 1953, which was paid off in 1956[506]), served for two years and, after a long interim period, rejoined the leadership in 1975 and until recently served as the chair of the community. Albert Goldschmidt, a Hanover-born engineer who had served with Adlerstein as one of Heinrich Ardel's SED-member deputies in 1954, returned to the *Vorstand* as its chair in 1956, and served until 1957. He was elected for two terms as a member of the *Vorstand* in 1960 and 1961.

[505] LGA 355/1, 13 June, 1956.
[506] Ibid., 17 August, 1956.

Again, the makeup of the *Vorstand* implies something more like the give-and-take of foreign- and German born Jewish Leipzigers from before the war than the emergency situation of 1945. Compare the *Vorstand* of 1945 and what was to come: in 1945, every one of the members of the *Vorstand* was born in Germany and most of them in the region—Leipzig, Berlin, Jena, and Halle. As time went on, it was much more of a mix. Adlerstein from Poland, Goldschmidt from Hanover, Samuel Merkel, a businessman born in Leipzig and appointed in 1956 and who would serve as Chair from 1958 to 1960, and Samuel Stammer, a bandmaster from Odessa who served on the *Vorstand* at the same time.[507] This mix of personalities and backgrounds is much more like the Weimar period—albeit with fewer signs of rancor—than the forced unanimity of the immediate post-45 era, much less the period of the Nazi dictatorship.

The Duties of the *Gemeinde*

The *Gemeinde* in Leipzig was not only a political body, of course. It was also the administrative arm of the Jewish community. Over the whole of the postwar period, as one neighboring community after declined in population and was unable to perform the basic tasks of communal Jewish life—especially the maintenance of cemeteries and the care of the old and sick—for itself, the Leipzig *Gemeinde* found itself obliged to pick up those responsibilities. As early as 1953, the Leipzig *Gemeinde* was in charge of Jewish life in the neighboring towns of Zwickau and Plauen.[508]

[507] Held, *Tradition*, 68-72.
[508] In response to a questionnaire from the *Encyclopedia Hebraica* in Jerusalem, putting together a World Register of Jewish Communities and Organizations, in LGA 307, 8 October, 1953.

Much of the work of the *Gemeinde* was distinctly prosaic, like getting Jewish children out of school for vacation or asking the schools to excuse them from Saturday classes for the Sabbath.[509] When a Jew who had lived in Leipzig and had gone to the west needed proof of their residency or ownership of a business to move through the Federal Republic's restitution program, the *Gemeinde* provided it.[510] There are hundreds of these in the files, and one thinks of the reactions of the employees of the *Gemeinde*, helping their former neighbors take part in a program of restitution that their own government would not institute.

Sometimes, the *Gemeinde* made it its business to run interference for a Jew in their relations with the state, and one is struck by the skill employed. In 1960, the *Gemeinde* wrote to the religious office of the regional council, asking for permission for Herr Theodor Klotzer and his family to move to town for religious purposes. The town where they lived, Roßwein, was too small to have a functioning religious life, and this large family wished to move to Leipzig and take part in the life of the *Gemeinde*. The interests of the *Gemeinde* in boosting its numbers by the arrival of a family with young children were not mentioned in the request. Nor were Klotzer's interests in moving to a town with more opportunities for a livelihood. Attention was carefully drawn, however, to the fact that Klotzer had immigrated to the GDR from the Federal Republic, "because of the smearings of swastikas in the Federal Republic, which he knows are unthinkable here."[511] The *Gemeinde* knew how to further their own and their members' interests in language that was likely to be effective in the world of the GDR.

[509] LGA 318, 25 May, 1950. The schools refused, saying Saturday instruction was a matter of unity within the German Democratic Republic, although an exception might be considered for major holidays.
[510] In LGA 387.
[511] LGA 387, 25 November, 1960.

