An Ill-Suited Memorial? Nazi Atrocities In Publications On The American Right, 1930-1985

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AN ILL-SUITED MEMORIAL?
NAZI ATROCITIES IN PUBLICATIONS ON THE AMERICAN RIGHT, 1930-1985

A Thesis Presented

by

Sandor Farkas

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The Faculty of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

From 1930 to 1985, reactions to Nazi atrocities in the Saturday Evening Post, Wall Street Journal, and National Review represent a sampling of the American political right’s understanding, memory, and use of the Holocaust. A touchstone for evil in American culture and politics, few scholarly works have explored the origins of the Holocaust’s outsized role in American political discourse, and fewer have seriously considered the American right’s role in this evolution. Nazi atrocities assumed their role in American politics because the novelty of Nazi crimes against Jews and their post-war consequences received persistent media attention. On the American political right, the perception that the Nazi persecution of Jews was a matter of conscience and not identity enabled periodicals on the right to universalize the Holocaust as a violation of liberal and Christian values. This vision of Nazism and Communism as aspects of a modern “totalitarian” threat invited a conservative reaction, conflicting with identity-based understandings of the Holocaust that called for progression beyond a longer history of persecution.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

An anonymous National Review author labeled the Eichmann trial “an ill-suited memorial to the Jews whose obdurate adherence to ancient laws made them so objectionable to the Nazi Reich.”¹ The American public knows little about those ancient laws, the Jews who variously struggled to adhere to them, what happened to those Jews under the Third Reich, or why those things happened.² It does know that whatever happened, its memory remains a prominent and controversial staple of political metaphor: the left compares immigration detention facilities to Third Reich concentration camps, the right uses the Nuremberg laws in the debate surrounding firearms regulation, and the Holocaust serves as a byword for evil. Academic work on American Holocaust memory has focused on the American Jewish community and American culture, largely neglecting the role of the Holocaust in post-war American politics, especially the American right.

The Holocaust assumed its role in American politics because the novelty of Nazi crimes against Jews and their post-war consequences received persistent media attention. On the American political right, the perception that the Nazi persecution of Jews was a matter of conscience and not identity enabled periodicals on the right to universalize the Holocaust as a violation of liberal and Christian values. This vision of Nazism and Communism as aspects of a modern “totalitarian” threat invited a conservative reaction, conflicting with identity-based understandings of the Holocaust that called for progression beyond a longer history of persecution.

The *Saturday Evening Post, Wall Street Journal*, and *National Review* represent a sampling of how the American political right understood, remembered, and used Nazi atrocities. An overview of the American right and its relationship with Jews offers context to early coverage of Jews and the National Socialist German Worker’s Party in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Wall Street Journal*. As Nazi persecution of Jews and the conflict in Europe intensified, the *Saturday Evening Post* represented a steadfastly anti-interventionist Old Right that appreciated Jewish assimilation while the *Wall Street Journal* focused on the moral ills of Nazism. Both publications’ reactions to the revelation of Nazi brutality reflected their appreciation of its significance, and the *Wall Street Journal*’s use of this meaning in its rapid pivot to the Soviet threat emphasized the importance of Nazi atrocities to the American right’s anti-Communist messaging.

Accountability for these atrocities and the conflict in Palestine brought the aftereffects of Nazi evils into conflict with the American right’s international agenda in the context of the burgeoning Cold War. With the addition of the *National Review*, representing the New Right, these publications made significant use of Nazi atrocities in their ongoing portrayal of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany as two manifestations of “totalitarianism.” The capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann was a major catalyst in the consolidation of Holocaust memory, and it brought attention to issues of Jewish identity in all three publications. In the decades following the trial, Holocaust memory took on a broader role in American politics, infiltrating a variety of issues and leading to historic debates.

Many works on American Holocaust memory mention the political right; few afford it significant attention until the 1990s ushered in increasing awareness of the
national importance of the American religious right. Much of the scholarship on the political right and the Holocaust has focused on the religious right beginning in the last two decades of the twentieth century into the presidency of George W. Bush. This scholarship primarily examines the political use of the Holocaust as a comparison and justification for humanitarian intervention in international conflicts, containment of Communism, and anti-abortion policies.

Peter Novick’s 1999 *The Holocaust in American Life* controversially pioneered a critical approach to the historical study of American Holocaust memory. Novick’s approach is the methodological basis for this thesis; Novick’s brief treatment of the American right demonstrates the need for additional research on the subject. His emphasis on the social construction of memory marginalized the role of politics in Holocaust memory and his focus on the Jewish community led to a lack of content addressing the American right. His two references to William F. Buckley and the *National Review* do not accurately reflect the magazine’s treatment of the Holocaust in its scope or in its character.³ Works responding to, and often criticizing, Novick similarly contain infrequent reference to the American right and the politics of Holocaust memory. Hasia Diner’s 2010 *We Remember with Reverence and Love* focused exclusively on Novick’s claims regarding the Jewish community and placed more emphasis on his claims regarding its memorialization of the Holocaust than on its claims regarding the role of the Holocaust in American support for the State of Israel.

The articles in this study represent a thorough search of the *Saturday Evening Post, Wall Street Journal,* and *National Review* for any and all mentions of Nazi atrocities in any name or in any context, as well as any mentions of Jews, the NSDAP, Hitler, Auschwitz, Eichmann, Bitburg, and a variety of noteworthy locations, people, events, and publications that might turn up undetected mentions of Nazi atrocities or provide context to a given publication’s coverage. Primary and secondary sources on American politics and Jews in America contributed to the context of the periodical sources. A limited pool of scholarly works on Holocaust memory helped to form a theoretical approach and background to this study as well as suggest paths of inquiry. Peter Novick’s 1999 *The Holocaust in American Life* offered a critical standard for this inquiry, although it includes only passing mention of the American right. William F. Buckley Jr.’s 1993 *In Search of Anti-Semitism,* a response to a variety of perceived accusations against him and the American right, included a moderate amount of content related to the Holocaust that helped guide research into specific events, publications, and individuals. A variety of works address American pre-war and wartime knowledge of and actions in response to Nazi atrocities. While many of these works offered essential context, they generally avoided the intellectual history of American politics undergirding these actions, with the exception of Deborah Lipstadt’s 1986 *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945,* which helped frame

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wartime coverage of Nazi atrocities. Many scholarly and popular books on American culture and Holocaust memory offer only basic coverage of its political dimensions, and all of these works avoid serious engagement with the American right.\(^5\)

The phrase “Holocaust memory” reflects American society’s current prevailing understanding of atrocities in the Third Reich: the Nazi German mass-murder of Jews as a discrete and unified phenomenon. “Nazi atrocities” represents the complex historical reality of legal persecution as well as irregular and systematic violence and murder of Jews and a variety of other groups at the hands of Germans, non-Germans, supporters of the NSDAP, and those with other political preferences. This broader terminology acknowledges the social construction of American memory of these acts, emphasizing the agency of political actors in formulating historical narratives.

Following a look at the evolution of the American right and Jewish-American politics, this study will consider the “Old Right’s” reactions to Hitler’s rise, the road to the Second World War, early reports on Nazi atrocities, and post-war revelations of the extent and nature of those atrocities. The right’s early post-war reactions centered on its

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primary goal of fighting Communism and foreshadowed later controversies in form, though not in magnitude. As memory of Nazi atrocities coalesced into a consciousness of a distinct and unified event, Israel’s abduction, trial, and execution of Adolf Eichmann forced the right to confront its own understanding of the Holocaust and the State of Israel. The American right became increasingly critical of public and academic memory surrounding NSDAP crimes as it perceived an inherent criticism of its own views and actions, and it began to lay and diminish blame for the Holocaust along political lines. It turned to the concept of “totalitarianism,” an academic conflation of fascist and Communist government, and found tepid new allies in the former anti-Stalinist left. The 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars tested and showcased the right’s support for Israel and further encouraged the use of the Third Reich’s murder of Jews, now cemented in public memory as the Holocaust, as a political comparison. Along with its own increasing use of Holocaust comparisons, the American right of the late 1970s and 1980s became increasingly concerned with perceived American cultures of victimhood. Following the Civil Rights era, the American right used Holocaust memory in its criticism of non-Jewish American minorities. While many on the Old Right opposed American entry into the Second World War and many on the right were continuously critical of public Holocaust memory, denial or justification of Third Reich attitudes and atrocities against Jews rarely appeared in its publishing, even among groups such as the America First Committee and the John Birch Society. That changed in the 1980s and 1990s, when Holocaust denial and other anti-Jewish sentiments found mainstream voices on the American right and established their own camps just outside the gates from which they
were summarily thrown. The American right’s relationship with Nazi atrocity memory reveals how major events, political expedience, and personal values brought the Holocaust to the forefront of America’s conception of evil.
CHAPTER 2: THE AMERICAN RIGHT

The Evolution of the American Right and its Relationship with Jews: 1865-1945

The American right’s early reactions to Nazism’s views on and treatment of Jews was much like the American right itself throughout the same period: muddled and lacking direction. The Old Right and its successors found common cause in their opposition to Communism and every whiff of government social welfare or incursion into private industry and finance. They only considered American Jews when they offered significant support or opposition to these ends, and this concern muted their public association of Jews with Communism. Along with their commitment to individual liberty and their Christian values, it ensured that they condemned Nazi anti-Jewish acts. While recognizing American Jews as a constituency, their condemnation, and later memorialization, of Nazi atrocities was built on their liberal and Christian values and not on a conception of Jews as a uniquely-persecuted group, either historically or contemporarily. In this manner, Nazi atrocities against Jews became a convenient example of the dangers of “totalitarian” illiberal and atheistic government. With Nazism in ruins, this left Communism, which unlike Nazism, they considered a direct threat to America.

2.1 The Post-Civil-War Right

What began as a loose and moralistic anti-Democratic Party coalition prior to the American Civil War emerged from the Reconstruction Era as a party with its own distinct identity. According to American electoral historian Paul Kleppner, the Republican Party of the 1870s to the early 1890s represented Yankee character, pietistic and evangelical
beliefs, and federalist patriotism. Increasing non-Protestant immigration moderated Republican support for liquor prohibition, which drove some Yankee Prohibitionists away, and began to erode Republican dominance of the Northeast and especially the Midwest. Labor crises contributed to a trickle of voters leaving the Republican Party for labor-friendly leftist parties or the Democratic Party. Political identity in the South persistently followed racial lines and derivative class and regional affiliations. Black voters and poorer Southern Highland white voters, who opposed tidewater aristocratic culture while sharing its racial sensibilities (even in the absence of a significant black population), constituted the majority of Republican support in the South. In areas of the South and border states with significant black populations, party affiliation was primarily racial. In areas with less racial diversity, voters tended to affiliate along religious and class lines.

Protestant sects that largely voted Democratic emphasized individualism, sin, and salvation, while Protestant sects that voted Republican were often more concerned with communal and societal morality. Most Roman Catholics and liturgical Protestants were Democrats, with the notable exception of those with early American ties who shared Republican nativist sentiments. American Jews usually voted along the lines of region, class, wave of immigration, and denomination. More traditional communities tended to support Democrats, especially in the South, while Reform and other liberal communities,

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especially refugees from European revolutions, supported Republicans. In a similar fashion to Catholics, older communities of economically established and culturally assimilated Jews supported nativist candidates in order to mitigate their cultural affiliation with less-assimilated Jewish immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe. Many American Jews, capitalizing on their historical experience and American economic and religious liberalism, were engaged in mercantile and industrial professions, and they voted according to their economic interests, which usually meant in line with their Republican communities. The major exception to this trend was that Jews were white where race mattered, and as such, Southern-born Jews often aligned with Democrats in order to maintain a racial system that privileged them and shielded them from persecution.⁹

It is not necessary to identify a “right” in this foundational period of modern American partisan identity. Race, regional and class economic interests, and religious attitudes drove party platforms and affiliation, with both major parties favoring liberal, conservative, progressive, and social positions when it suited their broader interests. Republican pragmatism and industrial economic interests as well as the roles of race, social morality, and immigration in American politics would all prove essential factors in the formation of the American right and American political reactions to Nazi atrocities.

Following this post-American-Civil-War era of American growth that culminated with the Gilded Age, a depression in 1893 led to a partisan realignment and new dominant issues in American politics. Race and immigration remained major cultural

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issues, while the hottest points of political contention centered around the now-booming economy and its relationship with the government. Northern and urban Republicans supported industrial and business interests, which included high tariffs and government non-intervention. They also represented older Yankee moralist and nativist sentiments, supporting Prohibition and restrictive immigration policies. The Democratic Party became a loose coalition of white southerners, rural interests, and new immigrant populations. Threatened by rapid industrialization dominated by northerners, Democrats advocated low tariffs, anti-monopoly policies, government regulation of big businesses, liberal immigration policies, and, prior to the intervention of Southern Baptists and later after its failure, opposition to Prohibition. As the west and mid-west industrialized, Republicans saw initial electoral success in these battleground territories.

