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## Silence in America Textbooks

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## Silence in America Textbooks

### Abstract

[Excerpt] Although more than two decades separate us from the time when the Allied forces revealed the depth and dimensions of the Nazi horror, America's textbook-writing historians still do not understand the demands the death camps place on each of them as scholar and as educator of the young in our public schools and universities. They continue to write in the tradition that prepared no one for the catastrophe, a tradition that still prevents us from attempting to assess and understand what happened; for with precious few exceptions they write of the years before 1945 as if the 1930's and 1940's did not require a re-examination of European history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### Keywords

Holocaust, historian, history, America, 1930s, 1940s

### Disciplines

European History | Labor Relations | United States History

### Comments

#### Suggested Citation

Korman, G. (1970). Silence in American textbooks [Electronic version]. *Yad Vashem Studies*, 8, 183-202.

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## *Silence in the American Textbooks\**

GERD KORMAN

[i]

Although more than two decades separate us from the time when the Allied forces revealed the depth and dimensions of the Nazi horror, America's textbook-writing historians<sup>1</sup> still do not understand the demands the death camps place on each of them as scholar and as educator of the young in our public schools and universities. They continue to write in the tradition that prepared no one for the catastrophe, a tradition that still prevents us from attempting to assess and understand what happened; for with precious few excep-

\* If the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of Modern History*, and the *Journal of the History of Ideas* can serve as reliable guides this title can be extended to the articles in leading general professional journals used by American historians. With the following exceptions these journals, for the years 1945 to the present, are silent on the subject discussed in this paper. Leo L. Honor's short review article of "With Firmness in the Right: American Diplomatic Action Affecting the Jews" (New York, 1946) by Cyrus Adler and Aaron N. Margolith, in *JMH* 22: pp. 48-52 (March, 1950); Hans Heilbronner, "Court Aehenthal and Russian Jewry, 1903-1907," *JMH* 38: pp. 394-406 (December, 1966); Carl E. Schorske, "Politics in a New Key: An Austrian Triptych," *JMH* 39: pp. 343-386 (December, 1967); George L. Mosse, "Mystical Origins of National Socialism," *JHI* 22: pp. 81-96 (January-March, 1961); Shlomo Avineri, "Marx and Jewish Emancipation," *JHI* 25: pp. 445-450 (July-September, 1964); Gavin I. Longmuir, "Majority History and Post Biblical Jews," *JHI* 27: pp. 343-364 (July-September, 1966). Among these exceptions the articles by Mosse and Longmuir are of special value. Mosse is one of the very few historians who has in his works on nineteenth and twentieth century Europe moved Gentile-Jewish relations into the mainstream of European history; Longmuir takes non-Jewish scholars to task for all but ignoring Jews in the study of Medieval Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Some of the terms and data contained in the passages quoted from the textbooks below are incorrect (Ed.).

tions they write of the years before 1945 as if the 1930's and 1940's did not require a re-examination of European history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The capacity of so many Gentiles to destroy or acquiesce in the destruction of European Jewry raises far too many fundamental questions about their culture and institutions for textbook-writing historians. To be sure, a few scholars have at least begun to recognize the Jewish presence in European affairs, but such a recognition by a tiny minority does little more than fill some obvious voids left by earlier historians. Essential as such efforts are they simply do not require a refashioning of the perspective from which European affairs are examined.

And it is the perspective that has to change if textbook writers ever hope to help student readers make a beginning in understanding the horror. Historians today must do something their forebears did not, and perhaps could not, do. They must make room to interlace Gentile-Jewish relations in the mainstream of European history and in contemporary American history.

Since some of the intertwined branches of the intellectual thicket framing traditional treatments of the Jew can be readily identified, it is fruitful to speculate about them before turning to the main burdens of this paper, which are the contemporary textbooks' treatment of the 1930's and 1940's, and a plea for changing the paradigms governing those treatments. Such speculative remarks will at once reveal the complexity inherent in any effort to modify the treatment of Gentile-Jewish relations in the history textbook. Hopefully they will also help explain the passages historians have written for the young.

Three branches in that thicket are especially evident. The first may be identified as Christian culture, the second, modern nationalism, and the third, the patterns of America's absorption of immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Until recent years most American historians were Christians raised in a Christian culture. Diverse and complicated as that culture is in the United States it did share with European Christianity what some Protestant theologians have styled as a pathological collective unconscious about the Jew: he was the enemy who became good only after death or after his conversion to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Historians reared in such an environ-

<sup>2</sup> A. Roy Eckhardt's letter in the *New York Times*, July 13, 1967, and the

ment and educated in the belief that Jesus was "...the consummation of all Jewish religious experience..." could hardly be blamed for perceiving the Jewish people as Toynbee had: "...devoid of any living juices, a lifeless and unproductive, though perhaps instructive curiosity, a simulacrum of genuine peoplehood."<sup>3</sup>

The traditional commitment to the modern nation complemented and strengthened such a perception of the Jew. Since the Jew was a Wanderer among nations until 1948 historians simply could not fathom the peoplehood of the spirit or Jewish versions of nineteenth century nationalism. To the historian Jews as such did not exist. They were nationals of Jewish persuasion. The nationalist frame of reference that characterized historical scholarship simply precluded an exclusive Jewish existence with a future, a sentiment shared by radicals, including many who are of Jewish parentage striving to organize the proletarians of all nations.