Of course, the work of the *Gemeinde* was in religious life, too. There was no resident rabbi. Like other Jewish communities, Leipzig was dependent on the leadership of the *Landesrabbiner* [State Rabbi] of the DDR, Martin Riesenburger, on matters ranging from conversion classes[512] to circumcisions[513] to the dedication of the renovated synagogue[514]. In 1953, Werner Sander was hired as cantor of the *Gemeinde*, and became the most important local religious authority, the *Seelesorger* [literally "soul custodian"], and later served for a time on the*Gemeinde* 's *Vorstand*.[515] His leadership was hardly uncontroversial, and decisions he made on issues like holiday celebrations were sometimes appealed to Riesenburger by angry members of the *Gemeinde*, with Eugen Gollomb among them.[516]

One of the things the *Gemeinde* did *not* do, and might have been expected to—given the legacy of Fritz Grunsfeld—was to fight for the rights of its members in regaining its lost property. The GDR never did pass a restitution law, after putting off people like Grunsfeld in the late 1940s with promises of one. And as Leipzigers asked their religious community for help, they were disappointed. This was even true before the purge of early 1953. Max Silbermann asked in 1952 for help in securing a piece of the settlement the Federal Republic had made with refugees to Shanghai. He received a rather condescending letter from the *Gemeinde*, explaining that his wishes were a reflection of a misunderstanding on his part. Citizens of the GDR could not apply for a share of such settlements, but, he was reminded, he was eligible to receive a pension of up to 400 Marks monthly. There was no such pension available in the west, and this was the big

[512] CJA 5B1, #59, 31 May, 1949.
[513] LGA 307, 27 October, 1953.
[514] LGA 582, 18 August, 1962.
[515] CJA 5B1, #36, 15 August, 1953.
[516] LGA 634, 25 June, 1954.

difference.[517] The *Gemeinde* was justifying a policy of the state that stood in stark opposition to the interests of its members.

Rhetorical Support for the Regime

The *Gemeinde* had a responsibility to present the best possible face of Jewish life in the country, whether to its own members or to foreign visitors. In efforts reminiscent of the Nazis' discussions of whether to mitigate some visible abuses of Jews during the *Messe*, or trade fairs [see above, chapter on early Nazi period, page 4], the state asked the *Gemeinde* to take part in a demonstration in honor of Georgi Dmitroff in the Jewish cemetery.[518] This was in the late Stalinist period, and it might be imagined that the state and party became less manipulative in the use of the Jews of Leipzig as propaganda tools as time went on. There was no such luck. Over the years, the *Gemeinde* hosted and held special religious services for Jewish and other visitors from Sweden, Turkey, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Federal Republic, the USA, England, Holland and France. On these occasions, the state sent flowers for services, and officials from the religious affairs ministry came, too.[519] Jewish guests were received on other occasions, too, like Rabbi Yompol from Chicago, chair of the American anti-fascist committee. The rabbi was especially taken by the condition of the Jewish cemetery during his 1969 visit, and the chair of the *Gemeinde*, Eugen Gollomb, pointed out that it was all possible due to the support of the government of the GDR.[520]

[517] CJA 5B1, #61, 24 June, 1952.
[518] LGA 301, 9 September, 1952.
[519] LGA 503, 18 April, 1969; 16 October, 1975.
[520] LGA 503, 22 October, 1969.

Not only Jewish guests but foreign journalists were received by the *Gemeinde* as part of the government's efforts to convince the world of the laudable condition of their society, as in the 1971 tour of the synagogue for journalists from the USA, Britain and other western countries, ending with a press conference with the *Vorstand* of the *Gemeinde*, Cantor Werner Sander, and the leaders of the *Verband der Jüdischen Gemeinde in der DDR*, along with representatives from the state's office for religious affairs and the foreign ministry.[521]

The use of Jewish citizens of the GDR as tools to show the toleration of the state was perhaps unseemly, but did not compare with the negative use of the Jews of Leipzig as denouncers of the western part of the country, the USA, and Israel. Such use dated back at least to the 1950s and the denunciations of the west by Jewish Leipzigers as the last remnants of Nazism, to be placed in stark contrast with the progressive forces of the GDR. [See 1952-1953 chapter]. This use of Jews as rhetorical props continued into the 1960's. In 1962, the German National Congress of the National Front [an umbrella group of regime-supporting organizations] received a note from the Leipzig *Gemeinde*. The note made clear that the *Gemeinde* appreciated the work of the Front in light of "the life experiences of the community". The *Gemeinde* equated the Nazism of the past with the West German government of the present, and made that linkage very clear.[522]