Also known as the “Progressive Era,” elements of both parties championed policies of social and political reform to address the growing pains of an increasingly industrial country coping with increased immigration, urbanization, and corruption. Government and political reforms targeted corrupt party machines and ostensibly promoted more direct democracy, although they had the effect of sapping the power of Democratic populism and supporting Republican capital interests. Muck-raking mass media pushed for government regulation of corporate bad practices, and Progressives called for anti-trust legislation. Democratic populists and the left of the Republican Party supported and enacted many of these measures. Many Progressive causes championed social advancement through scientific means, including public schooling and eugenics. The country’s largely Democratic Catholic population became the most vocal opponent
of the latter policy especially. Progressives broadly supported enfranchising women and the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, two policies grounded in Yankee and pietist moralism.\textsuperscript{10}

Jewish political participation did not substantially change during this period, although one prior trend began to change how American Jews saw their country and themselves. The dramatic increase in Jewish immigration to American, particularly from Eastern Europe, led to an increase in anti-Jewish sentiment among American nativists and those other immigrant populations that harbored old prejudices, wanted to shield themselves from bigotry, or resented Jewish success. This new immigrant majority of American Jewry was largely traditionally observant and came from areas with significant anti-Jewish sentiment and violence. While they desired social acceptance on an individual level, they simultaneously wanted to preserve their Jewish ethnic and religious identity and customs for themselves and their descendants. The absence of significant persecution and the attractiveness of assimilation posed a new challenge, and Jewish leaders formulated a variety of strategies, ranging from aligning themselves with cultural Zionism and the revival of a Hebrew nation in Palestine to supplementing, instead of replacing, the American public school system with a system of Jewish education. Other immigrants abandoned their orthodox practices and flocked to America’s previously-dominant Reform congregations.\textsuperscript{11}

While many older American Jewish populations continued to see themselves as Americans who practiced Judaism and resented the waves of Jewish immigration, most American Jews became increasingly conscious of their minority status and threats to their religious practice. This made the left wing of the Democratic Party and its anti-nativism attractive, although anti-Jewish hatred from the Democratic right, such as the Ku Klux Klan lynching of Leo Frank, prevented a broad shift in Jewish voting.\textsuperscript{12}

These waves of immigration also saw a new kind of Jews arrive in America, the ideological descendants of the Jewish refugees from the 1848 liberal revolutions: Jewish socialists and Communists. Concentrated in New York’s Lower East Side and Milwaukee, socialist Jews often found themselves in conflict with the established immigrant political machines typical of the Democratic Party. Opposed to the concept of national and religious identity, it grew out of Jewish labor unions and established its own media, most prominently the \textit{Forverts}. Combined with the visible presence of Jews in international socialist movements, this significant yet limited American Jewish Socialist movement served as fodder for the anti-socialist right of both parties to paint Jews and Jewish immigration as part of the broader red scare.\textsuperscript{13}

Most of those Jews who identified as orthodox did not eagerly attempt to assimilate their culture or religious practice, setting up their own religious schools and forming more insular communities. Historically skeptical of politics, they shared the moralist sensibilities of northern Republicans and feared the prejudices of their fellow

immigrants. Republican Jews began to form their own institutions, most prominently Jacob Saphirstein’s Yiddish paper, the *Morgen Zhurnal*. Orthodox Jewish Republicans focused their efforts on promoting the interests of their coreligionists around the world and advocating for American policies towards religion that furthered their own interests. These causes ranged from diplomatic rebukes over Russia’s Jewish policies and supporting liberal American immigration policies to opposing official displays of Christianity in public schools. They couched these policies, which sometimes conflicted with Republican policies, in a conception of American values that imitated Republican conceptions of liberty and the American ideal. They also brought a pragmatism and cunning to American politics that they had developed over centuries of political marginalization, displaying a remarkable ability to cross party lines and orchestrate complex deals.\(^\text{14}\)

Prior to the Great Depression, the American right was not confined to either party, and it embraced both conservative and progressive policies. Its foundation became economic liberalism and it grew to represent a broad and evolving cultural conservatism. The stronger of these two was economic liberalism, which was also the core of the Republican Party. Religion, race, and immigration formed American cultural blocks and their political preferences. Of these three factors, race was the most consistent: whites in areas with significant black populations and poor whites had a social and economic interest in maintaining America’s racial system and its accompanying policies and practices. Those who came from older American populations had an economic interest in

opposing immigration, which often paired with xenophobia or the fear of increased bias against their ethnic or religious background if more immigrants from that background came to America. Religion spurred conservative moralist policies, such as pietistic support for Prohibition, and formed the basis for conservative opposition to progressive policies, such as Catholic opposition to eugenics. Populism became a significant force on both the right and the left, opposing immigration in the Republican Party and demanding corporate and social reforms in the Democratic Party. The “Old Right” of this period is best understood as a bi-partisan coalition of those who opposed change, particularly economic and cultural change, while holding diverse opinions on social policy. As Hitler and the NSDAP rose to power between the wars, the Old Right admired their economic works and nationalism while maintaining skepticism of their socialist, anti-democratic, anti-religious, and eugenicist leanings.

2.2 Diese Welt, Jennawelt, aun Roosevelt\textsuperscript{15}

The Great Depression threw these alignments into chaos, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt shepherded America through and into a new era of American life and politics. Roosevelt defeated President Herbert Hoover in a landslide 1932 election that served as a referendum on economically liberal Republican policies amid the Great Depression. Serving four terms until his death just before the end of the Second World War in 1945, the political system he built in support of his New Deal laid the groundwork for the American left and the Democratic Party throughout the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{15} Literally, “This World, the Next World, and Roosevelt,” this Yiddish saying satirized the perceived enthusiastic and universal support for Roosevelt within the American Jewish community by playing on the last syllable of the president’s name, which resembles the Yiddish word for “world,” and adding it to a Jewish phrase referencing the importance of both this world and the world to come.
Historians debate the degree to which the New Deal represented a break with or a continuation of bipartisan progressive policies.

A masterful politician, Roosevelt assembled a coalition in support of his actions by carefully co-opting popular policies to both his left and his right while maintaining distance from the socialists and other divisive factions. The New Deal’s federal relief, social welfare, and economic intervention appealed to poor Americans as well as a growing middle class. Rivaling the Democratic Party’s established political machines, Roosevelt formed a strong coalition with organized labor interests. The New Deal also made special provisions for minority groups, including Native, black, Catholic, and Jewish Americans, which fueled these groups’ support for Roosevelt and the Democratic Party.

Opposition to Roosevelt and the New Deal came from the right wing of both the Republican and Democratic parties, coalescing around support for liberal economic policy and opposition to government expansion, federalization, and intervention. This coalition feared that the New Deal had opened a door for socialism in America, and that Roosevelt’s style of politics, including his political machine and threats of court packing, was a threat to the traditions of American republicanism. Roosevelt’s patronage of and popularity with America’s racial and immigrant minorities, combined with his appeal to poor white voters, appeared to threaten the electoral prospects of the bipartisan right and economic liberalism. With the exception of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a moderate Republican who continued much of his predecessors economic and social policies, these fears proved well-founded. Although the broader American right continued to dominate
Congress, it was not until Senator Barry Goldwater and President Richard Nixon broke with the Republican Party’s more moderate and culturally liberal northern wing and employed the “Southern Strategy” of using racial fears to appeal to poor southern whites that the Republican Party began to regain its former dominance.16

Roosevelt appealed to Jewish interests when he campaigned for the Jewish vote, and he privately echoed anti-Jewish sentiments, as well as other anti-minority biases, when he spoke to constituencies that held those views. During his first term in office, he stood by as the NSDAP persecuted Jews, refusing to antagonize possible allies with anything that could be seen as pandering to the Jews. Just before his 1936 reelection, he met with Jewish leaders for the first time, and during his second term, he began to publicly oppose Jewish persecution, support a Jewish homeland in Palestine, push for other countries to accept Jewish refugees, and even use his executive powers to admit more Jewish immigrants. As war loomed in 1939, Roosevelt abandoned such activism for fear that it would hinder his ability to oppose isolationists and prepare America for intervention if it appeared he was doing so on behalf of the Jews. By 1943, Roosevelt resumed publicly denouncing Hitler’s Jew hatred and persecution, and, under mounting Jewish pressure, he created the War Refugee Board to aid the escape of Jews from Europe and their post-war resettlement.17 Historian David S. Wyman argued in his 1984 work, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941–1945*, that Jewish

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leadership, the Allied Powers, and Roosevelt in particular failed to adequately respond to
the ongoing murder of European Jews, the latter two on account of their anti-Jewish
bias. Many other scholars have echoed these claims, prominently including Rafael
Medoff. Regarding the claims about Roosevelt, historians Richard Breitman and Allan
J. Lichtman convincingly demonstrate in their 2013 *FDR and the Jews* that Roosevelt
likely held no antipathy toward Jews, opposed Jew hatred, and undertook his policies and
actions regarding the persecution of the Jews according to what he believed was the best
strategy to defeat Hitler and put an end to all Nazi atrocities.

Wartime knowledge of and actions in response to Nazi atrocities have been
controversial subjects at least since Allied soldiers encountered atrocity sites on a large
scale. Many Jews and non-Jews have criticized Allied leaders, governments, and
institutions, such as the Catholic Church, for failing to do more to halt or temper
atrocities. Both European Jewish leadership and their international counterparts have also
faced intense scrutiny for everything from collaborating with the Third Reich to failing to
relay information about atrocities to the broader public. These accusations and the
responses to them are an important part of political memory and feature prominently in
later political debates surrounding Nazi atrocity memory. The question of “Who knew
what, when?” will feature in a comparison of wartime media coverage of NSDAP anti-
Jewish policies and actions. It is this author’s view that the debate surrounding Allied
action (or lack thereof), particularly the Auschwitz bombing debate, primarily revolves

around strategic and moral hypotheticals which historians can only inform, not judge.

The available academic scholarship across disciplines indicates that the Allied military could have taken additional actions regarding the Third Reich’s murder of Jews and that possible military actions were so limited in possible scope, unlikely to succeed, and costly in human and material resources that contemporary military leadership did not seriously consider them. This does not rule out the possibility that anti-Jewish bias or apathy played a role in these or any other Allied military decisions, and it does not preclude the possibility that there were other actions that, in hindsight, could have saved more lives. It also does not address the more complex question of whether Allied government informational and diplomatic strategies regarding the murder of Jews could have been more effective and whether anti-Jewish sentiments hindered these efforts. This study will consider the debate surrounding Allied actions as a form of political memory while avoiding further judgment on its merits.²⁰

The Great Depression and Roosevelt’s response to it dramatically and, to date, permanently altered the voting pattern of American Jews. As a disproportionately urban immigrant population, American Jewry experienced significant hardships following the crash. Roosevelt’s policies offered poor Jews hope and appealed to wealthier Jews’ sense of communal responsibility. His liberalism and discreet coalition building distanced him from conservative Democrats’ bigotry and offered Jews a chance at success in America without threatening their identities.²¹

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The Saturday Evening Post and Wall Street Journal, which had flouted the yellow journalism of earlier decades, became the media redoubt of the Old Right in American media through the 1940s. Along with the America First Committee, these outlets provide a window into the American right’s reaction to NSDAP treatment of Jews prior to the U.S. entry into the war. While the Post began to decline in political stature, National Review emerged in 1955 as the voice of the paleo-conservatives. Commentary, which began publishing in 1945 as a predominantly leftist Jewish magazine, became the refuge of the anti-Stalinist left. The dialogue between these reluctant allies showcases the role that anti-Communism and relations with American Jews played in the right’s early post-war references to Nazi atrocities.
CHAPTER 3: AMERICA FIRST

The Saturday Evening Post, Wall Street Journal, and the Road to War: 1931-1942

The movement against American intervention in the Second World War retains a popular association with the Old Right and pro-Nazi, anti-Jewish sentiment. While the Old Right was a bastion of anti-interventionist sentiment, as seen in the Saturday Evening Post’s editorials, it maintained robust public opposition to Nazism for its anti-liberal ideology and actions, including its persecution of Jews. The Old Right understood this persecution as antithetical to the American liberal tradition of freedom of conscience, even as it idealized Jewish assimilation and opposed accepting Jewish refugees. The Wall Street Journal, with its foundation in liberal economics and its unrepentantly Catholic immigrant editor Thomas Woodlock, did not take the same hard line against the war or Jewish immigration. Echoing the Old Right’s critique of Nazism’s perceived illiberal economics, its critique of Nazi ideology, including Nazi persecution of Jews, focused on the party’s perceived irreligion and the superiority of America’s religious conservatism.