In the United States patterns of absorption reinforced these conceptions shaped by a Christian culture housed in a nation state. In the very years when the writing of so-called scientific history began, Jews from Eastern Europe gave many indications that they too would join Africans and other Europeans in becoming Americans. In *ante-bellum* years Jews from Central Europe had already demonstrated this eagerness and capacity to go the way of urbanites in Eastern America. The recent arrivals at the end of the century were engaged in building identifiable ghettos, but even then they made haste to walk in the ways of educated America. To be sure many then and in later decades feared that the Jew would remain ghettoized and unabsorbed. But it was a fact that in their lifetime American scholars of the twentieth century witnessed the Jew's process of spacial and occupational dispersal as he institutionalized himself within the plurality of American nationalism. For the American historian the Jew in fact disappeared; whatever distinctive attributes he and his community may have had became irrelevant, except of course the attribute of becoming the object of anti-Semitism.<sup>4</sup>

article, written with his wife Alice L., for *Christian Century*, 84, pp. 992-995 (August 2, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Samuel, *The Professor and the Fossil* (New York: 1956), pp. 20, 88, 98.

<sup>4</sup> Two recent studies of American professional historical scholarship ignore the thicket in question. John Higham, et al., *History* (Englewood Cliffs,

The relation of these and other branches of the intellectual thicket may well have made it impossible for generation after generation of American-trained scholars of European history to recognize the significance of nineteenth and twentieth century Gentile-Jewish relations. Certain it is that they have not perceived what Gershom Scholem recently suggested:<sup>5</sup> At bottom Gentile-Jewish relations in Germany were mutual acts of delusion, *Schauspiele* using the rhetoric of liberal nationalisms to blind the actors from recognizing the obstacles precluding effective integration of Jew with Gentile. The consequences of these delusions in Germany and elsewhere in Europe may well have brought on the events of the 1930's and 1940's; they may also have functioned as root causes of other malignancies in European society of the nineteenth and twentieth century. In any event the textbooks of American historians reveal that they still do not appreciate that within those relations may be the clue for our incipient understanding of the horror of our age and our civilization.

[ii]

With striking exceptions historians do not acquaint readers with the exterminated Jews.<sup>6</sup> One searches in vain to learn of their number

N.J.: 1965), and Harvey Wish, *The American Historian* (New York, 1960).

<sup>5</sup> Gershom Scholem made the suggestion in *Commentary* 42, pp. 31-38 (November, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> The following paragraphs are based on examples drawn from these texts: Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron, *The American Republic* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1959); Arthur E. R. Boak, Preston W. Slosson, Howard R. Anderson and Hall Bartlett, *The History of our World* (New York: 1965); Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolf, *A History of Civilization* (New York: 1967); Boyd C. Shafer, Richard A. McLemore and Everett Ausburger, *United States History for High Schools* (River Forest, Ill.: 1966); Walter T. Wallbank, *Man's Story: World History in its Geographic Setting* (Chicago:nd); F. Lee Bennis, *Europe Since 1914 in its World Setting* (New York: 1945); Stewart C. Easton, *The Western Heritage* (New York: 1961); Harold H. Erbling, Fred M. King and James Herlow (adapted by Milton Finkelstein), *The Story of America* (River Forest, Ill.: 1965); Ethel E. Ewing, *Our Widening World: A History of the World's Peoples* (Chicago: 1963); John M. Blum, Bruce Catton, Edmund S. Morgan, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Kenneth M. Stampf and C. Vann Woodward, *The National Experience: A History of the United States* (New York: 1963); Rebekah R. Liebman and Gertrude A. Young, *The Growth of America* (Englewood

and places of sojourn in the countries of Europe, of their diversity, their conflicts, their institutions, their theology, literature, philosophy, and of their culture in France and the Low Lands, in Germany and other countries of Central Europe, in Italy and the Balkans, in Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia, and in Russian and other East European lands. The size and scope and educational level of the texts seems not to make much difference in the treatment of Jews. The space assigned to them seems instead to be a function of the historian's personal predilection, and his interest in the persecutors and destroyers of Jews.