In 1963, when Hans Globke, a commentator on the Nuremberg laws who went on to serve in the government of Konrad Adenauer as secretary of the Chancellery, was tried in absentia in an East German court and sentenced to life imprisonment, the *Gemeinde* commented. Emanuel Henik, then the chair of the Leipzig *Gemeinde*, called an assembly

[521] LGA 503, 19 July, 1971.
[522] LGA 582, 15 June, 1962.

to discuss the Globke case, and concluded by writing a letter, to be sent both to the court in Berlin that had tried him, and to the *Leipziger Rundschau* newspaper. Henik called for the implementation of the sentence as soon as possible. He blamed Globke personally for the crimes of the Nazi regime ["there are 120 Jews in Leipzig today—that is Globke"], and warned that his accomplices were in power still. He closed by urging that "every person—of whatever race of skin color—be treated with respect."[523]

Criticism of the West German regime under cover of Jewish history was part and parcel of political life in the GDR. In 1967, this use was taken to another level, as Jewish East Germans were paraded in front of foreign reporters to criticize the west, and to include Israel in their criticisms. A press conference was held in February of 1967, with reporters from West Germany and other countries in western Europe, as well as from India and Canada and even a couple from Israel. The participants in the news conference—including Emanuel Henik, who was introduced as someone who had emigrated to Palestine during the war—were given notes beforehand on how to respond to questions.

If participants were asked about German restitution to Israel, especially the fact that the West was sending such funds and the East was not, "the question should be answered very emotionally", by pointing out that the only real restitution to the Jews who had suffered was certainly not in crass cash payments. "In the GDR the victims of the fascist barbarity, regardless of religion or worldview, were granted a true restitution. The state of Israel in no way has the right to make demands of other states in the name of the Jewish people or to speak in the name of all Jewish people. In Germany, only the GDR

[523] Ibid., 9 August, 1963.

had truly solved the issue of restitution for the crimes of German imperialism: imperialism and Nazism were torn up by the roots, and with the creation of a stabile socialist state a bulwark against imperialism and militarism, for peace and friendship among nations, was erected."

Handwritten notes were also given in case anyone asked about the GDR's lack of diplomatic relations with Israel: "-we as Jewish communities are not the government of the GDR." "-so far as we know, there was no attempt on the part of the Israelis to have state relations with the GDR." And then typewritten: "The antifascist forces of the GDR maintain friendly contact with the progressive people of Israel, who work for the maintenance of peace and fight against the re-emergence of militarism and Nazism in West Germany." "These contacts between parties and mass organizations of the GDR and democratic, anti-fascist parties and organizations in Israel correspond with the humanitarian goals of the policy of the GDR."

At the press conference itself, the Vice President of the *Verband*—Fritz Grunsfeld's old position—denounced the Federal Republic as anti- Semitic, called Federal Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger the "Ribbentrop-Goebbels specialist for foreign radio propaganda", and the Federal President Heinrich Lübke a "concentration camp builder". The Archbishop of Cologne, Joseph Frings, was accused of holocaust denial, and this "blasphemy" was compared to the support of Cardinal Spellmann [sic] for the American effort in Vietnam. The conference, by the way, was held on a Friday afternoon, despite the requests of the Jewish participants that it be held another day.[524] The press

[524] CJA 5B1, #211, 4 and 10 February, 1967.

conference did not attack Israel directly, and this may have been an important line of demarcation for the participants.

That same year, Eugen Gollomb, who had been serving as a deputy for Emanuel Henik at the head of the *Gemeinde*, completed his improbable comeback with election as the new Chair of the community following Henik's death.[525] He would serve in this position for the next twenty-one years, until 1988, the eve of the collapse of the East German regime. The fact that Gollomb could rise to this position, and the at times remarkably independent tack he took while in office, are indicators of the relative autonomy available to the Jews of Leipzig under the same government that had begun a purge against them in 1952-53, and which tried to use them as propaganda tools for years after that