If the Saturday Evening Post’s critique of Nazi religious intolerance reflected a traditional American Protestant anti-Catholic bias, the Wall Street Journal conservative Christian critique of Nazism transplanted a Catholic traditionalism into an American Puritan tradition. This marriage of liberalism and traditionalist Christian rhetoric would later define a New Right and the National Review. While it shared the Old Right’s understanding of Nazi persecution as an issue of freedom of conscience, it understood this fundamental American liberty as a shield against progressive government interference with traditional religious practice, not a license for social dissent.
3.1 The *Saturday Evening Post*

The *Saturday Evening Post*’s masthead of the 1930s proclaimed its lineage to Benjamin Franklin’s 1728 *Pennsylvania Gazette*. While sharing a printshop is a tenuous basis for such a claim, it reflects the popular image that the paper cultivated from its true 1821 naissance to the end of the nineteenth century: a variety publication that eschewed sensationalism in favor of a vernacular American character. Journalistic enterpriser Cyrus Curtis purchased the failing paper in 1897 and converted it into a magazine that embodied his own passion for business and the prevailing entrepreneurial spirit of the dawning Progressive Era. Under Curtis, who controlled a vast publishing empire until 1932, a year before his death, *The Saturday Evening Post* pioneered the strategy of selling issues below cost and relying on advertising revenue for profit. Curtis hired failed industrialist George Horace Lorimer, the son of a Boston Baptist minister, to edit his new venture. Lorimer, whose tenure ended with his death in 1937, presided over the publication’s heyday and displayed a remarkable knack for reflecting a common American sensibility in its pages. Lorimer and his successors, Wesley Winans Stout (1937-1942) and Ben Hibbs (1942-1963), produced a magazine that privileged business while celebrating a centrist American romanticism and entertaining its readers with fiction and art, which notably included works with positive depictions of Jews.22, 23

From 1922 until 1942, Garet Garrett served as a senior editorialist, leading the magazine’s coverage of economic issues. A confident of President Hoover who had worked his way up from a printer’s assistant, Garrett identified as a conservative of the Old Right. The America he sought to conserve was rooted in liberal economics and small-government republicanism, and his writing emphasized individualism and government nonintervention in affairs at home and abroad. Garrett led the *Saturday Evening Post* first in opposition to forgiving European debt from the First World War, then in denouncing President Roosevelt and his New Deal. As tensions over Hitler’s aggression rose and war broke out in Europe, Garrett vocally opposed American intervention.24

Garrett was not a fascist or fascist sympathizer; in his 1935 novel depicting a fascist America, *It Can’t Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis listed him among those who would oppose a fascist regime on liberal democratic grounds. Prior to his work at the *Post*, Garrett wrote in emphatic opposition to the First World War and the prospect of American entry, despite his prediction that both would lead to American economic flourishing. He labeled war unchristian and America a Christian nation, the latter based off its underlying societal values and not church attendance. Garrett also pushed his readers to reflect on their racism against the Japanese, although he did not urge them to forsake their prejudices, only to trade with the new industrial power despite their personal feelings.25 While an editor at the *New York Times*, Garrett demurred at publisher Adolph

Ochs’s response to the 1915 lynching of a Jewish factory foreman, Leo Frank, in Georgia. While he believed that there was insufficient evidence to convict Frank, Garrett was skeptical of the haste and intensity with which Ochs defended Frank. Garrett saw Ochs’s unflinching defense of Frank as an example of Jewish tribalism and the Georgian reaction to that defense as Christian tribalism. It particularly bothered him that Ochs, who he greatly admired, failed to see this in himself or acknowledge it in others. Garrett was a tribalist, an American nationalist, and his objection was not to others’ tribalism, but to others denial of their own tribalism or the insistence that any people should be obligated to forfeit their own interests in favor of others’ interests. It was this principle that constituted his primary objection to the forgiveness of American war loans to its European allies and led him to sympathize with Germans’ refusal to pay war reparations. America, Garrett believed, had no obligations to foreign states, systems, or emigrants seeking a better life and carrying with them insidious collectivist ideologies.

Following Roosevelt’s election, Garrett led the Saturday Evening Post’s crusade against the New Deal on the grounds that it was not economically sound and would expand the American presidency, leading to despotism and government encroachment on the individual domain. In a series of Saturday Evening Post editorials responding to increasing interventionist rhetoric, Garrett accused American politicians of “balcony manner,” comparing their declarations of America’s duty or intent to oppose dictatorial

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26 Ramsey, Unsanctioned Voice, 47-53.
governments to the speech of those governments’ leaders.\(^{29}\) His poetic observation that, “There is all at once an intellectual cult of interventionists [sic]. The feet of many pacifists are running in the paths toward war. The American character is inhabited by a strong crusader spirit,”\(^{30}\) was not a contradiction to his and later the America First Committee’s claim that the American people opposed intervention against the dictatorial powers, but a lament that the American people were falling victim to the warmongering of their country’s own illiberal leaders in the same way that they had fallen for the socialist and illiberal New Deal. Garrett’s editorials show a steadfast commitment to liberal democracy coupled with an equally strong belief that intervention in foreign affairs beyond America’s regional interests, such as America’s entry in the First World War, was antithetical to both liberal democracy and the best interests of the American people.

Dorothy Thompson penned the *Saturday Evening Post*’s first significant coverage of the increasingly influential National Socialist German Workers’ Party in May 1931, taking an almost comic approach to “the awkward Austrian with the Charlie Chaplin mustache” and his sidekick, “the wizened, club-footed and frenetic Doctor Goebels [sic].”\(^{31}\) Thompson’s surprisingly accurate appraisal of NSDAP ideology included such verbiage as “Ultra-Nationalistic,” and referred to “antisemitism.” Most of the four-page spread focused on lampooning the German and Fascist Italian economies, as well as the NSDAP opposition to continued war reparations, although it concluded with a brief note


\(^{30}\) Garrett, *Defend America First*, 23.

describing the party as “conservative” and on the “Right.” The *Saturday Evening Post* reported every step in Hitler’s ascent to power with passive skepticism that it would continue beyond the given dilemma. While it strongly opposed an end to war reparations and held clear disdain for the NSDAP and its leaders, it maintained a basic empathy for the welfare and wounded pride of the German people. While Jews were hardly the focus of the newspaper’s coverage, they often merited brief mention. Thompson noted in 1933 that the NSDAP believed Jews, who the party tied to bankers, to be an “alien race,” and that Hitler planned, “in some manner not quite clear—purge the country of the influence of international finance.”

Reflecting on Hitler’s *fait accompli* under the appropriate headline “Back to Blood and Iron: Germany Goes German Again,” Thompson summarized his message as “an appeal to fear, hatred, envy and, above all, ignorance” and marveled at the stupidity of “the war against the Jews, who have been a fraction of the population as long as there has been a German nation.” She sought to explain NSDAP Judeophobia with the proposition that, “Jews are dangerous, because they have relatives elsewhere and are notoriously internationalist;” also noting that the party harbored hatred for Catholics and other Christian religious groups. Her most optimistic hope that, “Perhaps the awakened war spirit in Germany will burn itself out upon Germany’s own population. Then some

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32 Thompson, “Poverty De Luxe,” 152.
thousands of Social Democrats and Jews may not have suffered in vain,” demonstrates how accurately she perceived NSDAP hatred for its internal enemies.35

As German persecution intensified, the Saturday Evening Post and its favored Berlin correspondent, Dorothy Thompson, devoted increasing coverage to the Jewish issue, with a focus on the government’s actions and the philosophical origins of its Jew-hatred, including Houston Stewart Chamberlin’s pseudoscientific Wagnerian theories.36 Contrary to this view of German Jew-hatred as a product of modern philosophy, British veteran Frederick Britten Austin saw Hitler’s actions against Jews as a revival of “medieval” ideas. Speaking to a German friend, Austin reported that this revival was due to the perception that Jewish socialists and Communists had betrayed Germany, Jews were disproportionally economically privileged, and Jews were corrupting German culture. In contrast to this justification, Austin’s friend indicated that his primary break with Hitler was over his “cruel and stupid” treatment of the Jews and racial theories, as it was obvious to him that most Jews were not responsible for the aforementioned Jewish sins.37 Austin’s German was not alone in faulting the Jews for problems stemming from the First World War; in a short front-page note decrying the prospect of a second war, an anonymous Saturday Evening Post writer decried “Uncle Shylock, the international sucker” for profiting off the conflict. While this minor note could conceivably lack anti-

35 Dorothy Thompson, “Back to Blood and Iron,” Saturday Evening Post 205, no. 45 (May 6, 1933): 3–74. In this piece, Thompson continues her trend of making acute observations, noting the philosophical and artistic differences between Mussolini’s Fascism and Hitler’s Nazism.

36 Dorothy Thompson, “Room to Breathe In,” Saturday Evening Post 205, no. 52 (June 24, 1933): 3–54. Thompson compares Hitler’s regime to the philosophy of Aldous Huxley and notes various philosophical influences on NSDAP Jew-hatred, including Houston Stewart Chamberlain. She then discusses the boycott of Jewish businesses and growing body of laws excluding Jews.

37 F. Britten Austin, “Old-Time Germany Looks at Hitler,” Saturday Evening Post 206, no. 6 (August 5, 1933): 10–64.
Jewish intent and holds only tenuous significance, it demonstrates that the paper’s editors understood there to be a portion of Americans who harbored resentments about the previous war, held apprehensions about a second war, and coded these feelings in similar language to their German counterparts.38

“No We Want More Mouths to Feed?” asked a similar bulletin six months later. Without mentioning Jews, the article questioned the wisdom of welcoming refugees of Germany persecution, and argued for tighter immigration laws and caution regarding intervention.39 In an article on the Hitler Youth, New Englander and chief European correspondent Kenneth Roberts introduced the concept of a “Totalitarian State,” defining it as, “a state in which those in power stick their fingers and noses into every existing human activity, set themselves up as the only judges of what can rightly be done, said, written and thought, and forbid by force and terrorist tactics any sort of criticism, open disagreement, freedom of opinion, or political opposition.”40 While the Saturday Evening Post continued to steadfastly oppose legislation designed to ease immigration quotas on victims of persecution abroad, it simultaneously opposed laws that it saw as imposing discriminatory restrictions on legal American immigrants as unethical government overreach.41

By late 1934, the Saturday Evening Post ceased reporting on breaking news relating to the Third Reich. Sporadic reports on events in Europe referred to Hitler and heightening tensions, although most of these brief mentions focused only on those things

that might affect the United States, such as the subject of war reparations. In contrast to its prior concern for the Jews, it did not report on or even mention the anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws of 1935 or the November 1938 “Kristallnacht” Pogrom.

This abruptly changed in March of 1939 when the *Saturday Evening Post* published a six-page feature on Jew-hatred in politics. Describing the “anti-Jewish movement” as a “worldwide” phenomenon that originated with the NSDAP, it argued that “anti-Semitism” was not merely “hooliganism and brutality and senseless race prejudice” but also “a deliberate, systematic policy, aimed at definite objectives.” Demaree Bess, then the *Saturday Evening Post’s* European correspondent, argued that Americans’ history of emotional responses to domestic and international “outrages” helped make persecution part of “international power politics.”

“Anti-Semitism,” Bess wrote, had existed “even before our Christian era” in many areas, including Germany, although Adolf Hitler had taken it to a new extreme in philosophy and action. He explained that in addition to “fanatical religious persecution for its own sake,” Hitler was using “anti-Semitism” to manipulate international affairs, the domestic economy, and international migration. Bess’s instrumental theory of anti-Jewish action posited that Italy and Japan’s conversion to the anti-Jewish cause was part of those powers’ plan to create a cohesive enemy in what would later become the Allied Powers.

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Bess specifically elaborated his belief that Hitler and especially Mussolini were using Jew-hatred as a tool to confound British interests in the Mediterranean by fomenting Jew hatred and anti-British sentiment among the Arabs. In a less-compelling example, he explained Japan’s anti-Jewish stance as a method of foiling Russian support for China by fueling anti-Jewish-Bolshevik sentiment in Eastern Europe. While Bess emphatically stated that “Jews are not today especially prominent” in Soviet administration, he argued that Hitlerian conflation of Jews and Communists was an attempt to dissuade Eastern European peoples from aligning with the Soviet Union by playing on their long-standing anti-Jewish sentiment. Explaining the role of “anti-Semitism” in the Third Reich’s domestic economy, Bess wrote that extreme Nazism was “actually another form of Bolshevism,” describing it as an ideology on the “left.”

Overpopulation, Bess wrote, was another origin of Jew-hatred, and he argued that Hitler was deliberately using Jewish refugees to free up living space for Germans and overburden democratic powers. Bess’s solution was simple: instead of accepting additional Jewish refugees, resettle them in Germany’s former West African colonies.

Bess’s instrumental analysis of German and Axis anti-Jewish actions runs counter to current historical consensus regarding most of his examples, such as Italy’s adoption of anti-Jewish legislation. It also illustrates an earnest attempt to tackle the senseless hatred and violence of these actions; Bess concluded that Americans should continue to “play our full part in helping to solve the tremendous humanitarian problems created by anti-

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Semitism's reactions upon millions of unfortunate Jews.” This “full part,” according to Bess, included avoiding conflict with the Axis, rejecting additional refugees, and opposing the economic collectivist left, which he highlighted with a comparison of the NSDAP’s pogroms to American labor unions’ intimidation tactics.

The *Saturday Evening Post* continued to tackle the issue of Jew-hatred for the remainder of 1939. As the conflict in Europe escalated, the *Saturday Evening Post* did not neglect the escalating measures against Jews. In its coverage of Germany’s invasion and annexation of Czechoslovakia, it devoted considerable space to relating the plight of Czech Jews, noting the Czechs’ attempts to resist German demands for anti-Jewish legislation and actions. Ira Jewell Williams, Jr. analyzed Adolf Hitler through an early look at an English translation of *Mein Kampf*, contemptuously dismissing his racial theories as unscientific and arguing that Hitler was conscientiously using the Jews as a “universal scapegoat,” or “a single devil.” Williams then proclaimed that, “The world knows only a fraction of the horrible and bitter fruit of this overmastering hatred,” and proceeded to describe the November Pogrom and denounce Jew-hatred.

Nora Waln, a reporter in Germany whose book on the rise of the NSDAP outsold *Mein Kampf* in American that year, penned an article on the German people’s reaction to National Socialism. She described children who wholeheartedly accept the gospel of Jew-hatred as well as children who defied the party line and stood up for Jews.

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51 Demaree Bess, “Nazi Germany’s First Colony,” *Saturday Evening Post* 212, no. 9 (August 26, 1939): 23–49.
Stanley High, a speech writer for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, penned a front-page feature on fascists in America, arguing they were without leader since the death of Huey P. Long. Providing an overview of American fascist organizations and figures, he argued that American fascism was more closely related to Hitler’s National Socialism than Mussolini’s Fascism and that it originated from the same spirit as and consciously emulated the Ku Klux Klan.\(^\text{54}\) The Saturday Evening Post was not desperate for writers willing to write a seven-page cover story, yet it chose a proponent of the New Deal to lay down its editorial line on what constituted fascism in America. High went so far as to note that William Dudley Pelley, leader of the Silver Shirts, labeled the New Deal as the “Jew Deal.” High declined to go any further; the Saturday Evening Post could confidently assure its readers that a New-Deal-Democrat had declared the country’s mainstream political right free from fascism.