These features of textbook historiography reveal themselves in the indexes and charts of important events one finds in most of the surveys being used in our schools. An important text of American history, for example, indexes "Jessup, Philip," "Jewett, Sarah Orne," *Jews without money* (Gold), and "Jodl, General Alfred," but has no reference to "Jews," an entry that would precede Nazi General Jodl or follow the page guide to Ambassador Jessup, writer Jewett or Michael Gold's proletarian novel. References to "Judaism" are more common but these usually occur in histories including chapters on antiquity and Medieval Europe, and are thus index guides to accounts of the Hebrews' travels, revelations, and wars of conquest and national defense south of the Fertile Crescent or to Judaism's relationship to the rise of Christianity. Sometimes "Anti-Semitism" is the key to the passages devoted to Jews. Occasionally "Atrocities" leads one to the appropriate page. Reference to "Auschwitz" or "Concentration Camps" are rare: one textbook writer of American history took the trouble to add "(Cuban)" next to his "Concentration Camps" and was then consistent enough never to mention the word or camp names while surveying American and European affairs during World War II. Another book reproduces a photograph of a Jewish storekeepers' window, whitewashed with symbols and the key word Dachau, but neither index nor text ever reveals what the Dachau is to which the merchant had "been sent on leave". More often than not the index is simply silent if "Jews" have not been employed as a reference group. (One enterprising indexer

Cliffs, N.J.: 1964); Nathaniel Platt and Muriel J. Dummond, *Our Nation From Its Creation: A Great Experiment* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1964); H. Stuart Hughes, *Contemporary Europe: A History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1961); Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York: 1962).

rejecting silence found his salvation by turning to "Jewish persecution," and listed the pages for all his Jewish references, beginning with Abraham and ending with the establishment of the State of Israel.)

Chronological charts of important events say nothing on any aspect of Gentile-Jewish relations, even when such charts are lengthy and detailed. In one of our good texts of the history of Western Civilization the author provides college students with a chart of events for the years 1939 to 1945. Like others conveniently scattered throughout the book, this one is long enough to include two kinds of events: the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and other such obviously momentous events as the invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941, the Allied invasion of Normandy, June 6, 1944, and V-E Day, May 7, 1945; the second kind consists of June 23, 1940, when General de Gaulle declared he would continue the fight of Free France, and October 2, 1944 when the heroic Poles of Warsaw lost their fight against the Germans while the liberating Russian army watched another Nazi triumph from the eastern shore of the Vistula. There is no place in this chart for July 31, 1941, the day Hermann Goering authorized Reinhardt Heydrich to organize and implement the "Final Solution"; for April 19, 1943, the beginning of the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto; or for January 27, 1945, the day the Soviet Army liberated Auschwitz, the killing centre which had in three years annihilated hundreds of thousands of Jews.

When it comes to maps this special silence truly reigns supreme. They tell tales of nature's bountiful grain, soils, rivers, and trees, of vast steppes and mountains, of economic resources, of voting behaviour, and of Europe's national boundaries and capitals. Though the maps invariably depict movements of belligerent soldiers and major battle sites we have yet to see a single map in a single textbook that includes the names of the towns and villages to which the German government deployed hundreds upon hundreds of locomotives and railways cars, in which it retained thousands of soldiers and civilians working in such differing occupations as clerks, guards of transport and campsites, scientists, executioners, mass-grave diggers, and body-burners, and through which it tried to destroy the one people officially declared as Germany's worst and most deadly enemy. The maps are silent about Dachau and Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück, Mauthausen and Theresienstadt and other



camp where the Germans imprisoned and destroyed Jews. About the many annihilation centres in Poland such as Chelmno and Belzec, Sobibor and Lublin, Treblinka and Auschwitz where the Germans killed their Jewish enemy, about Russia where the mobile killing units of the German government machine-gunned the Jewish population, and silent about Vilna and Bialystok, Warsaw and other places where Germans encountered the Jewish enemy fighting in the style of embattled guerrillas.

There are, of course, the proverbially few textbooks proving the rule governing the treatment of Gentile-Jewish relationships, but these books bring into especially clear focus the substantive implications of the unwritten rulebook most textbook writers seem to consult. Do not, seemingly say the rules, attach to these relationships any greater importance for understanding of European or recent American history than did the writers and teachers of history working in the United States before World War II; in the text, do not pay particular attention to Jewish affairs and institutions; in indexes or in such other reading guides as tables of contents, headings and subheadings of chapters, maps and charts do not refer directly to Jews, their concentrations or destruction; but in the text do make some references, explanations, or extended remarks about Jews while discussing the Russian Empire, immigration to the United States, the decline of democracy and the rise of fascism, or such commonly discussed subjects as racism in Nazi thought, the military operations of the Allies, and the cost of war. More often than not these positive features of the rules are obeyed with a brief passage stating that many Jews lived in Eastern Europe, where they encountered periodic pogroms and from which they fled to the United States before World War I; with a few sentences or even one or two paragraphs explaining why Jews became the special targets of the Nazis, and a related passage or two in which the reader is projected into the future of the 1930's in Germany and other parts of occupied Europe; with a curt reference to concentration camps while following the armies in the closing months of the war; or with a numerical identification while giving the dollar and people value lost by all belligerents.