Much had indeed changed since the early 1950s. In 1963, the same year that Gollomb was elected to the *Vorstand*, he and Henik were joined by Ella Wittmann, just 9 years after the rejection of a woman candidate for the *Vorstand* by the community.[526] This was far enough for men like Gollomb, though. In 1968, both the Leipzig *Gemeinde* and the largest community, in East Berlin, threatened to leave the *Verband* in protest of the election of Karin Mylius as Chair of the *Gemeinde* in Halle.[527] The threat was apparently never carried out, though, and by 1975 the Leipzig *Gemeinde* had recovered from its indignation sufficiently to send Frau Mylius official greetings on her birthday.[528]

[525] LGA 503, 28 July, 1967, 2 February, 1968.
[526] Ibid.
[527] LGA 634, 2, 4 December, 1968.
[528] LGA 503, 15 January, 1975. Though the hesitancy to see women take an equal place was not gone. In November of 1973, a majority of participants in a discussion sponsored by the *Verband* der Juden in der DDR spoke out against allowing women to take part in the constitution of a Minyan, despite the conclusions of an international conference on the subject, and despite the growing number of cases in

Change and Autonomy

Not everything changed in the 1960's and 70s. The government continued to invite foreign visitors to Leipzig to meet with the Jewish leaders there[529] and clearly hoped to use these visits to influence some section of foreign opinion. But the more blatant use of Jews in Leipzig to convince the world of the rightness of DDR foreign policy—and especially to question Israeli policy—ceased, and a large reason seems to be the resistance of people like Eugen Gollomb. In 1974, Gollomb broke publicly with the *Verband* der Juden in der DDR by refusing to send the Leipzig *Gemeinde*'s report of activities. The protest arose because the *Verband* had stricken a reference to Israeli victims of terrorism from its Passover report shortly before, and Gollomb found this "undemocratic and unjust".[530]

To be sure, the use of Israel as a rhetorical device against the west and to build the anti-colonial bona fides of the GDR continued. In 1982, the German-American Jewish newspaper *Aufbau* ran a story comparing DDR philosemitism and anti-Israeli rhetoric. The article pointed out the flourishing religious life of the Jews of Leipzig, but also discussed a speech by DDR Prime Minister Willi Stoph given at the side of Nicolae Ceausescu. In the speech, Stoph argued that the "criminal murder expedition of the Israelis against Lebanon and the Palestinians, directly supported and approved of by the Americans, shows, imperialism is heating up tensions all over the world." The article also discussed a characterization of Israelis as "not people, but animals" in a Czech

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which a Minyan could not be found in Leipzig, much less the smaller communities in the DDR. Held, *Tradition*, 63.

[529] E.g.: 22 October, 1969; 20 October, 1971; 4 July, 1974; 16 October, 1975 all in LGA 503.

[530] LGA 503, 15 July, 1974.

newspaper, *Prace*, or *Labor*, and described the whole thing as being of a piece with the efforts of Josef Goebbels.

The article also mentioned growing cooperation between Lutheran churches and Jewish communities in the GDR, and mentioned especially the work in Leipzig of Pastor Theodor Arndt and Eugen Gollomb.[531] The article made clear that, while the state was continuing to use Jews and Israel and the Nazi past to justify their current policies, actual East German Jews—at least in Leipzig—were opting out of such action. There are several possible conclusions to be drawn from this shift. One is that in communities as small as the Jews of East Germany, individual personalities are important, and Eugen Gollomb was an outstanding and independent leader. This was undoubtedly the case, from the testimony of virtually every source.[532]

But the article also raises questions about what had changed in East Germany from the time of 1952-53 purges, to allow for such independence of political activity. We should take into account that Stalin was long-gone, that Khrushchev had made his secret speech at the 20th party congress, and that although the Eastern Bloc was not an open society, it was far less repressive than it had been at the height of the Stalinist terror. This was true in East Germany as well as in other countries. And, to be sure, it was at least partially the result of changes in government policy. Even the post-1961 consolidation of power by the SED after the completion of the Berlin wall had passed.[533]

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[531] From *Aufbau*, 26 November, 1982. In LGA 634.
[532] This includes non-Jews in Leipzig such as my wife Nancy's physician, who while setting a break in her hand became quite excited on hearing my dissertation topic. He was very keen to discuss Gollomb, whom he had known well as a neighbor, and whom he admired immensely. Nancy showed admirable restraint during the discussion.
[533] Henry Ashby Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, New Haven: 1992, 95.