The Saturday Evening Post took a similar approach with its first full-length guest opinion piece on intervention by handing it to Reform Jew and prominent left-leaning journalist Milton S. Mayer. Mayer presented typical pacifist and left-isolationist arguments for non-intervention, supplementing them with his opinion that pogroms had happened many times before and would happen again, and that persecution was an unfortunate part of human nature.\(^\text{55}\) The paper placed considerable weight on eschewing Jew hatred, devoting the first bulletin of an issue to combating a rumor that its ostensible founder, Benjamin Franklin, had given a speech against the Jews.\(^\text{56}\)

\(^{54}\) Stanley High, “Star-Spangled Fascists,” Saturday Evening Post 211, no. 48 (May 27, 1939): 5–73.

\(^{55}\) Milton S. Mayer, “I Think I’ll Sit This One Out,” Saturday Evening Post 212, no. 15 (October 7, 1939): 23–100.

As the European war intensified and the Third Reich began to consolidate its gains, the *Saturday Evening Post* continued to report on its treatment of Jews. A February, 1940 bulletin simply noted the decrease in the Reich’s Jewish population due to emigration. In a May, 1940 article arguing that the root of Europe’s problems was simple “too many Germans,” Wallace R. Deuel briefly described the actual events of the November Pogrom, noting for the first time in the paper’s coverage that some Jews died, the authorities set up ghettos, and that “Jews were sent to concentration camps.” Deuel, a former Berlin correspondent who served in the OSS as a political advisor to General Eisenhower and remained in intelligence following the war, included this brief tale of horrors against “defenseless Jews” for the sole purpose of illustrating how the Germans intended to treat their defeated enemies. Reports on atrocities against Jews usually occurred within the context of reports on other atrocities, such as an April 1940 article offering a first-hand account of the deportation of Poles to the East and resettlement of Germans in their former homes. Among a variety of photographs prefacing six pages of detailed descriptions of railway deportations and camps, the article included an image of a Jewish refugee praying, although it made no other mention of Jews.

The *Saturday Evening Post* also printed various accounts from those refugees who were both privileged and lucky enough to find welcome in the United States. One account made brief mention of hiding Jews from the Gestapo. Hermann Ullstein, son of

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57 “We See by the Papers: Amsterdam,” *Saturday Evening Post* 212, no. 35 (February 24, 1940): 86.
60 Emanuel V. Voska and Will Irwin, “Victory -- and Flight for Life,” *Saturday Evening Post* 212, no. 53 (June 29, 1940): 22–70.
the great German-Jewish publisher Leopold Ullstein, wrote his own account of the NSDAP rise to power, its early persecution of Jews, its seizure of his family’s publishing empire, and his eventual flight. He notes his regrets that, when a representative of the “reactionary right” approached him with a plan to violently crush the budding NSDAP, he declined to sponsor such an un-democratic response to such a small faction.61

Various articles offered theories about the Third Reich’s future, the NSDAP, and Hitler himself.62 One essay argued that after a hypothetical victory in Europe, Hitler planned to tackle America with Nazi ideas instead of arms, arguing that the German leader understood the United States as “a country always on the brink of civil war” and could leverage economic and racial tensions as well as the conflict between “our Jews and our anti-Semitism.”63 A French exile, poet Jules Romains, described asking German officials about “the Jewish question,” and related in his account that they answered with “embarrassment and moderation,” quoting statistics about Jewish power while eschewing responsibility for violence against Jews.64

As the American presidential election approached, the Saturday Evening Post turned its focus towards the question of American entry into the war. Dismayed that both candidates seemed to endorse increasing American intervention in the intensifying European conflict and that even the Republican candidate, a former Democrat, did not adequately oppose the New Deal, Garet Garrett complained that conservatism was off the

ballot and that, “the liberals have it in either case.”

The remainder of his editorial, an eloquent rant on the decay of the Democratic Party, reveals Garrett’s conception of American conservatism: conservation of individual liberty from government interference. In an editorial he penned immediately ahead of the 1940 presidential election for publication after, he bemoaned its futility, writing that it “left the meaning of self-government in the ditch.” The election, he wrote, “was conducted as if for more than a year isolationists and interventionists [sic] had not been locked in mortal struggle. To intervene or not to intervene? Did the people vote on that? No. That question, too, was avoided.”

Accusing interventionists of betraying the interests of the American people, he wrote that their propaganda, “substituted for the idea of defense the idea of offense.” He then blamed America for Japan joining the Axis, a choice that would later ensure his dismissal from the *Saturday Evening Post*. Lamenting the death of the American experiment, he concluded that, “An America strong enough to save the world was strong enough to stand alone.”

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65 Garrett, *Defend America First*, 115. Note that Garrett does not discuss Japanese territorial aggression and only mentions Japan as one among the world dictatorships.

66 Garrett, *Defend America First*, 115-119. Garrett drew a simplistic picture of a tradition of American liberties and their advocates. Aside from neglecting the roles of slavery and race in American liberty, he used folk philosophy to describe a pastoral American ideal that ignored the legal realities of changing Constitutional, legal, and cultural interpretations of individual liberties in the United States. In spite of Woodrow Wilson’s inseparability from American interventionism and internationalism, Garrett paints the former president as a champion of Jeffersonian liberty and limited government, in apparent contradiction to his attacks on both 1940 presidential candidates over the same stances.

67 Garrett, *Defend America First*, 120.

68 Garrett, *Defend America First*, 121.

69 Garrett, *Defend America First*, 121.

70 Garrett, *Defend America First*, 124.
to joining the war in Europe captured the purpose of the America First Committee, which Garrett mentioned favorably.\footnote{Ruth Sarles, \textit{A Story of America First: The Men and Women Who Opposed U.S. Intervention in World War II}, ed. Bill Kauffman, (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002), Various secondary sources claim that Garrett was a member of the America First Committee without providing citations. I have not found any evidence for this claim in primary sources. Sarles reports that Winan Stout, Editor-in-Chief of the Saturday Evening Post from 1937 to 1942, stated that he agreed with the America First Committee’s principles but declined to join.}

The America First Committee, constituted on 4 September 1940, was an uneasy alliance of various anti-interventionist American demographics. Its core formed around the anti-New-Deal conservatives of the Old Right, who saw intervention as another manifestation of Roosevelt’s dictatorial proclivities, and it welcomed a contingent of liberals who preferred peace for its own sake. Its prevailing message was simply that isolationism was and had always been in America’s best interest and would allow the country to focus on its own economic recovery. This message also appealed to many socialists, students, and workers in America’s midwestern heartland. Wealthy Yale student Robert Douglas Stuart Jr. founded the organization, which quickly drew many other students from wealthy and prominent families. General Robert E. Wood, a figure of the Old Right and chairman of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, agreed to lead the Committee and aviator Charles Lindbergh agreed to be its spokesman.\footnote{Sarles, \textit{A Story of America First}, 1-9.}

With the addition of famed industrialist Henry Ford, the organization cemented both its prominence in American life and its controversial association with pro-Hitler, pro-German, and anti-Jewish sentiment. While the America First Committee claimed to “exclude from our rolls Fascists, Nazis, Communists, and members of the Bund,” it received significant support from these corners and constant accusations of more sinister
motivations than peace. Garrett noted that both the Saturday Evening Post and America First Committee faced the problem of “those who might agree with us for the wrong reasons,” arguing that his camp had successfully pushed these voices to the sidelines.

Ruth Sarles, head of political research for the America First Committee, produced a manuscript chronicling the organizations history after it disbanded following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In her account, Sarles accused interventionists of inventing the charge of anti-Semitism and associating anti-Semitic groups with the America First Committee, which she believes lent these groups a “cloak of respectability” and caused them to constantly attempt to infiltrate the America First Committee. Sarles devoted significant portions of her work to countering these accusations, focusing on three arguments: Jewish membership in the America First Committee, the organization’s exclusion of anti-Jewish individuals and groups, and the organization’s empathy for Jewish interventionists. Aside from listing the significant number of prominent Jewish figures, mostly wealthy businessmen and women, who occupied leadership positions within the organization, Sarles repeatedly referred to non-Jewish leaders’ “Jewish friends.” While she largely dismissed accusations that Charles Lindbergh harbored anti-Jewish sentiments, she acknowledged Henry Ford’s record of anti-Jewish activities, and argued that he never contributed to the organization, which eventually instructed him to voluntarily withdraw due to this reputation. Sarles particularly denounced the notoriously anti-Jewish Father Coughlin and the associated

73 Sarles, A Story of America First, lviii.
74 Garrett, Defend America First, 203.
75 Sarles, A Story of America First, 38.
Christian Front, indicating a particular disdain for that brand of Christianity. She argued that America First Committee leadership was empathetic towards American Jews who support intervention considering the increasingly aggressive anti-Jewish policies of Hitler’s Germany. At the same time, she revealed, Jewish leaders within the organization sought to counter the perception that Jews were pushing the country towards war out of self-interest.76 Sarles, in a similar manner to Lindbergh, seemed to take particular offense at the Bund as well as Father Coughlin’s German and Irish Catholic followers because of their apparent dual loyalties, as well as the latter’s stain on the name of Christianity.

Empathy for Jewish victims of Third Reich persecution and even Jewish refugees did not affect the anti-war and anti-refugee policies of Old Right. While Bess wrote that the Gestapo’s treatment of Jews “has become to Americans a synonym for terrorism,” a *Saturday Evening Post* editorial decried Lend-Lease and the “American Crusade.”77 In a March 1941 article, American pollster Samuel Lubell accused the Third Reich of making “war by refugee,” arguing that the Germans sought to gain diplomatic leverage against their dependents and neutral countries, impose a financial and resource burden on the Allies and neutral countries, and stoke the Jewish-Arab-British conflict. Lubell dotted his writing with brutal details of Jewish suffering under the Germans, describing concentration camps, forced labor, and deportations to the East while casually accepting the contrast between Americans’ sincere abhorrence of these persecutions and their blithe unwillingness to accept refugees. These descriptions would not have left

readers with uncertainty regarding the scale of German anti-Jewish activities in Greater Germany, its possessions, and its dependencies, as Lubell included explicit figures ranging from deportation of 10,000 Palatinate Jews by freight car to Germany’s cash demand for the release and expulsion of 450,000 prisoners. Describing these events and the resulting horrors of emigration, including the MS Saint Louis and SS Patria incidents, he noted that such tragedies had “long been forgotten” by the American public. Exploring a variety of refugee proposals, including the German Madagascar plan and an American plan for the Virgin Islands, Lubell saw little hope for resolution and maintained an implicit determination to deny Germany a victory in its “refugee war.”

In a peculiar August 1941 article, Saturday Evening Post European correspondent Bess drew interesting conclusions from a brief visit to occupied Poland. The brutal German occupation of Poland, including atrocities against Catholic clergy, convinced her of the superficiality of Hitler’s efforts to appeal to Western Christians, and that Nazism was the enemy of religion. Her argument incorporated Lubell’s belief that a primary aim of German anti-Jewish policies had been winning over Muslims and Arabs in the fight against the British. While she suggested that the occupation of Poland had seen “Nazi extremists” push “Nazi racial theories to their logical conclusions,” she understood this as an anti-Slavic phenomenon and did not mention Jews in the East.

In the 6 December 1941 issue of the Saturday Evening Post, the magazine published what would be its final word on isolationism: an article addressing the

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79 Demaree Bess, “Hitler Bids for Christian Allies,” Saturday Evening Post 214, no. 6 (August 9, 1941): 12–13, 39, 42.
conflation of Jews and interventionism by federal judge and Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Jerome Frank. A nearly-full-page photograph of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise included the quotation, “…anti-Jewishness is anti-justice, anti-freedom, anti-democracy, anti-decency [sic] and anti-civilization….” Rabbi Wise belonged to a wealthy Hungarian-Jewish family and came to America as an infant. Following in his father’s footsteps, he served as the rabbi of a succession of prominent Reform congregations that served older and wealthier German-Jewish communities. A leading rabbi of the Progressive Era, he broke with the Reform movement’s opposition to Zionism and helped to found a variety of Zionist institutions, the World Jewish Congress, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A Democrat and advisor to Presidents Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, he petitioned the U.S. government, with some success, to condemn German persecution of Jews.

Chairman Frank came from the same stock of wealthy 1840s German-Jewish immigrants to America that formed the core of Rabbi Wise’s congregations and Jewish-American isolationism. In his article, he argued that American Jews were not monolithically interventionist, pointing to his 1938 book, Save America First, which he claimed inspired the Committee’s name and earned him Dorothy Thompson’s ire. His reasoning was simple: he was an American of Jewish faith, not a Jew of American citizenship, an understanding of Jewish identity embodied in the Reform Movement, first in Germany and later in America. Only recently, he wrote, had he and the majority of American Jews joined the majority of their fellow Americans in becoming interventionists, a response to recent “amazing Nazi victories.”
At this point, he presented his titular thesis: that the accusation that Jews were behind American interventionism was a “red-white-and-blue herring.” “There is no such thing as a cohesive American Jewish group with a common body of opinion,” he wrote, comparing Jews who put their Jewish identity first to German-American Bundists and disowning secular Jewish Communists. He similarly attempted to differentiate between American Jewish Zionists who supported the Jewish project in Palestine and those who believed it to be the sole Jewish future. American Jews, he argued, often choose to adopt a “hush policy” in fear of provoking anti-Jewish sentiment, which inadvertently amplifies the voices of those Jews he decried as un-American. Frank then proceeded to explain the religious and cultural differences between orthodox and Reform Judaism, emphasizing the primacy and assimilationism of the latter and extolling the American tradition of religious toleration. “If ever any Americans go to a concentration camp, American democracy will go with them,” wrote Frank, echoing the words of Rabbi Wise.