The treatment of these topics by one of the finest texts in American history illustrates the meaning of these general remarks. The example comes from the pages of the latest edition (1962) of the second volume of the *History of the American Republic* by Samuel Eliot

Morison and Henry Steele Commager. The index—it includes “Auden, W. H.,” “Australia,” “Austria,” but not Auschwitz—has the subject entry “Concentration Camps” and it leads the reader to page 830 and the instructive paragraph. The authors had skilfully tracked the movements of Allied armies, following the crossing of the Rhine and the encirclement of the Ruhr, Montgomery’s rush to Hamburg and Bremen, Patton’s drive to Kassel, and Patch’s campaign through Bavaria in order to meet in Czechoslovakia the Russians coming East. “As the Allied armies drove deep into Germany, Austria and Poland,” the authors then begin their new paragraph, “they came upon one torture camp after another—Buchenwald, Dachau, Belsen, Auschwitz, Linz, Lublin—and what they reported sickened the whole Western World.”<sup>7</sup> Having already said more on this subject than most writers of general American or European history texts, Morison and Commager use subsequent passages to convey the scope and intent of the destruction. “These atrocity camps had been established in 1937 for Jews, gypsies, and anti-Nazi Germans and Austrians; with the coming of the war the Nazis used them for prisoners of all nationalities, civilians and soldiers, men, women, and children, and for Jews rounded up in Italy, France, Holland and Hungary. All were killed in the hope of exterminating the entire race.”<sup>8</sup>

But closing passages reveal that Morison and Commager are like most of their colleagues who also failed to understand the conflict between Germans and Jews. The evidence from the front piled higher and higher ultimately overcoming the American skepticism World War I had fostered about German atrocity stories. “And the pathetic story of one of the least of these, the diary of the little German girl (*sic!*) Anna Frank, had probably done more to convince the world of the hatred inherent in the Nazi doctrine than the solemn postwar trials.”

Even if in the eyes of Morison and Commager Jews exist only as nationals of a particular religious persuasion, the fact remains that German Nazis saw the word differently. Why was a little German girl in hiding in a farm house in Holland? In the historical context of World War II Anna Frank was not a German girl, not even a

<sup>7</sup> To appreciate Morison and Commager’s treatment in the second volume of American history, compare it with Gordon A. Craig’s *Europe Since 1815* (New York: 1961); pp. 624-644, 713, 714, 716-717, 746, 765.

<sup>8</sup> Compare these comments to Brinton et al., II, p. 670.

German Jewish girl. Anna Frank was a sensitive little girl who knew she was being hunted as one of the Jewish enemy of the German state. On Friday 9 October 1942 she wrote: "...Nice people the Germans! to think that I was once one of them too! No, Hitler took away our nationality, long ago in fact. Germans and Jews are the greatest enemies in the world."<sup>9</sup>

The truth is that readers of Morison and Commager or of most texts have not been prepared for the Jew of the modern nation state. They know him only as a national of the Jewish religious persuasion. Thus, the same author who listed all his Jewish references under "Jewish persecutions" reproduces the incomparable "White Crucifixion" in order to illustrate religious persecution. He offers the following description for the painting: "A modern artist, Marc Chagall, uses the contrast of Christ and the destruction of Jewish lives, temples, and scrolls to highlight the modern problems of persecution. Nazi persecutions were most barbaric of all and shocked the whole world."<sup>10</sup> To speak of Chagall's work in any way but as a poignant expression of the relationship between the European Gentiles and the autonomous cultural minority that nurtured him is not to speak of him at all.

## [iii]

The implicit insistence that Gentile-Jewish relations of the World War II era must also move into the mainstream of American history texts deserves a special explanation. It consists of two points, not entirely separable. For whatever the reason, failure to move these relations into the mainstream of American history has so far sustained the silence in most texts about the United States' policies towards

<sup>9</sup> Of all the texts and anthologies examined only George L. Mosse, et al., *Europe in Review: Readings and Sources Since 1500* (Chicago; 1952), pp. 41-472, reported Hitler's statement of January 30, 1942, a statement broadcast by the B.B.C.: Jews, said Hitler, are "our old enemies... They hate us and we hate them... We realize that this war can end only either in wiping out the Germanic nations, or by the disappearance of Jewry from Europe... I said (on September 3) that the result of this war would be the destruction of Jewry. For the first time, it will not be the others who will bleed to death... The hour will come when the worst enemy of the world of all time will have finished his part for at least one thousand years to come."

<sup>10</sup> *Wallbank*, p. 630.

Jews under German control from 1933 to 1941, and about the American response towards the liquidation of Jews between 1941 and 1945. Sometimes a text goes even beyond this silent presentation. One found it possible to show high school students some of the virtues of the Roosevelt administration by comparing them to Hitler's rule. Roosevelt tried to feed, house and clothe a third of the nation; Hitler refined his ways of street terror and violence in order to strangle Jewish life in Germany;<sup>11</sup> obviously the information is valid enough but in that context the silence about the United States policy towards Hitler's victims is impressive—the entire subject is not mentioned anywhere else in this text.