But it was also the result of events and factors outside of the party and state's control. The same international contacts that both Nazi and SED officials assumed existed for Jewish citizens—and sought to use for their own purposes—also played a role in encouraging Jewish Leipzigers to assert their autonomy. Eugen Gollomb had a sister in Omaha—who was able to visit Leipzig in 1971—and a brother in Israel.[534] It is not too much to assume that they conveyed information to him from the wide world, information which frequently did not match the assertions of his government. In fact, we know Gollomb received such information, because the *Aufbau* article mentioned above was in his own files in the *Gemeinde* archives!

And what was true for the Chair of the *Gemeinde* was no doubt true of other members. Brothers, cousins, aunts, flung all over the world: this was hardly unusual for survivors of the Holocaust like those who made up the vast majority of the *Gemeinde* in Leipzig. And if we look particularly at the case of Israel, we see not only personal connections but the institutional ones formed by the Association of Former Leipzigers in Israel. The Association, founded in 1953, sent a report of over 100 former Leipzigers from all over Israel laying a cornerstone for a new old-age home in the city of Rechowoth. The celebrants included the former *Gemeinderabbiner*, David Ochs, and were led by the president of the Association, Dr. E. Mezshav, the new identity of the extraordinary former leader of the State Zionists in Leipzig, Ludwig Goldwasser.[535] There were other Israeli contacts, too, like a 1964 visit from the distinguished Leipzig-born Israeli conductor Sabtai Petrushka.[536]

[534] LGA 503, 16 July, 1971.
[535] LGA 503, undated but probably February, 1965.
[536] LGA 503, 9 October, 1964.

None of these developments by themselves—changes in the political tone of the Eastern Bloc, the emergence of new and more forceful leaders, the persisting international contacts of Jewish Leipzigers, especially with Israelis, can explain the growing rhetorical distance of the state and its Jewish citizens, especially on the subject of Israel. But taken together, they illustrate the broad set of causes that made Jewish Leipzigers increasingly unlikely to submit to calls for cooperation in anti-western propaganda.

The *Gemeinde* and state did cooperate over symbolic functions over the years to come, but they seemed relatively divested of politics and increasingly focused on religious and communal life. On November 10, 1966, a memorial was laid at the sight of the main Gottschedstraße synagogue, and Steffen Held believes that "with this activity the public officials believed their responsibility to be fulfilled", though it is hard to see from his account or anywhere else how the state officials had ever considered themselves responsible for the fate of Jewish Leipzigers. Held also dates an important change from the 1960s, saying that from the 1968 commemoration of *Kristallnacht*, the Jewish history of Leipzig was "being returned to public view".[537]

There is something to this: from the early 1970s there are many more examples of Jewish life being lived outside the walls of the *Gemeinde*, the end of what Held calls the "sequestering" of Jewish life. It should be kept in mind that Jews had been visible when the state authorities needed them for political purposes—a practice that certainly survived into the 1960s. But Held is right in pointing to the increasing role in public life that Jewish Leipzigers took. Under the leadership of Cantor Werner Sander (who had been

[537] Held, *Tradition*, 43.

named *Oberkantor* for the whole DDR in 1962[538]) performances of Jewish music were given by the Synagogue Choir in the most prestigious hall in the city, the*Alten Handelbörse*. An institution of major importance in the reemergence of Jewish life and history was the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kirche und Judentum* [Working Group of the Churches and Jewry], led by Pastor Siegfried Theodor Arndt. Arndt, along with Eugen Gollomb, took leading roles in this ecumenical organization, with Gollomb giving the major speech at its semiannual meeting in 1977.[539]

After the Fall

1989-90 saw a wave of political change that also revolutionized Jewish life in Leipzig. In some ways, little had changed: the state and party had relieved the *Gemeinde* of direct political pressure some time earlier, official anti- Semitism was in the past, and the emergence of Jews into public life in Leipzig had been going on for some time, thanks not least to the action of Jews acting in concert with Christians of faith and goodwill like Pastor Arndt. In others ways, though, the *Wende* [literally, "the Turn", the term used by Germans to refer to the end of the SED regime] , brought on at least in part to similar dynamics of church activism that had shaped the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kirche und Judentum*, changed Jewish life in Leipzig more than any other segment of that city's population. We now know that Jewish Leipzigers were, for instance, the object of special

[538] StAL Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig 14836—VdN File on Werner and Ida Sander, Report from 10 January, 1965.
[539] Held, *Tradition*, 45.