Unfortunately for Japanese-Americans, Frank never made it past the Second Circuit.80

This plea to not associate Jews with interventionism highlights the prevalence of this association, the importance isolationists placed on dispelling it and its associated label of intolerance, and their Jewish allies in this endeavor. These Jews, often wealthier and established scions of older waves of Jewish immigration, sought to maintain their Jewish identity while downplaying its importance in order to assimilate into the upper echelons of American society. This also meant aligning themselves with an American political center that represented business interests, isolationism, and a Progressive

80 Jerome Frank, “Red White and Blue Herring,” Saturday Evening Post 214, no. 23 (December 6, 1941): 9–11, 83–86.
American nationalism. Prior to the United States’ entry into the war, the pro-business American nationalism of the Old Right found a popular voice in the *Saturday Evening Post*, even as it published a more diverse array of writers, such as iconic American liberal Dorothy Thompson. This form of nationalism saw the hatred and persecution of Jews as contrary to a perceived tradition of American religious tolerance while opposing American intervention abroad and acceptance of refugees, which it perceived as a threat to economic progress and continued tolerance. It increasingly saw Nazism as anti-Christian, interpreting its persecution of Jews as a precursor to Christian persecutions and evidence of its anti-religious nature. Americans who identified with this strain of nationalism did not see their opposition to Nazism’s hatred, violence, aggression, and tyranny as contradictory to their isolationism, especially as the specters of the First World War and the Great Depression compelled them to focus on domestic priorities.

Following the 7 December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Garet Garrett left the *Saturday Evening Post* under pressure in light of his history of anti-interventionism, although he immediately changed his position following the attack. Garrett volunteered his services to the government in support of the war effort to no avail, settling on a job in a shipyard that ultimately proved too physically difficult at his age. Still keen on aiding efforts to oppose the New Deal, he found that no reputable publisher would take a former isolationist, and he refused to associate those who agreed with him for the wrong reasons. Following the Second World War, Garrett, now a staunch

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81 The Reform Judaism of successive generations may share assimilationist tendencies and a different form of progressive nationalism, but it generally embraces a strong sense of Jewish identity.
conservative, returned to editing and began to publish a series of essays on America. Three of these essays appeared in his 1953 book *The People’s Pottage*, which went on to become a core text of the nationalist American right.\footnote{Garrett, *Defend America First*, 261-263.}

### 3.2 The Wall Street Journal

In 1882, three reporters working for a financial news service on New York City’s Wall Street struck out on their own with the intent to offer more standardized and incorruptible news bulletins. Skilled interviewer Charles Bergstresser acted as the silent partner, funding Charles Dow and statistician Edward Jones’s Dow Jones & Company, which began to publish news bulletins in the fashion of its competitors. They soon aggregated these bulletins into a daily publication, and in July of 1889, they began to publish this financial news as the *Wall Street Journal*. In 1898, the *Wall Street Journal* began to cover other news, with Dow maintaining an emphasis on disinterested analysis and considering how government policy and conflict impacted the financial world. In 1900, the paper endorsed Republican candidate William McKinley for President of the United States.

*Wall Street Journal* Boston correspondent and owner of two separate Boston and Philadelphia news bureaus Clarence Barron purchased Dow Jones & Company from a sickly Dow and an exhausted Bergstresser in 1902. Barron merged his bureaus with *The Wall Street Journal* and dramatically increased its circulation by the 1930s. The descendants of Barron’s adopted stepdaughters, who married into the wealthy Bancroft family, held majority shares of Dow Jones & Company and the *Wall Street Journal* until
a 2007 sale. Irish immigrant and prominent American Catholic apologist Thomas Woodlock took over editorship of the paper following Dow’s death in 1902. A Democrat, Republican President Calvin Coolidge appointed Woodlock commissioner of the Interstate Commerce Commission from 1926 to 1930, after which he rejoined the paper.

From its beginnings as a financial bulletin, the Wall Street Journal emphasized American financial success. While the paper ceased endorsing candidates in 1928, its 1900 support for McKinley marked the beginning of its editorial lean towards the right. The first mention of Jews in this flagship paper of American finance was in the context of theater. The paper noted its disdain for artistic displays of stereotypes that lacked artistic merit or represented actual hatred, phenomena it implied were connected. It further praised Jews, foremost among immigrant groups, for their appreciation of humor involving their own group’s “racial weaknesses and peculiarities.” It suggested that other immigrants, notably the Irish, Germans, and Italians, had taken longer to assimilate and laugh at their own racial faults. Another theater review discussed a play about Jewish assimilation, noting its threat to “the ancient faith and religious practices of the Jews,” while simultaneously describing its triumph as a “happy ending.” It further predicted that after “centuries of oppression and persecution in other lands,” “Ku Kluxism” in America would be a passing fad. A later, 1934 bulletin noted the Klan’s revival, including its continued hatred for both Jews and Catholics.

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The *Wall Street Journal* frequently printed cables from *Barron’s*, including pieces addressing the issue of Jews in British Palestine, discussing the challenges of the region and escalating tensions. One noted that Jews “have now a home in every nation of the world, including Russia,” and speculated that for any type of Jewish project to succeed in Palestine, it must have sovereignty. The cable took a balanced view of Jewish and Arab interests while expressing skepticism of the concept of Jewish nationhood. It rooted this doubt in the alleged fact that the Jew “is not” a “fighter,” and an underlying assumption that Jewish assimilation was both the preferable and likely future of Jews around the world. Another cable declared that the Jews “deserve something better” than Palestine after “centuries of persecution.” This humorous comment introduced a deeper skepticism at a Jewish colonial project that struck the writer as both an unwise and unfitting future for the Western, assimilated, and financially-astute modern Jew. The cable further expressed apprehension at the “Koran Orthodoxy” of many ruling Arabs, although it saw a silver lining in their purported anti-Communism.

A 1929 editorial succinctly condemned attacks against the British for their handling of the Mandate, arguing that Zionism would never be able to survive without the support of force, and that attempts to win sympathy for the Jewish minority in Palestine were futile and contrary to Anglo-American interests.

A short 1923 bulletin noted that Hungarian Jews were publicly refusing to lobby international Jewish finance to tender loans to the Kingdom of Hungary in exchange for

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Horthy’s promise to lobby his government to relieve its restrictions on Jews. These restrictive laws were the first of their kind in interwar Europe, and represented an early regression in Jewish emancipation.\textsuperscript{91} The \textit{Wall Street Journal} also printed a bulletin reporting on Polish complaints over the high percentage Jews among Polish immigrants to the United States and the effect this had on wealth distribution in Poland.\textsuperscript{92} These brief reports demonstrate the role that financial interest had in bringing early warning signs of anti-Jewish sentiment to the American public.

The \textit{Wall Street Journal} mentioned industrialist Henry Ford’s hatred for Jews before it ever mentioned the name of an insignificant Austrian painter. Noting a recent interview in which he walked back some of his harsher words regarding American Jews, it reported that Ford still raged against “international Jewish money power.”\textsuperscript{93} The paper first mentioned Hitler and the “National Socialist (Fascist) party” in a September 1930 article reporting on their support for evading the Versailles Treaty.\textsuperscript{94} A subsequent article reaffirmed the paper’s identification of the NSDAP with Fascism. While it repeated German assurances that the party would not come to power, the \textit{Wall Street Journal} was far more hesitant than the \textit{Saturday Evening Post} to write off the party’s economic threat.\textsuperscript{95} A few days later, on 29 September, the paper devoted a column to ridiculing Hitler and his party, stating that it “had no platform except opposition to everything that

\textsuperscript{92} “European Notes,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, August 28, 1923.
\textsuperscript{95} “European Stock Markets Lower: Fresh Tone of Nervousness Follows Widespread Publicity to Hitler Remarks,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, September 27, 1930.
is.” Elaborating on the party’s hatreds, the column noted that it was “radically opposed to capitalism, to the rights of Jewish people,” arguing that “Even if it united with the Communists,” it would ultimately fizzle out.96

A frenzy of Wall Street Journal cables reporting German electoral developments and political intrigues maintained skepticism that the Hitler and his National Socialist “Nazi” party would succeed in taking power even as Hitler achieved increasing electoral success.97 A continuing comparison to Mussolini’s Fascists betrayed a deeper fear that Hitler would violently seize power.98 The paper also expressed the fear that increasing NSDAP power would bolster Communist electoral power, and it went so far as falsely claiming, without sources, that the majority of Berlin Jews were Communist, which it considered a product and not a cause of Hitler’s anti-Jewish rhetoric.99 When, in 1933, Hitler succeeded in seizing power, the Wall Street Journal faithfully reported his promise to “destroy” all those who stood in his way and fight Communism. While the paper approved of Hitler’s anti-Communism, it saw a real threat in his threatening rhetoric and the violent behavior of the party’s apparatus.100

98 “200,000 Picked Men in Hitler ‘Army’: If Fascist Leader Comes Into Power Men Will Be Used as ‘Police Force,’ ” Wall Street Journal, December 23, 1931. After detailing the organization of the SA and SS to the best of its knowledge, this article compares them to Mussolini’s Blackshirts and express fears that Hitler will use them to seize power.
While the *Wall Street Journal* devoted only bulletins to NSDAP attempts to control Protestant churches and the Vatican’s ongoing condemnation of Hitler’s eugenic sterilization programs, it devoted significant and detailed coverage to Hitler’s persecution of Jews. In addition to reporting on Hitler’s speeches attacking Jewish influence, the paper reported on American Jewish denunciations of Hitler and his regime and the regime’s replies. Noting official statements that promised to maintain “law and order,” the paper also published a bulletin reporting that Hitler was threatening German Jews to remain quiet regarding their mistreatment. Following up on this threat, bulletins reported that the German government had begun to impose restrictions on Jews, dismiss them from various posts, and boycott them over their “atrocity propaganda.” With its business focus, the paper provided detailed explanations of how the Germans went about systematically carrying out these tasks. As international Jewish and American boycotts of German goods began to emerge, the *Wall Street Journal* watched with both humanitarian and economic interests in mind.

The *Wall Street Journal* did not limit its discussion of Jewish issues to finance and international relations; their second-most-frequent appearance came in the theater section, where reviews celebrated anti-NSDAP productions and their frequent focus on the plight of German Jews. Reviewers particularly lauded humanistic themes such as the altruism of Jewish characters towards their German oppressors, and, in one case, a black man facing persecution in the American South.\(^{107}\) In contrast to this acknowledgement of American racial prejudice, a September 1938 reprint of anti-New-Deal Democrat Frank R. Kent’s renowned political column adamantly denounced fears of anti-Semitism appearing in America.\(^ {108}\)

In 1943, the paper published a report on equal pay for black Americans, comparing Americans segregation to Nazi racial doctrine. While this article did not signify approval of government intervention in racial issues, it did represent an early comparison to Nazi ideology and its ability to mute criticism of government intervention in private business.\(^{109}\) While the paper noted with irony that the translated name of Hitler’s new economic council bore striking similarities to that of President Roosevelt, it stood with the government in its attempts to undermine domestic support for Hitler’s

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regime.\textsuperscript{110} Attacking German-American support for Hitler, the paper condemned dual national loyalties among Americans at large.\textsuperscript{111}

Bridging the gap between domestic and international issues of racial prejudice, the issue of Jewish refugees put a damper on the \textit{Wall Street Journal}’s support for German Jews and humanistic values in American society. The paper initially made positive reports on Jewish and political refugees fleeing Germany into France.\textsuperscript{112} When, in August 1933, the American Jewish Congress appealed to President Hindenburg to fire Hitler and protect German Jews from what the paper quoted as “certain extermination,” the \textit{Wall Street Journal} applauded Britain for admitting additional Jews into Palestine.\textsuperscript{113}

The first mention of concentration camps in the \textit{Wall Street Journal} came in connection with Hitler’s 30 June 1934 purge, noting that Hitler sent many victims to a “detention camp” at Dachau.\textsuperscript{114} The paper dispassionately reported as the League of Nations debated how to handle refugees. Unlike the \textit{Saturday Evening Post}, the \textit{Wall Street Journal} frequently noted the Jewish nature of the refugee crisis.\textsuperscript{115} As talks turned to admitting refugees into the United States, the paper decreased its reporting and favorable outlook, although it did not explicitly argue against accepting refugees.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{110} “Hitler Copies Roosevelt,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, July 17, 1933.
\textsuperscript{111} “Shocking Bad Manners,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, October 19, 1934.
\textsuperscript{112} “German Refugees to France,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, March 15, 1933.
\textsuperscript{114} “Nazi ‘Purging’ Arrests: All But 80 or 90 Released of 400 Arrested in Drive at Berlin,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, July 21, 1934.
Thomas Woodlock’s first editorial mentioning Jewish persecution in Germany belittled Hitler and the NSDAP, attributing their “anti-Jewish frenzy” to jealousy of Jewish intellect and economic power. Moving beyond this jab, Woodlock described “Communism, Fascismo, ‘Nazi-ism,’ (and perhaps we should add the ‘New Deal’)” as the products of “modern romanticism,” or, more broadly, “Liberalism.” According to Woodlock, European Liberalism was not only tainted with its cradle-mates, the political machinations of Machiavelli and the divine right of kings, but lacked a conception of human rights in its classically antique roots. The political concept of human rights, he argued, “grew by strict logic from the Christian philosophy of man,” and was the patrimony of American government, not the evident failure of European Liberalism.