Although eschewing recognition of the particularities of Gentile-Jewish relationship in the 1930's, Morison and Commager do show how, with a passage or two, historians can incorporate relevant information about United States policy towards Germany's Jews of the 1930's. When "...tens of thousands of victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution—Jews, Poles, liberals, democrats, and other minority groups—sought asylum in the United States, the American response, except to a small minority of distinguished scientists and artists, was not generous." Organizations imbued with patriotism, veteranism, and trade unionism opposed the publicized efforts F.D.R. made in relaxing restriction, say these two scholars. "If we are going to keep this country as it is and not lose our liberty," they quote one of the organizational spokesmen about the possibility of admitting some 20,000 children, "we have got to not only keep these children out, but the whole damned Europe."<sup>12</sup>

But it is clear enough that even Morison and Commager's treatment make American immigration policies towards Jews in Germany a most peripheral subject. The fundamental reasons for this approach are embedded in the intellectual thicket touched upon at the outset of this article. Merle Curti's comments about the scholars and intellectuals who watched the spectacle of the 1930's may be helpful, however, in appreciating certain generational branches of that thicket which affected the men who wrote the texts for the students in our schools after 1939 and taught history to our contemporary textbook writers. "Though the Nazis burned the books of the great

<sup>11</sup> Richard N. Current, Alexander De Conde and Harris L. Dante, *United States History* (Glenview, Ill: 1967), p. 608.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 665.

writers of all lands," he wrote in his Pulitzer Prize winning *Growth of American Thought* (1964 edition), "though they perverted science and scholarship to party purposes, though they persecuted all critics of the regime and all people 'tainted' by Jewish blood, many American intellectuals continued to remain indifferent or even apologetic. . . ." Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Stanford took part in the 50th anniversary of Heidelberg in 1936, and in spite of criticisms of their acts of participation from liberal journals and academic quarters, American universities participated in similar celebrations in 1937. They were blind, says Curti, one of their contemporaries, "to the plain fact that Nazism threatened all the ideals of scholars and intellectuals—sustained search for truth, freedom of inquiry and expression, the supremacy of the mind, the dignity of all men." How to explain this loss of vision? Confusion about the nature of totalitarianism, answers Curti. To the left the extremes of fascism revealed the fascists' desperateness in trying to preserve capitalism; "others" found little that was new in the movements controlling Italy and Germany; and still "others" insisted that totalitarianism in Italy and Germany were a part of the revolutionary movements against nationalism and capitalism.<sup>13</sup>

The second reason for insisting that Gentile-Jewish relations of the World War II era should move into the mainstream of American history texts is somewhat different from the first. Without the help of textbook historians, significant features of Europe's Gentile-Jewish relationships have in fact become a part of America's actual contemporary history. Since the end of the war, books, articles, and newspaper accounts have conveyed to many Americans information and judgments about the battles Nazis waged against Jewry. After the famous Nuremberg Trials other trials of Nazis, in Jerusalem as well as in Germany, have kept the mobile killing units and the death camps in the public arena. Under Pope John XXIII and Augustine Cardinal Bea a contrite Catholic Church converted its historic relationship to Jews into a laser beam with which to search the heart and mind of its theology, pedagogy, and missionary tradition, and with other elements of organized Christianity tried to find a way of confronting its responsibility for Auschwitz while embracing Jewry in an ecumenical movement. Beginning in the 1950's social and political action groups fighting on behalf of Negro rights and the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Vietnamese's rights of self-determination and self-destruction have employed the word "Hitler," "Auschwitz," "Nuremberg," and "Genocide" in attacking their opponents at home and abroad. And in June 1967 supporters of Israel reminded the world of the last time the nations watched Jews die by the millions.

To the thoughtful men of religion and philosophy, to aware spokesmen of political action groups, Gentile-Jewish relationships of World War II have come to represent experiences that far transcend the events of the 1930's and '40's. They have come to represent dramatic evidence of the malaise of Western Civilization in general and the power of modern technology and bureaucracy over human affairs in particular. In short, Gentile-Jewish relations of World War II have played and are playing a substantial role in generating uncertainties and fear about man's behaviour and his institutions. They have also provided symbols and slogans with which to attack or ask the help of the awesome power and bureaucracy of the nation-state Americans have created for themselves.<sup>14</sup>

[iv]

Most Americans writing texts about European history are like their colleagues who survey the story of the United States, but there are some important exceptions. H. Stuart Hughes is one of these. His approach to the subject of Gentile-Jewish relations is like that of Morison and Commager but in his one-volume history of twentieth century Europe he has more to say about Jews in Europe between 1933 and 1945. He sees the Germany of the 1930's clearly. 'If for the mass of the population the fundamentals of life did not change under fascist rule, this was true only of the torpid and conformist majority.' For the minority of the freespirted, the creative, and the "racially alien, life changed catastrophically. The persecution of the Jews and denial of free thought under fascism came to rank as the second nightmare of the decade... the jobless worker and the refugee fascist oppression became the twin symbols of the 1930's..." He discusses the destruction of Jews in two different contexts. The first occurs in an explanation of the Nazis'