Stasi [the East German secret police] observation. As late as 1988, a nation-wide inventory of "special Jewish objects", was ordered by the Ministry for State Security[540]

But the major change in Jewish Leipzig came after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In May of 1991, the Jews of Leipzig had survived the DDR, but there were only thirty-five of them. At the end of July of that year, the first Jewish émigrés were welcomed into the Leipzig *Gemeinde* from Kiev, Odessa and St. Petersburg. The *Gemeinde* devoted itself to finding homes for them and, with some more difficulty, jobs. By October of 1994, 60 members of the *Gemeinde* were foreign-born.[541] By June of 1999, at the semiannual "Jewish Week" sponsored by the city and the *Ephraim Carlebach-Institut*, there were 191 members of the *Gemeinde*, and 170 of those were foreign-born, from the former Soviet Union.[542]. Today, there are 1,043 members of the community, much its highest number since the genocide. Of these around 30 were born in Germany, and they are between the ages of 50 and 80. There is one *Gemeinde* member from Argentina, one from Poland, 10 from Lithuania, and the rest from the republics of the former Soviet Union.[543]

And so now history has come full circle for the Jews of Leipzig in some ways. A community founded in conflict between German and foreign-born Jews, a community that had its glory days on the back of a huge influx of *Ostjuden* in the early part of the 20th century, a community devastated by genocide and degraded by Stalinism, now grows again, and again it is thanks to the wave of Jews from the east, seeing Germany,

[540] Held, "Schalom", 35.
[541] Held, *Tradition*, 45.
[542] Held, "Schalom", 35.
[543] Correspondence with Israelitische Religions*Gemeinde* zu Leipzig, 25 May, 2004. The correspondent, Klaudia Krenn, points out that the Lithuanians will soon be reclassified as Germans, though no explanation was given.

not for the first time, as a haven. When one goes to services in the old Kielstraße synagogue, one is handed a prayer book in Hebrew, German and Russian.

The old issues are raised again. Who will run the new *Gemeinde*? Will it be the last remnants of the old Leipzigers, or the majority, the new members? It is too early to declare that the present has learned from the past, but the *Vorstand* elected in January of 2001 was led by Rolf Isaacsohn, who was born in 1933 in Leipzig, and who had served on the board since 1993. He was joined in that election by two other native-born Germans, a man and a woman, Gabriele Jonas, and by one man and one woman from the Ukraine. When Frau Jonas died in 2003, she was replaced by Galina Chandalova, from Kyrgyzstan.[544]

The latest news out of Leipzig is the current debate over the construction of a new community center in the Waldstraßen quarter, in the site of the former Ariowitsch old age home. Rolf Isaacson of the *Vorstand* told reporters that the current space in the synagogue building on Keilstraße can only seat 60 people and has become inadequate for community celebrations, music, and educational undertakings, especially those for newcomers needing language instruction. Objections have been raised by neighbors over construction details, and also over security concerns, but a petition drive led by other neighbors in the quarter and joined by the pastor of the Thomaskirche [a prominent downtown Protestant church, where J. S. Bach had served as choral director and organist] netted 1,071 signatures which were ceremoniously delivered to the *Gemeinde*. The organizer of the petition drive, Suzanne Michaelis said "I would like for my children to

[544] Correspondence with Israelitische Religions*Gemeinde* zu Leipzig, 17 March, 2004.

get to know the Jewish culture.[545] The administrative court ruled on behalf of the *Gemeinde* on the 12th of March, 2004, that the concerns of the neighbors over constructions issues were unfounded, and that the questions of security were beyond its purview. Construction will commence.[546]

[545] *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 6 March, 2004. The author can attest to the inadequacy of the current space in the Keilstraße, having spent many hours in the hall of the *Gemeinde*'s administrative offices examining archives, and being passed by many people, mostly Russian-speakers on their way to language classes or meetings with the *Gemeinde*'s social worker.
[546] LVZ, 13 March, 2004.