“What,” he wondered in April 1935, “went wrong?”

His answer, appearing in June 1935, was “hate.” Pondering how Germans under Hitler could tolerate what he perceived as an increasingly lower standard of living, he decided the answer was “intolerance” itself. Germany’s “new mark for intolerance in the history books,” primarily in its treatment of its “Jewish citizens,” was sufficient to create popular fervor equal to that of war. Woodlock argued that Hitler used race to transform the majority’s natural resentment of “privileged” classes into a hatred for the Jews, just as the New Deal, in his opinion, manipulated the American majority into hating “business” as a class and its representational persons and organizations.

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American chauvinism demonstrates a lingering desire to link Hitler with Roosevelt and the liberal left, but it also identified the important roles that Romanticism, Liberalism, and hatred played in Fascism and Nazism.

In a July 1936 editorial, Woodlock began to differentiate between Italian Fascism and German Nazism, suggesting that Nazism had little ideological basis while Fascism had more grounding in established political traditions. Reinforcing his earlier notions, he wrote in a December 1939 editorial that Dr. Hans Frank’s entire legal philosophy boiled down to the principle that “Might Makes Right.” Mocking his conception of the American left, he accused it, the late Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and their school of “Realistic Jurisprudence” of being essentially identical to that of Frank and differing only by degree.

In explaining this comparison, Woodlock revealed that he understood utilitarianism as functionally and ideologically entwined with Liberalism. In contrast with his conception of the American political idea, Woodlock used the term “liberal” to refer to a system of thinking that privileged the welfare of the majority over other moral values. He saw the autocratic powers of Europe as an inevitable realization of this system due to the efficiency of centralization. Returning to his favored pastime of mocking Oliver Wendell Holmes, Woodlock used an April 1941 editorial to criticize the late justice’s quotation “Have faith and pursue the unseen end,” in the context of his critique of Williams College Professor and journalist Max Lerner’s defense of the means of

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Fascism. Neither “the archaic categories that we call ends” nor the “fetishes of encrusted habits that we call means” are inherently worthy of pursuit, according to Woodlock. In his semantic and sarcastic rhetorical argument, Woodlock implied that the liberal struggle to distinguish and comprehend the relationship between ends and means was a futile attempt to replace the guiding role of “structures of values” in private and public life.  

If Woodlock believed that liberalism combined with hatred led to Nazism, he believed that Nazi rule over Europe would lead to “physical extermination en mass of the subject peoples” of Europe. In a March 1941 editorial, he argued that Nazism’s rejection of Christianity, which enabled it to embrace hatred and disregard human rights, locked it in a cultural conflict for the future of civilization. This hatred, wrote Woodlock, could not coexist with any type of stable order, and would evolve in necessarily cruel and annihilationist disorder.

Woodlock did not balk at the prospect of war with the Third Reich. Unlike Garet Garrett and the Saturday Evening Post, he envisioned the American political tradition as rooted in Christian faith and not in “liberal” political expediencies, such as non-interventionism. While he did not urge his readers to support a hastier entry into the war, he regarded such an entry as inevitable. When a reader asked him how he could be sure that a military victory would win this cultural war between “the Christian ethos” and “totalitarianism,” Woodlock wrote that it would not guarantee anything, but that it would prevent totalitarian victory and its accompanying evils.

Unlike his reader, Woodlock did not unquestioningly accept the popular new term “totalitarian,” or its partner, “authoritarian.” All governments, in their essential nature, were authoritarian, he wrote. According to Woodlock, those who liked to use the term as a pejorative merely harbored a dislike of authority and hierarchy, understanding them as the antithesis of democracy. Hierarchy, he wrote, was an essential part of humans’ social nature and every political construction. The success or failure of democracy and “despotism” alike, Woodlock wrote, depended on their constituent authorities’ ability to exercise humility regarding the common good, which he defined as both order and justice.\(^{125}\)

Only a month prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Woodlock mused that “reality” only touches human lives on occasion, such as at birth, in sickness, and at death. Reality, he said, had only touched the United States at its birth and during its Civil War, not in 1917. “Only now are we slowly awakening,” he wrote, to the “feel that this is something different to anything we have heretofore experienced, but we do not yet see it clearly, and we are loath to believe it really is what it seems to be – Satanic.” The “Hitler phenomenon,” Woodlock explained, was “not sub-human but in-human, and that in a highly intelligent way. It is that ‘intelligence’ indeed that seems to mark it as diabolical.”\(^{126}\)

Neither the Saturday Evening Post nor the Wall Street Journal were charitable to the Third Reich leading up to America’s entry into the Second World War. Both periodicals covered Hitler’s persecution of Jews and condemned it in the strongest terms.

\(^{125}\) Thomas F. Woodlock, “Thinking It Over,” Wall Street Journal, September 26, 1941.

The *Saturday Evening Post* and Garet Garrett spoke out against American entry into the war and acceptance of refugees, while the *Wall Street Journal* and Thomas Woodlock maintained moral concern without explicitly advocating a course of action. The *Saturday Evening Post* printed a diversity of authors, including those from the political left, while maintaining a cohesive editorial outlook that opposed the New Deal and foreign entanglements while promoting a humanistic Protestant conception of American culture. Woodlock and the *Wall Street Journal* celebrated American business while explicitly criticizing the left and “Liberalism” for eschewing the Christian values underpinning American liberal democracy. Woodlock, an Irish Catholic, may have lacked the nativist sentiment that helped men like Garrett detach themselves from the increasing horrors of Europe, but this does not account for his astute appraisal of the coming horrors.
CHAPTER 4: TOTAL WAR

Wartime Atrocity Reports and Responses: 1942-1945

War brought an end to what Thomas Woodlock might have described as Garet Garrett and the America First Committee’s fetish for the encrusted habit of American isolationism. It also afforded both Woodlock and the Saturday Evening Post’s new editor Ben Hibbs the opportunity to explore how a New Right would react to the revelation of Nazi atrocities.

Judge Jerome Frank’s eerily-timed 1941 article on Jewish interventionism was the first in a series of three articles on Jews in America Garet Garrett had ordered prior to Pearl harbor. If Frank’s assimilationist article represented Garrett, the pre-War Saturday Evening Post, and the Old Right’s Progressive American nationalism, then the subsequent two articles emulated the magazine’s own bold step into a more prideful, bellicose form of nationalism.

The next article in the series, “The Jews Are Different,” featured an unlikely writer: Waldo Frank (of no immediate relation to Judge Frank), the Yale-educated son of an old and successful American Jewish family who had recently severed ties with the Communist Party, USA over its treatment of his late idol, Leon Trotsky. A journalist, Frank’s post-Communist work concentrated on Latin America, where he spent most of 1942 exploring American culture and advocating against NSDAP sympathizers. Frank undertook to answer a simple question: Why did ostensibly good and intelligent people all over the world subscribed to anti-Jewish ideas and prejudices of every variety? The answer, Frank suggested, was that there was fundamental, yet benign or even benevolent,
truth in these many forms of Jew hatred. Deriding Judge Frank’s assimilationist beliefs as self-deluding, Frank insisted that most Americans, and most Westerners, still see Jews as different. The fascists, he wrote, provided inaccurate justifications for this intuition, while democracies derided it as vulgar, thereby forfeiting common intuition to the fascists. Dismissing philo-Semitic arguments that persist to this day, Frank argued that Jews are not significantly better than non-Jews in any way, just as they are not significantly worse.127

The Jews, Frank argued, are different because “they issue from a great and potent tradition” which, although just as changing as the world around it, “has kept its continuous identity and its one general direction.” Even Jews who are indifferent to or actively hate this tradition are still part of it, still draw on it in their own qualities, and still experience external reactions to it, according to Frank. “Though his conscious taste be more Yankee than Vermont maple sugar,” Frank wrote, a Jew will retain a connection to his background in a manner that Americans of other non-Anglo descent will not.128

This innovative tradition of an intimate monotheism nurtured and propagated a conception of justice and praxis that has defined the Western world, waxed Frank, essentially arguing that the Jewish tradition is synonymous with the progressive tradition. Franked concluded with the dual statement that the American idea is inherently Jewish, by way of its liberal Christian origin, and that American Jews, whether secular or orthodox, embody the American democratic idea.129

If Frank’s ideas about Jew hatred were ahead of their time in their willingness to critically examine the Jews’ role in their own miseries, the ideas of a former Communist do immediately appear relevant to the American right’s perspective. His faith and politics aside, Frank was the archetype of the American social establishment: his ancestors were immigrants who fought in the American Civil War, his father worked in New York finance, and he was a Yale man who basked in Progressive-era Yankee intellectual society. Capable of transcending the insecurities that plagued later generations of American Jews, his career was also an early example of the anti-Stalinist left’s break with Communism and turn towards the American political center. That the *Saturday Evening Post* chose to publish an article, even one from a Jewish author, suggesting Jewish agency in anti-Jewish prejudice represented a critical attitude towards identity that was already falling out of favor given world events.

The third article in the series launched the career of Milton Mayer, then a Reform Jew who would go on to write a book chronicling the lives of ordinary Germans during the Third Reich, convert to Quakerism while retaining his Jewish identity, and achieve fame as a journalist. In “The Case Against the Jew,” Mayer noted a pervasive fear of rising Jew hatred in America while violently mocking assimilationist American Jews “he taught his children that the Jews were not a race, but a religion. But there was no religion, just like the gentiles.” Prejudice against Jews, Mayer lectured, was a byproduct of an international degeneration into a paganism that worshiped money, fame, and power, in which the Jew were doomed to be “second-class pagans.” Jews, Mayer argued, had to stoop even lower than gentiles to compete in such a world, thus fanning
the flames of Jew hatred and debasing themselves. Orthodox Jews were different, according to Mayer, because they held on to an identity, a faith, and a moral lifestyle worth suffering for. He recalled an assimilated Jewish friend’s story of feeling ashamed as he watched SS men spit on a religious Jew, noting, “He was prepared for suffering because he had something worth suffering for.” Mayer did not call on Jews to become orthodox or even Reform; he demanded that Jews embrace righteousness, as they had no ability to influence prejudice, hatred, and violence, while they had the opportunity to live up to their tradition through goodness and, if necessary, martyrdom.130

In a bulletin that could have appeared in any contemporary American publication, *Saturday Evening Post* Editor Ben Hibbs found it necessary to issue a clarification regarding the Mayer’s article. Hibbs explained that “several thousand… Jewish and Gentile” readers had written letters attacking the magazine for publishing the piece, believing that, “the article was intended as an attack on the Jewish people.” While he did not accuse these readers of only reading the headline, it is apparent that this is exactly what happened. The magazine, Hibbs wrote chose to publish the three articles on domestic and international Jewish issues by Jewish writers in the hope of countering the “malice and stupidity of Axis leaders” and “help prevent anti-Semitism from gaining a foothold here.”131 All three articles criticized Jews for undermining their own cause; the latter two targeted assimilationist Jewry. Absent the content of those letters, it is difficult to determine whether the resulting outrage was simply too ignorant to grasp the nuance

of this internal criticism, took offense at criticizing Jews, or consciously attacked anti-assimilationism. Through this uncertainty and the complexity of all parties’ political perspectives, the three articles and ensuing reaction establish the importance and sensitivity of discussing anti-Jewish prejudice in American life.

In an April 1942 bulletin, the magazine decried American racial prejudice, as embodied in a House speech by Mississippi Democratic Representative John E. Rankin, including anti-Japanese prejudice, although it declined to condemn interment. The short bulletin made sure to incorporate an essential fact: Rankin was an ardent supporter of the New Deal. While earlier articles attempted to link NSDAP economic policy with Roosevelt and the New Deal, this represented a small but deliberate move towards linking the racial prejudice of Southern Democrats with Hitler’s Jew hatred.\(^{132}\) Even the magazine’s many articles criticizing the Roosevelt administration for its efforts to aid the Allied Powers prior to American entry into the war did not stop it from publishing an article in 1944 that accused the president of being soft on national defense.\(^{133}\)

As American participation in the war increased, the *Saturday Evening Post* published a steady stream of articles highlighting the evils of the Third Reich. A May 1942 article on Hitler’s use of “psychological war” makes standard mention of NSDAP Jew hatred while discussing German suppression and deprivation of occupied peoples. One sentence features the magazine’s second mention of Jewish ghettos, describing the

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\(^{133}\) Frank B. Ober, “Roosevelt’s Record on National Defense,” *Saturday Evening Post* 217, no. 17 (October 21, 1944): 112.
An August 1942 article reviewed Germany’s take-over of occupied countries’ industry. While the article made brief mention of “3,350,000” humans engaged in forced labor who were “badly undernourished, a good many ill, half crazed with fear or despair,” it focused on the corporations and factories as the primary victims of Third Reich autocracy. Laudning America’s great industrial power as a product of its democratic nature, it predicted that Germany’s system would fail. The article made no mention of Jews. Another August 1942 bulletin made casual mention of Germany’s execution of “100,000 people” in Poland in order to give their land to Germans, notably appearing next to an article on the United States’ government’s failure to represent the interests of its own farmers.