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly enough Current et al., p. 668, express their recognition of this reality obliquely: "People who could not erase their memories of Nazi barbarism lost their faith in the belief that man was living in an ever improving world." See also Blum et al., p. 806, and Hofstadter et al., II, p. 623.

failure to gain European support for the new order. The German treatment of subject people was at fault, according to Hughes, and after identifying who these subjects were he turns to the Nazis' lowest order, "...those whom the Nazis regarded as pariahs—the Jews and the Gypsies. These were to be exterminated." Referring to the "...gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz and other concentration camps," Hughes concluded his comments about subject people with the observation that "three-quarters of European Jewry—two-fifths of all the Jews in the World" were killed by the Nazis.<sup>15</sup>

The second occasion is when he discusses "Jewish survivors and the Attraction of Israel." Here he points to a number of facts of postwar Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe, "and to a lesser extent in the West also, the dreadful memory weighed on the conscience of all convinced Christians: the destruction of six million Jews." The religious map of Europe had been permanently changed, with catastrophic results in Germany and Poland.<sup>16</sup>

Solomon F. Bloom's *Europe and America: The Western World in Modern Times* (New York, 1961) reveals an approach to the subject of Gentile-Jewish relations in the Hitler years which is different from that of most texts. Firstly, he includes a special section entitled "Exploitation and Genocide."

Within a paragraph of this section he provides demographic information about Jews in the various countries of Europe before 1939 so that percentage estimates of destruction can be cited in a meaningful fashion. He takes the trouble to distinguish between mobile killing units and death camps. "Speeding from town to town," the 2,000 machine gunners, divided into four squads, "rounded up the Jews, stripped them of their belongings, marched them out into nearby forests and fields, compelled them to dig deep ditches, and machinegunned them into their own graves. This was done with the knowledge of the military commanders and often with the assistance of regular army units." He is distinctive for the paragraph he devotes to the Warsaw uprising and other acts of Jewish resistance as well as providing readers with bibliographical references to Jewish history and to Nazi Germany's war against Jews.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 287-238, 263, 331.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 421-422. Brinton et al., II, p. 554, by contrast, offer no estimation of Jewish dead. They do, however, estimate that aerial warfare killed about 500,000 German civilians.

<sup>17</sup> pp. 734-736.

But if Bloom provides one clear guide for moving the destruction of European Jews into the mainstream of the history of World War II, R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton are distinctive in providing a foothold for a conceptual framework that will move Gentile-Jewish relations into the mainstream of European history. It is therefore worthwhile to examine closely their 1965 edition of *A History of the Modern World*.<sup>18</sup> We are introduced to the Jews of the modern European nation-state some two hundred pages before Hitler's era. Palmer and Colton identify them in the period 1871-1914 in a section entitled "The Churches and the Modern Age," and proceed to acquaint the reader with important features of their group's characteristics and behaviour. They speak of the impact science and secularism were having on Orthodox Jewry, and for Western Europe locate Reform Judaism as the Jewish faith's response to modernity. "Individual Jews," they explain, "increasingly gave up their old distinctive Jewish way of life. In society at large the prevalence of liberalism allowed them to act as citizens and to enter business or the professions like everybody else. Jews were thus freed from old legal discrimination that had been imposed upon them for centuries."

They also dwell on two generators working against "assimilation." Some Jews "...like other people with similar fears about the loss of identity or the disappearance of an entire tradition launched a nationalist movement of their own," which, in light of the eighteen hundred years that had intervened since the existence of a Jewish Kingdom, represent for Palmer and Colton "...the most extreme of the nineteenth century nationalist revivals." The other generator was located in the hostile Gentile world. It expressed itself with racist theories, dislike of Jewish competitors in business and the professions, socialist "scorn" for Jewish capitalists like the Rothschilds, upper-class fears of Jews in revolutionary movements, ethnic nationalism, the Russian pogroms, and the Dreyfus Affair in France. In the face of these hostile expressions Jews were forced into what Palmer and Colton call "... a new sense of Jewish identity," expressing itself in different ways. "Many wishing civic assimilation yet despairing of obtaining it, began to sympathize with the Jewish

<sup>18</sup> Robert R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World* (New York: 1965), pp. 606, 678, 706, 712, 755, 805, 808, 809, 810, 813, 814, 815, 816.



nationalist movement, looking to Zionism and a Jewish renaissance as a way to maintain their own dignity. Others insisted that Judaism was a religious faith, not a nationality by itself; that Jews and non-Jews within the same country shared in exactly the same nationality, citizenship, and political and social outlook. Liberals and democrats were of the same opinion. On the integration of Jews into the larger community the tradition of the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, the empire of Napoleon I, and the liberalism of the nineteenth century all agreed."