Conclusion

This dissertation has tried to show that in every example in the twentieth century since 1914, the German state saw its Jewish citizens as an important symbol. In the case of the Weimar Republic, religious and personal freedoms were central to the state's concept of itself. This resulted in a meaningful degree of freedom of self-definition for Jews in Leipzig, who were free to contest among themselves what it meant to be Jewish, and they did so. More importantly, legal equality meant physical safety and freedom. This was a high point for the Jews of Leipzig after centuries of, at best, second-class citizenship.

When 1933 came, this equality, freedom and safety ended. The new state saw Jews as important—indeed, they were much more a part of how the Nazi state saw itself than was the case with Weimar. But this was only in a negative sense. Jewish Germans were something against which the new Germany defined itself. This meant, in turn, that Jews had little—and then no—freedom to define themselves. At first, this meant a gradual exclusion of Jewish Leipzigers from the mainstream and the artificial ascendance of the Zionist vision of Jewishness. Soon enough, the rhetorical restrictions were matched by physical ones. Finally, the Nazi vision of Germany was fulfilled—Germany was defined by the absence of Jews. The symbolic politics surrounding the place of Jewish Germans in the larger community had real and murderous implications. The Jewish community of Leipzig was all but destroyed.

After the collapse of the Nazi dictatorship, a new German state evolved in the eastern part of the now-divided country. First under the direction of Soviet authorities, and then under the less direct influence of Moscow, a socialist Germany was established.

This German state saw Jews as important symbols, too, but their significance changed over time. From the beginning of the GDR, Jewish citizens were rhetorical weapons in the race with the Federal Republic to lay stake to the position as the opposite of the Nazis. This position was at the center of the SED's claim to legitimacy, and Jews were an important part of that claim. Jews were asked to participate in the rituals of the East German state, to make clear how different the new state was from the old one, for the world to see. At times, this was used in direct contradistinction to the Federal Republic to the west, painted as the successor to the Nazis.

The fact, however, was that the West German state offered far more freedom to its Jewish citizens than did the Eastern one. Part of this was a generally less free atmosphere in the East, but part of it was specific. Jews were not just a positive symbol, but in the purge years of 1952 and 1953, a negative one. At that point, in response to a wave of anti-Semitism, the SED cracked down on Jews in Leipzig and all over the country, accusing Jewish leaders of espionage in the cause of Zionism and imperialism. After the purges ended, Jews were expected to assume their old symbolic roles again, denouncing the west. Before, during, and after the purges, the Jewish community was used as a symbolic tool for the state to make its case for legitimacy, and to define itself. At all times, the ability of Jews to define themselves was limited as a result. At the worst times, their lives and liberty were in peril as a result. These matters were not just confined to rhetoric. Jewish Leipzigers lived with very real—and usually quite negative—consequences because of this discourse.

It matters immensely that the Berlin Republic is devoted to the equality of all of its citizens. As we have seen, it is the form and the intent of the state that determines

above all how Jewish lives will be lived in Germany. The current state is one founded on ideals of equality and sees itself quite clearly as the successor to the Weimar Republic.[547] The new united Republic is a state that takes seriously the right of all of its citizens to find their own place in society. This applies to Jews, to be certain.

One of the major questions facing any historian of Germany is that of continuity—was the Nazi state of a piece with German history, or an anomaly? How similar were the National Socialist and SED dictatorships? Were periods of liberal democracy "normal", or "aberrant"? The long view taken by this dissertation allows some preliminary responses to those questions. From this perspective, there is a great deal of continuity—in all cases, Jewish Germans were important to the regime. But there is greater discontinuity, and the defining factor in German persecution of Jews is not some ingrained anti-Semitism, *pace* Goldhagen, but the form of the state. During the Weimar period, to be sure, Jews in Leipzig were exposed to anti-Semitism, but they were freer, dramatically freer, than they had been, or than they were to be. In stark contrast, the Nazi state pursued discrimination and then mass murder.