First-hand reports of the Russian front featured the most graphic and detailed reporting of Nazi atrocities, often including pictures of dead and dying victims. “The Bloodiest Front in History” described the horror of the Russo-German front, making significant mention of the hunger, disease, and brutality Russian prisoners experienced at the hands of the Germans. “I Saw it With My Own Eyes” made no mention of Jews in its description of the German “Policy of Extermination,” although it referred to “pogroms” separately from “massacres.” The author noted that in spite of his natural American skepticism, he found reports that the Germans had murdered, starved, or

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kidnapped a majority of the local Soviet population to be credible.\textsuperscript{138} Articles describing concentration camps began to appear in the \textit{Saturday Evening Post} as escapees reached Soviet lines and the advance liberated minor camps. These articles made occasional references to Jews as particular victims of German brutality while focus on the plight of Polish and other Slavic prisoners.\textsuperscript{139}

Even as the Axis Powers retained control over the majority of continental Europe, writers speculated about how the victorious Allied Powers might handle their defeated foes. A September 1942 bulletin reflecting on a speech from President Roosevelt relished his promise that “justice” and not “mere revenge” would await “those responsible for the subhuman brutalities” that characterized Germany’s occupation of Europe. The piece contrasted the reality and common knowledge of NSDAP leaders’ crimes in comparison to the fabricated narratives of German evils during the First World War. It concluded with a call for the Allies to hold themselves to a higher moral standard in response to German propaganda highlighting Britain’s treatment of Indians and American segregation and lynchings.\textsuperscript{140} Neither the \textit{Saturday Evening Post} nor the \textit{Wall Street Journal} made explicit reference to the December 1942 Joint Declaration by Members of the United Nations, which called attention to the ongoing Nazi murder of Jews in occupied Europe. According to a March 1943 bulletin urging Americans to

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\textsuperscript{139} Charles Lanius, “The Underground Escape Route from France,” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 216, no. 29 (January 15, 1944): 20–21, 75.
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refrain from racial hatred of Germans and Japanese, the Third Reich had, by that date, murdered “3,000,000 innocent people.”\textsuperscript{141}

A June 1943 article mused on reports that retreating German leaders were asking their unwilling Polish hosts to sign papers testifying to their innocence in the atrocities of the German occupation. Describing the Polish government-in-exile’s preparations for war crimes trials, the author noted the meticulous detail with which the files documented evidence, witnesses, and incitements for “crimes against the laws of Poland and common decency and justice.” Emphasizing the importance of international efforts to carry out orderly justice, thereby preventing an unchecked, vengeful slaughter, the article explored the Allied Powers’ practical and legal plans for the trials. It also noted two atrocities against Jews among the many in noted against Poles. It made repeated reference to a massacre near Lublin in which “nearly 3,000 Jews of both sexes and all ages were hacked to death,” including this charge as a separate crime on the rap sheet of one criminal who would also face charges for atrocities against Poles at large. Near its conclusion, the article made the \textit{Saturday Evening Post}’s second mention of the Warsaw ghetto, noting that over three years, it had shrunken from 600,000 to 150,000.\textsuperscript{142}

Thomas Woodlock began contemplating the fate of a defeated Germany just two months after the United States entered the war. Responding to an unnamed friend who wrote to him of the horrors on the front lines, Woodlock rejected his initial call for “exterminating the German people” preferring his moderated preference of ensuring

\textsuperscript{141} “Hate Wins Few Victories,” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 215, no. 39 (March 27, 1943): 100.
\textsuperscript{142} Burnet Hershey, “Hang the Führers!” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 215, no. 50 (June 12, 1943): 16–17, 40, 42.
“Prussian savagery is bred out of Germans.” 143 In a later editorial, Woodlock lamented the motivations of both Axis and Allied soldiers, complaining that “progressive secularization of his thought and life” had sapped man’s internal strength to face challenges. 144 Woodlock saw the prosecution of the war and later its criminals as intimately connected, and he believed the end and means of winning the war and creating a lasting peace was the reestablishment of a moral order based in Christian values.

Unchecked vengeance was not the only post-war fear that found its way into the *Saturday Evening Post*. In January 1944, Demaree Bess penned an article exploring the widespread fear that a liberated Europe would embrace Communism. 145 In contrast, the *Wall Street Journal* preferred to use the word “totalitarian,” dragging it out in reference to the USSR, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, British economic policy, and Roosevelt’s New Deal. 146 Two editorials argued that intervention in the war could lead the United States to adopt totalitarian policies, similar to those of the Axis powers and later Britain, in pursuit of the war effort. 147 While he had previously defined authoritarian as synonymous with government, Woodlock had stopped short of defining totalitarianism. In a July 1944 editorial, he described it simply as authority with “no restriction whatever,” which amounted to tyranny of the majority in a democracy and simple tyranny in other forms of government. As an example of the former, Woodlock referred to Roosevelt’s

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unsuccessful attempt to pack the Supreme Court and his successful bid to fill it with liberal justices. Comparing his pejorative definition of “liberals” with his own liberal identity, he explained that authentic liberals in the American tradition accept restrictions on the will of the majority in line with the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence. *Id est,* in order to secure true liberty, government must protect the divine rights of minorities, including the individual, from imposition by the majority.\(^{148}\) Woodlock’s phrase “in dealing with minority groups” offers an explanation of his willingness to apply the same word to the Soviets, Third Reich, and Roosevelt: he understood all three as curtailing the rights of groups to pursue life according to their own designs. An editorial in May of 1945 later confirmed this view, supporting the “world ‘bill of rights’” as a hedge against totalitarianism.\(^{149}\)

One *Wall Street Journal* reader disagreed with Woodlock’s conception of Nazism’s evils, writing a letter to the editor arguing that “Prussian-German Imperialism” represented a peculiar and particularistic evil.\(^{150}\) The paper’s editorial board disagreed, publishing a response to the letter and similar arguments which stated that it was impossible to “change the *spirit* of a people by force,” and that changes in spirit required spiritual change.\(^{151}\) Raymond Moley, a former supporter of the New Deal turned its bitter opponent, penned an article expanding on the issue. Moley, later an early contributor to the *National Review*, wrote that the particular evil of the “Nazi crowd” in part originated


with its adoption of the Junker tradition of militarism and rejection of its family tradition, respect for culture, moral principles, and experience in government. His solution was “Allied supervision of schools” coupled with disarmament and “freedom of trade,” which he argued would, in time, bring traditional moral values back into the German classroom.\(^\text{152}\)

As the *Wall Street Journal* mused on how to eradicate Nazi ideas following inevitable victory, its war reports contained little to no mentions of the Third Reich’s atrocities against civilians in general or Jews in particular, even as the tide of war turned in the East.\(^\text{153}\) The publication’s first use of the term “concentration camp” referenced a Japanese camp holding Allied prisoners of war.\(^\text{154}\) In a February 1945 editorial, Woodlock contemplated the evils of the German occupation, even arguing that it was worse than that of the Soviets, as they “expressed a ‘faith’ of sorts, and an ‘ethical code’ expressing that ‘faith.’” While he noted that “The record of Nazism’s physical crimes as it unrolls has long exhausted our imaginative powers fully to absorb,” he did not elaborate on these crimes, continuing, “Murder wholesale, torture wholesale to the point of sadism can all be found in the record of wars through the centuries.” Worse, he argued was the effect that Nazi amorality had on the occupied peoples and victims of the Third Reich. While he lamented the potential of a post-war shift to the economic left, he


believed the greater danger was the persistence of the immorality that desperation effected under German rule.¹⁵⁵

Two months later, in April 1945, the Wall Street Journal published its first report of Nazi atrocities. Discussing the liberation of “camps” without mentioning a single camp name, the editorial discussed “fantastic horrors beyond the power of speech to adequately express.” Contrary to Woodlock’s assertion two months earlier, this editorial proclaimed, “There is nothing like it in all history.” Expressing skepticism that the people of the Reich were unaware of such atrocity sites, the editorial mused that if this were true, the withdrawal of such a thoroughly “insulating” power must result in social disintegration. The rambling piece continued with a statement on the importance of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, concluding, “We have much to learn yet about the Reich. This lesson we can take now.”¹⁵⁶

“From a Nazi murder factory in Poland, a Post editor gives you an audit on the war’s most frightful crime,” read a blurb drawing readers to an October of 1944 Saturday Evening Post report on Majdanek, its first coverage of a liberated death camp. Edgar Snow, a chronicler of Chinese Communism, wired the report from the camp as he accompanied Soviet troops in their advance, where he had faced criticism for his optimism regarding Russian and Chinese democracy. Snow struggled to express his horror in language that vacillated between extremes, describing the Nazis’ “brilliant success” at creating a “machinery of crimes almost too monstrous for the human mind to accept.” Quoting an ad-hoc and now-controversial Soviet estimate, Snow wrote that the

amount of human ashes present indicated “the remains of perhaps 1,000,000 corpses.” He further noted a Polish estimate of 4,000,000 dead at Treblinka, where “Only Jews were sent.” Four large photographs pushed Snow’s words into the margins of two pages and on to a third: civilians examining the crematoria, a pile of shoes, a pile of photographs, and a pile of canisters used for human ashes noting, “Some were used for fertilizer,” echoing the article’s title, “Here the Nazi Butchers Wasted Nothing.” The contrast of this “crowning achievement of Nazi totalitarianism executed with German efficiency” and the humanity of both victims and perpetrators permeated Snow’s writing, which lacked a clear structure and thesis. Blaming both the ordinary Germans who staffed the camp and German leadership in Berlin, Snow concluded with the hope that his report might alleviate the consciences of Allied soldiers.157

The other editors of the Saturday Evening Post had an additional takeaway: “there must be no soft peace.” Lamenting how the Entente powers “permitted Germany to prepare for the next holocaust,” with the latter term referring to world-engulfing war and not the horrors of Lublin, the editors maintained their hard stance on post-war justice.158 This account of an accused Communist sympathizer does not speak for the Old Right; it demonstrates that as the Allied Powers liberated sites of Nazi atrocities, the Old Right’s rump moderate right, embodied in the Saturday Evening Post, prioritized patriotic support for the war against German and thorough punishment for that country’s atrocities over anti-Communism. This sentiment did not last until the end of the war. In

March 1945, the *Saturday Evening Post* ran a prominent editorial criticizing various opinions regarding the impending trials of German leadership. In response to the Kharkov trials, the editorial accused the Russians of hanging war criminals “no mere spirit of vengeance, but with the political aim of advancing the prestige of the regime they decide to support in Germany.” The editorial also argued that trying German leaders for making war in and of itself, as well as their pre-war treatment of their own civilians, had no legal basis. The editors particularly objected to the trial of German industrialists, and they accused “the left” of wanting to prosecute them for their economic status and not their role in atrocities. 159 Later that same month, editorials began to focus on fears of Soviet dominance in Europe following the inevitable peace. 160

An article on German prisoners of war took for granted that ordinary German soldiers were aware of the systematic murder of Jews, quoting some who had witnessed it. According to the article, most German prisoners had a general dislike for Himmler and the SS, and while they abhorred the killing of Jews, maintained a hatred of Jews and the wish for their elimination though other means, such as sterilization. The article also fondly noted the irony of American Jewish soldiers exerting power over German prisoners. 161

The *Saturday Evening Post* and the greater portion of the Old Right desperately wanted the war in Europe to be about something other than the Jews. Prior to American entry into the war, arguments linking Jews to interventionism undermined a nationalist

159 “Hang the Criminals But Spare the Law!” *Saturday Evening Post* 217, no. 36 (March 3, 1945): 100.
160 “Were the Yalta Hosannas Premature?” *Saturday Evening Post* 217, no. 38 (March 17, 1945): 108.
American non-interventionism that morally and strategically coupled itself with a
traditional American abhorrence of bigotry. The attack on Pearl Harbor and American
entry into the war required a pivot from this tradition of non-intervention to the American
tradition of national rage in response to attacks on American ships. This only increased
the magazine’s resolve to downplay the persecution of Jews as a motivation for the war, a
motivation readily apparent in its publication of a Jewish soldier’s essay on his own
motivations for fighting, which evolved from religious liberty to a love of American
economic liberalism.\footnote{162}

The \textit{Saturday Evening Post} saw anti-Semitism was vulgar, an imported
European prejudice not befitting liberal, Protestant Christian American values. This
sentiment understood such prejudices as a medieval, Catholic relic, which reflected the
Old Right’s own biases against various European immigrant groups and the Catholic
Church. This view evolved as the war progressed, and increasingly painted Nazism as
anti-Christian, viewing its hatred of Jews as either a precursor to the persecution of
Christians or as evidence of anti-religious sentiment, but not a major threat in and of
itself.\footnote{163} A January 1944 article praising churches’ role in resisting the NSDAP noted
both Protestant and Catholic efforts to protect the Jews, emphasizing centuries of
Protestant toleration of Jews before the Third Reich rounded them up in concentration
camps “for deportation to Poland.”\footnote{164} Subsequent articles discussed those who saved

\footnote{163}Stewart W. Herman Jr., “Hitler Can’t Do Business With the Church,” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 215, no.
13 (September 26, 1942): 18, 99–100.
\footnote{164}Henry P. Van Dusen, “The Church Did It,” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 216, no. 31 (January 29, 1944): 19, 77–78.
Jews, although the Jewish author of one article on French Catholics who hid children labeled it “a testament to human compassion” and not an explicitly Christian virtue.\textsuperscript{165}

In contrast with \textit{National Review}’s later use of delicate prose to merely suggest its more pointed observations on sensitive topics, the \textit{Saturday Evening Post} addressed minority issues in a humane but unfiltered manner that occasionally gave offense.\textsuperscript{166} This is apparent in a brief bulletin criticizing the popular response to the words of generals George Patton and Frederick E. Morgan. It noted with sincere reproof that General Morgan “paid too little attention to the point of view of the Jews” in his remarks criticizing the migration of Jews from Poland to Germany, while citing numerous individuals who shared his general concerns, including Dorothy Thompson and Jacob L. Trobe, who, it was sure to point out, was “himself a Jew.” Arguing that “are supposed to admire men who say what they think,” the writer adeptly notices that the issue with the latter general’s remarks is his characterization of the Polish-Jewish refugees as not appearing persecuted and his neglect of the broader context of Jewish persecution.\textsuperscript{167} This passing commentary on a relatively minor episode also demonstrates how the Soviet threat and cultural ties to Germans caused some Americans to increasingly emphasize the welfare of the German people and the rebuilding of Germany over the welfare of Third Reich victims.