One need not accept Palmer's and Colton's implicit assumptions about nationalism to appreciate their ability to describe briefly the variety of Jewish life within Europe's Gentile world; to make room, within their conceptual framework, for the Jewish presence in European history. Throughout their survey of the twentieth century they never lose sight of it. Thus they mention not only Russian pogroms and the Balfour Declaration—the former as an example of Alexander II's (1881–1894) suppression activities, and the latter as part of England's World War I plans towards Arab nationalism—but also the behaviour of the Jewish Bund in 1903 in the split between the Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, and the Jews' significance among the new states of Central and East Central Europe after World War I: Poland and Lithuania clashed over control of "the largely Jewish city of Vilna."

Palmer's and Colton's ability to educate their readers concerning the diversity of Jewry within European society persists in their discussion of the Hitler period. This is part of a passage describing the Nazi leader's Vienna years: "Nor above all the Jews, who thanks to a century of liberal influences had become assimilated to the German culture, and now occupied many distinguished positions in business, law, medicine, and journalism..." Here are examples of Palmer's and Colton's comments about Hitler's propaganda: "Above all, he denounced Jews. Jews, like others, were found in all political camps. To the left, Jewish capitalists were anathema. To the Right, Jewish revolutionaries were a horror... At the same time the Jews were a small minority (only 600,000 in all Germany), so that in an age of mass politics it was safe enough to attack them." Even as they speak of Nazi violence Palmer and Colton educate the reader about Jewry: "Jews were beaten up, hounded, driven from public office, ruined in private business, fined as a community, put to death, or allowed to flee the country after being stripped of all their pos-

sessions. The anti-Semitism of some fanatics descended to positive bestiality; it foreshadowed the physical extermination of millions of German and East European Jewry." And what this physical extermination means to Palmer and Colton is quite clear: "Genocide, the attempted destruction of whole ethnic groups or peoples, was the greatest of the Nazi sins against mankind."

With this sort of passage Palmer and Colton demonstrate to other historians how one can meaningfully find room for the Jewish presence in European society. They have not only shown how one can write a good textbook within traditional perceptions of European history, but have made it possible for the reader to know at least who the Jews were and what many of them did before they were exterminated. They have found it possible to make them historically significant, prior to their extermination, a possibility that few textbook-writing historians have as yet discovered.

[v]

Historians collecting documents for students are more likely than textbook writers to include selections about the destruction of Jewry as material illustrative of the twentieth century, but some recently published multi-volume series on ideas, institutions and sources are essentially silent on this subject. Except for a document offering evidence to demonstrate the "racialism" underlying the anti-Semitism of Wagner and Hitler, Hans Kohn's *The Modern World: 1848 to the Present* (New York, 1963) reveals nothing of Gentile-Jewish relations. Similarly, another anthologist, who knows that the "... unique feature of Hitler's rule was his effort to put racial theories into practice by attempting to murder the entire Jewish population wherever he gained control," finds no documentary place at all for illustrating this unique feature, and for possibly linking it to Western Civilization. He has instead the following overreaching generalization: "When we look back on two terrible World Wars, on concentration and extermination camps unprecedented in their horror, on the most oppressive and totalitarian political systems that man has ever known, and on such cultural phenomena as surrealist and abstract art, free association literature, and atonal music, the argument for change and revolution may seem quite convincing. Yet the continued advance of science and technology, the prevalence of secularism, rationalism, and materialism, the obvious vitality of nationalism and above all, the spread of all the key themes of

Western Civilization into the economically underdeveloped, formerly colonial areas of Asia and Africa clearly link our era with the main themes of Western Civilization since the Renaissance."<sup>19</sup>

Two readily available collections point to alternative criteria for including documentary evidence. The editors of *Man in Contemporary Society: A Source Book Prepared Under the Direction of the Contemporary Civilization Staff of Columbia College* (Columbia University, New York, 1962) include selections from Hanna Arendt's essay on "The Concentration Camps," Erich Fromm's Nazi chapter in his "Escape from Freedom," and "the Graebe Memorandum" graphically portraying the operation of a mobile killing unit. The editors recognize the inadequacy of our capacities to comprehend totalitarianism and violence as political phenomena of our century. "There is little after all in the history of Western Civilization, from the viewpoint that history has been studied in the past two hundred years, which would prepare us for the terror of the Graebe Memorandum, remembering that this was not an individual aberration but the deliberate and even 'normal' act of political authority."

Eugene Weber shares these views of the Columbia University editors, but by his selection of documents he demonstrates his awareness of the historic role played by Gentile-Jewish relations in bringing Western Man face to face with the terror of the Graebe Memorandum.<sup>20</sup> In his *Western Tradition* he asks Michael François to speak to the point by selecting passages from his article "Against Oblivion" first published in 1956 by a French periodical. Addressing himself to "the organization of oblivion" François examines its motive powers. Does it derive from a special sensitivity to the horrors of Nazism? "There is no truth in that, and the very people who seem determined on spreading eternal silence over Nazi crimes, who hardly care to touch let alone believe, the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, do not hesitate to furnish us with detailed descriptions of persecution in China or Bulgaria, high-pitched descriptions with all the accompaniment of torn out nails, burned flesh, raped women. Our decent respectable friend who covers his eyes when there is talk of Auschwitz, is hypnotized by the sight of blood, as soon as this blood has been shed by Communists and certain good Christians

<sup>19</sup> Arthur P. Mendel, *The Twentieth Century, 1914-1964* (New York: 1965).