By the same token, we can see breaks even between German dictatorships. The SED was a dictatorial party, and the freedom of Jews to live their lives and find their place among their neighbors was restricted. But the comparison with the Nazi period makes clear that the SED regime was not one that defined itself in opposition to Jews, at most times. That government was devoted to the construction of a socialist state, not a racial one. As a result, Jews in Leipzig were—for most of the life of the GDR—left to a

[547] The Basic Law of 1949 makes clear in its First through Fourth articles that the liberty of individuals and groups is its first priority. This is especially significant to Jews in clause three of Article Three, which forbids discrimination based on race. Its attitude toward its heritage from the Weimar Republic is explicit in its adoption of Articles 136-141 of the Weimar Constitution, dealing with religious practice and liberty.

surprising degree to their own devices. Jewish citizens were important to both of the German dictatorships, but in very different ways. Links between "authoritarian" regimes need to be rethought. From this perspective, the GDR seems more in line than the Third Reich does with German tradition, as a state where Jewish Leipzigers had some opportunities to define who they were and to live in peace. The crucial difference, impossible to overstate, is that the Nazi state was a racial one in which the elimination and eventual murder of Jewish people was a defining task. The GDR's attitudes toward its Jewish citizens shifted over time, in concordance with the consistent goal of the construction of a socialist society.

All of this indicates a need for a more developed historical approach to the GDR. The Cold War construct of totalitarianism had the virtue of focusing attention on the very real limits on personal freedom within the Soviet Bloc. But it did as much to distort the distinctive character of those regimes.[548] The People's Democracies were states that did not define themselves racially, and that made an enormous amount of difference. In the specific case of East Germany, the vocabulary of totalitarianism had the effect of blurring the differences between the German dictatorships of Nazism and Communism and making easier the simple assertion of a German tendency toward illiberal politics. By making clearer the differences, we allow a more nuanced vision of the German political tradition, one that makes the sudden and surprising conversion of the West Germans to democrats after 1945 rather less sudden and surprising.

[548] Indeed, I believe that this study, following the example of work by other historians of the Nazi period, calls for a more complicated view of totalitarianism even from 1933-45. More and more evidence points to the importance of popular opinion even in the Nazi regime, and the significance of popular anti-Semitism is clear in the case of Leipzig. The state determines to a large degree what can be said, but not totally. The salient difference here is that, though German anti-Semites had some important freedom to speak and engage in a kind of political activity, Jews did not. In the final analysis, of course, it is the state that decides who will live and who will die.

This is made somewhat easier to see in the pursuit of a local history spanning different political eras. Examining a whole nation under one form of government can be too broad, in that it takes us away from the lives of individuals whose lives are important in themselves and which can tell us about the crucial questions of the effect of the state's intentions on real personal experience. At the same time, it can be too narrow in its focus; such a study can lack the perspective to place that political culture in its proper context, and to answer the critical questions of continuity. Taking the long view allows studies like this one to make clearer arguments about the relationship between Jews and Germans. Taking the local view allows scholarship to paint a more realistic picture, free of some of the need to fit a whole nation of experiences into a single explanatory model.

So, this dissertation is at some a level an argument for more local history being done. How does the case of Leipzig compare with that of Hamburg? Of Dresden? Each city is different, with a different history and different neighborhoods. Only by taking each case on its own merits can we begin to put a larger picture together. This is especially true in the case of Germany, a nation made up of many distinct regions. Looking at the smaller picture allows us to look at the bigger picture, and to make a more accurate assessment of the crucial issues around German Jews and German gentiles. This work is a gesture in that direction; a contribution to what can only be the work of many scholars.

But the most important reason to study Leipzig at the local level is the same reason I began studying the Holocaust. We owe the victims of these persecutions something. We cannot give it to them without paying close attention. This is a work of memorialization as much as analysis. When we look closer, we can see the lives of

people like Richard Frank and Fritz Grunsfeld and Eugen Gollomb and Samuel Hodes and Tanja Ury as something besides mere examples, types to be examined in brief by way of explicating a larger point. These were whole lives touched and often ended by tragedy and wickedness. This realization and the kind of work that it drives are little enough to do in their memory.

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StAL—Staatsarchiv Leipzig (Saxon state Archive in Leipzig)

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PP-V Vereinsregister (police and court records of registered organizations)
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