<sup>20</sup> *The Western Tradition: From the Enlightenment to the Atomic Age* (Boston: 1959), pp. 784-791, 885-886.

who, for purely Christian reasons, preach that we should forget 'because ten years have passed,' find it very easy to skip back over whole centuries and evoke with indignation the death of Christian martyrs and stigmatize their murderers. The readiness to forgive and forget varies according to the quality (and sometimes according to the colour) of the killer and the killed."

One need not share François' conviction that anti-Communism, combined with Allied haste to rearm Germany, were behind the "organization of silence" to appreciate his understanding of the significance of Gentile-Jewish relations in European history: "Gradually, as the archives and memoirs give us access to the great and little secrets of the war, we discover the responsibilities which are still little known and which oblivion alone can maintain in a propitious shadow. The great trial of those who sinned by omission, the trial of those who failed to give assistance to people in peril of their lives, has never come up. We know now that in London, in Washington, in Moscow, even at the Holy See it was no longer possible to ignore in 1942 the project of mass extermination of the Jews. More was known sometimes in such places than among future victims . . ." With acute insight François continues: "If at that moment we had declared that we should quite simply prevent the murder of six million Jews (and many more non-Jews) we should have given its real dimensions to the war against Nazism—a more real dimension, in any case, a more authentic war aim than the phraseology of the Atlantic Charter. But between gentlemen it was impossible to fight for Jews! . . ."

[vi]

Since François published his article more and more of the great and little secrets of the Hitler period have been revealed. Much of what he suspected we now know for a fact. Today we have not only a far better knowledge and understanding of Nazi Germany but also know a great deal more about the behaviour of the Papacy and the Allies than when François made his charges. In addition, there has developed an enormous multi-language literature about Jewish behaviour which tells in detail and tries to comprehend the events of the 1930's and 1940's.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, it seems reasonable enough

<sup>21</sup> The following are especially useful for guiding historians to this literature: Institute of Contemporary History (London) which has published *The*

to ask textbook-writing historians to search for paradigms that would make it possible for them to write different kinds of textbooks so that future students of history would be better prepared for the Graebe Memorandum and all it represented.

Implicit in the foregoing remarks is the feeling that the approach of Palmer and Colton is inadequate. To be sure, for anyone who wants to work in the old paradigm theirs is the only admissible approach since their work makes room for the Jewish presence in European history.

To advance beyond Palmer and Colton, each historian must do his own careful thinking about the subject he studies and tries to pass on to the next generation. Characteristically each will justifiably insist on finding his own way. However, all must begin by confronting unvarnished truths about Gentile-Jewish relations and by at least exposing themselves to what Jewish historians have said about their people's past.

Three events of the 1960's make such a search especially appropriate at this time. The Fritz Fischer controversy about the origins of World War I (*Griff nach der Weltmacht*) in Germany has opened the floodgates for rewriting of German history.<sup>22</sup> American historians have begun to include Negro history and black-white relations within the framework of their texts; and there is some reason to believe that this involvement will lead them to the recognition that they have not fully understood group life in their own history. Finally the Six Day War in the Middle East has sharpened our understanding of Gentile-Jewish relations.<sup>23</sup> Taken together, and

*Wiener Library Bulletin* since November, 1964; Leo Baeck Institute (New York-London-Jerusalem) which has published its *Bulletin* since 1957 and its *Year Book* since 1956; Institut für Zeitgeschichte (München) which has published its *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte* since 1957 and whose multi-volume catalogue has been published by G. K. Hall, Boston, 1967; Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (Paris) which has published its quarterly Review *Le Monde Juif* since 1945, and many special publications also since 1945; and YAD VASHEM (Jerusalem) which has published its *Bulletins* since 1957, its *Studies* since 1957, and in conjunction with YIVO (New York) English-language bibliographies in its multi-volume bibliographical series.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Laqueur and George L. Mosse, eds., *1914: The Coming of the First World War* (New York: 1966); Geiss, *July 1914: The Outbreak of the First World War* (London: 1967); pp. 9-53, 361-375.

<sup>23</sup> A. Roy Eckhardt, *Elder and Younger Brother* (New York: 1968); Martin

properly understood, these developments provide the climate in which an honest search for new paradigms may begin.

Peretz, "The American Left and Israel," *Commentary* 44, pp. 27-34 (November, 1967); Arthur Hertzberg, "Israel and American Jewry," *ibid.*, pp. 69-73; Emil Fackenheim, "Jewish Faith and the Holocaust: A. Fragment," *Commentary* 46, pp. 30-37 (August, 1968); Jacob L. Talmon, "Israel Among the Nations," *Commentary* 45, pp. 32-51 (June, 1968); Leni Yahil, "The Holocaust in Jewish Historiography," *YAD VASHEM STUDIES VII*, pp. 57-73 (1968).