\textsuperscript{165} Meyer Levin, “They Saved the Children,” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 217, no. 30 (January 20, 1945): 34, 41–42, 44.
\textsuperscript{166} This contrast is analogous to the pseudointellectual “alt-right” use of irony and coded language to express precise, premeditated ideas in contrast with naïve inquisitiveness of popular right-wing commentators such as Joseph Rogan.
\textsuperscript{167} “Has Sounding Off Become a Crime?” \textit{Saturday Evening Post} 218, no. 33 (February 16, 1946): 136.
Two weeks after the war in Europe ended, Woodlock responded to a reader who argued that “Hitler’s greatest crime” had been “contempt for the dignity and personality of man.” Not only did Woodlock concur, but he continued that “what defeated [Hitler] was the evoking of the spirit of personality in his victims and the indomitable will of that spirit to be free.” Quoting Thomas Aquinas, Woodlock unsurprisingly derived human dignity from G-d’s creation of man in his own “image and likeness.” Noting that, “It was from a Hebrew prophet that man first heard of Creation, and from a Hebrew psalmist of the source of his personality,” Woodlock criticized Greek and Roman thought for their failure to realize this truth. It was this failure, he argued, that prohibited them from moving beyond the “notion of political to that of personal freedom.”

If Woodlock had then taken the opportunity to lament the neo-pagan Third Reich’s murder of the same Hebrews who told man of his own dignity, it would have been a poetic conclusion to his and his paper’s lack of coverage of Nazi atrocities and the post-1942 plight of the Jews. That is not what Woodlock wrote. Instead, he raged against the evils of Soviet Russian and Stalin, noting their murders while focusing on their persecution of religion, specifically the Orthodox Christian Church.

Americans who encountered the results of Nazi persecution and atrocities expressed shock and horror beyond what had marked earlier reactions to the general horrors of the Second World War. In attempting to describe this inhumanity, writers for the Saturday Evening Post and Wall Street Journal focused on the modern logistics and methods of killing, the scale of the killing, the civilian status of many victims, the

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targeted nature of the killing, and the disgust they felt when confronting such unmitigated brutality. These writers stopped short of labeling the atrocities “unique” or “unprecedented.”

Although falsified and exaggerated First World War atrocity reports contributed to American skepticism of Nazi atrocities against Jews and others, the horrors of the First World War and their modern efficiency left Americans no strangers to the terror of poison gas and human suffering on a mass scale. The mass-murder of civilians, if rarer in the modern West, was familiar to any American who read a Bible, as was the brutal treatment and ethnic cleansing of civilians based on their identity. While it is possible to argue that it was the cumulative effect of these factors that so impressed American witnesses, it was the unavoidable confrontation with visceral evidence of these horrors that imprinted on the American public. If Poland was not precisely at the center of industrialized Western civilization, it was far closer than Congo, China, Armenia, and even Ukraine, and Germany was no Russia, Turkey, Japan, or lone Leopold. Western media devoted significant resources to capture and relay a potent combination of horrors to the American public, and this spectacle met a threshold of intensity and coverage that has yet to be matched.
CHAPTER 5: WAR GROWN COLD

Accountability, Transition to Cold War, and the Palestine Crisis: 1945-1950

The rapid evolution of opinions in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Wall Street Journal* on accountability for Nazi perpetrators emphasizes the roles of press coverage and anti-Communism in American political Holocaust memory. The trials represented the evolution of normative international relations, as many peace processes had before them, but the intimate coverage they received and their emphasis on atrocities against Jews were instrumental in introducing the Holocaust into American politics. Their inextricable connection with the transition into a Cold War with the Soviet Union influenced the trials, American political opinion about the trials, and the role of Holocaust memory in the Cold War.

As America emerged from the Second World War and the Roosevelt presidency, the perceived threat of Communism and opposition to the New Deal defined a fragmented right. Traditionalist and faith-based social conservatives shed much of their Progressive Era opposition to capitalist interests and gradually allied with free-market economic liberals. The Austrian and Chicago schools of economic theory, economists such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and the new American Enterprise Institute laid the theoretical, philosophical, and institutional groundwork for this “conservative” libertarian platform. From the 1940s to the 1950s, thinkers such as Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley, Jr. published works elucidating their conception of a new American conservatism. Periodicals, such as *Human Events* and Buckley’s *National Review*, and associations, such as the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, came to represent this new
political camp. These “paleo-conservatives” understood their values of individualism, Christian morality, and limited government as a traditionalist conservative reaction to the Communist emphasis on collectivism, atheism, and government intervention.

Support for anti-Communist efforts and eventually free market economic principles also arose from an unlikely source: the left-wing “New York Intellectuals.” This group of largely Jewish first-generation Americans coalesced in Trotskyist circles in and around the City College of New York. Founding periodicals such as Partisan Review and Dissent, the New York Intellectuals’ anti-Stalinism solidified into strong anti-Soviet sentiment. While many remained on the left and some remained Marxist socialists, many others gradually became anti-Communists and open to laissez-faire economic and civil policies beginning in the 1960s. Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Bell, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, as well as the magazine Commentary, came to represent the core of this “neoconservative” movement.

The fraught relationship between paleoconservatives and neoconservatives was at the center of cultural politics on the American right and played a significant role in political memory of Nazi atrocities. The religious and cultural gulf between the largely Christian paleoconservatives and Jewish neoconservatives resulted in debates over the universality of atrocity memory, theology, cultural issues concerning American Jews, and Israeli issues. Controversies regarding accountability for perpetrators of Nazi atrocities, such as Israel’s trial of Adolf Eichmann, provoked a range of commentary from the right. The right’s anti-Communism highlighted the importance of relations with the Federal Republic of Germany and resulted in several controversies related to atrocity memory,
such as President Ronald Regan’s visit to Bitburg military cemetery. Political comparisons of minority suffering to Jewish suffering under the Third Reich played a significant role in many issues, ranging from the anti-Communist theory of totalitarianism and the perceived plight of Soviet Jewry to racial conflict in America and later abortion. As national and international memory of Nazi atrocities began to focus on memory of the Jewish Holocaust, issues of antisemitism on the right and the extreme right coalesced around Holocaust memory. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Holocaust memory served as a battleground for cultural and political accusations of antisemitism and as an important component of efforts on the right and left to define the mainstream American right.

5.1: Nuremberg and Accountability

The Saturday Evening Post’s first article on the impending trials of German war criminals included a variety of references to atrocities, often linking numbers, methods of killing, killing locations, and target demographics that betray a sense of overwhelmed confusion regarding the Third Reich’s crimes. Describing interviews with high-ranking German prisoners of war, the article records the breadth and depth of their denials of atrocities, their complicity in atrocities, and Hitler’s role in ordering atrocities.169 While this first article made frequent mention of Jews as victims, the next article on the trials focused entirely on disagreements between the victorious Allied Powers and made no mention of Jews in its brief references to victims.170

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A 1946 article on Leni Riefenstahl continued the *Saturday Evening Post’s* mockery of Nazis who denied knowledge of and responsibility for the crimes of the Third Reich. The writer recalled catching Riefenstahl giving contradictory statements regarding her knowledge of concentration camps and “the persecution of the Jews.”

The magazine continued this trend, remarking that based on the alibis of Moosburg inmates, “one might easily think that the Nazi Party was a society for the care and protection of Judaism.” In an interview with Doctor Karl Ittameier, the magazine noted his crimes against Jews and proudly reported on exposing his bluff that he protected a friend with a Jewish wife. The article, a piece on German post-war democracy, noted that many Germans continued to harbor prejudice against Jews, quoting one man’s claim that the American Army was “all Jews and Negroes, as Goebbels predicted.” The magazine also produced more sympathetic reports, noting the lingering shame that dogged even anti-Nazi Germans over the persecution of the Jews.

A 1949 article focusing on the remnants of Germany’s native Jewish population presented both continued German prejudice against Jews and signs of hope that the German people could overcome their hatred. It also represented a unique case in which the magazine relayed a variety of Jewish experiences during the war, ranging from early refugees to camp survivors.

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When an Illinois synagogue became the target of vandalism following a campaign of anti-Jewish flyers, the *Saturday Evening Post* celebrated the local community for coming together to oppose the hatred.\(^{176}\) In contrast to its confidence in American society’s ability to uphold the rule of law and oppose hatred, the magazine’s coverage of the Nuremberg trials began to criticize their ability to prevent future aggressive wars. It pointed out that those found guilty were only those associated with “the horrors of Nazi concentration camps, abuse and enslavement of subject peoples, torture and murder of Jews.” These convictions and sentences “might more appropriately have been taken care of by a drumhead court martial” using existing international conventions around war, rather than invent legal mechanisms which failed to deter increasing Soviet Russian aggression.\(^{177}\) A few years later, in 1950, an article leaned into this early concern about the impact of the trials on growing tensions with the Soviet Union. This article omitted any mention of Jews, focusing on the alleged chilling effect the Nuremberg trials had on Germans’ willingness to aid in “defending the West” against the Soviet Union.\(^{178}\)

In an illicit account of his work with German prisoners in Spandau, a former American Army physician recalled asking German Minister for Economic Affairs Walter Funk about his order that Dachau staff extract precious metal fillings from prisoners’ teeth. The “Bowery derelict” first argued that he had not done the actual extracting, then sought to dilute his responsibility with more notorious names. The doctor then recounted

\(^{176}\) “It Won’t Happen in Glencoe, Illinois,” *Saturday Evening Post* 219, no. 12 (September 21, 1946): 152.

\(^{177}\) “Will Nuremberg Stop New Aggressors,” *Saturday Evening Post* 219, no. 18 (November 2, 1946): 164.

his examination of a proud and jocular Baldur von Schirach, the dignified and mature Karl Doenitz, the “engaging” and “dangerous” Albert Speer, and a petulant Rudolf Hess. The doctor’s portrayal of the German leaders as ordinary men was predominantly social and not scientific in its manner, but its simultaneous appreciation of their normalcy and villainy anticipated Hannah Arendt’s descriptions of the banality of evil. A similar account, this time from a Lutheran Army chaplain responsible for the spiritual needs of the Nuremberg defendants, appeared in 1951. Chaplain Henry F. Gerecke, noting the agreement of prison psychologists stated that the defendants “were basically the same as other mortals,” and that with spiritual assistance, most were able to recognize their sins and sincerely repent. Grecke did not mention Jews in his extensive reflection on the inmates’ relationships with Christianity, although he did admonish Americans to “remember that the gross hates and cruelties which climaxed in the careers of the Nazi leaders had their inception in the petty hates, prejudices and compromises of millions of little men and women – some of them quite pious too.”

In contrast to the Wall Street Journal, the Saturday Evening Post published articles with a generally favorable view of admitting displaced persons into the United States. The magazine stressed the Jewish identity of most displaced persons as a factor of their status as “Hitler’s first victims,” and “in the best of times objects of persecution in many parts of the world,” repeating a particularistic narrative of Jewish persecution.

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Taking the opportunity to criticize the Truman administration for its handling of the ongoing conflict in Palestine, one article held it responsible for “leaving Europe’s dispossessed Jews in concentration camps for the rest of their lives.”

Another noted that Jewish displaced persons increasingly rejected immigration to America due to their Zionist sympathies. By this period in the magazine’s history, its opinionated editorials championing isolationist and pro-business policies had given way to an embrace of America’s “diverse religions and racial groups.” A 1948 article on a middle-class Jewish family, part of a series on these groups, celebrated the family’s financial mobility as a product of the country’s liberal economic policies.

While the Saturday Evening Post still opposed the New Deal and government intervention, it no longer held to the isolationist cultural nationalism of the Old Right and refrained from embracing the traditionalist and often deeply religious conservatism of an emerging New Right.

As the Saturday Evening Post drifted from relevance and the new American political right, its views on justice for the perpetrators of Nazi atrocities and admitting displaced persons into the United States grew farther apart from those of the Wall Street Journal. It consistently recognized an explicit Jewish focus amongst the Third Reich’s crimes in its discussion of the Nuremberg Trials, and it condemned that prejudice both independently and as a basis for the regime’s evils, separate from the regime’s political character. Following its coverage of the Nuremberg Trials, it made little mention of Jews

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and only featured sporadic echoes of Nazism beyond its discussion of rebuilding Germany and bolstering it against Soviet influence.

The Wall Street Journal’s outspoken opinion editor Thomas Woodlock died in 1945. Vermont Royster, who had left the paper to serve in the Navy during the war, returned to become the magazine’s defining voice. In late May 1945, after victory in Europe and prior to the convening of the International Military Tribunal, Raymond Moley published an editorial in the Wall Street Journal criticizing the Allied Powers for their failure to promptly establish the machinery of justice necessary to prosecute, try, and punish Axis war criminals. International conventions and German criminal law were a sufficient legal basis, he wrote, although reconciling the judicial procedure of the various Allied Powers would pose a challenge.185

William Henry Chamberlin, a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal and a Communist sympathizer turned ardent anti-Communist, urged caution in a September 1945 article. Noting that there was “no historical precedents for trials” of defeated leaders, he argued that “There has never been a war without atrocities,” and that the trial and execution of defeated leaders for such atrocities would discourage voluntary surrender in future wars and necessarily lack the “moral weight” of “objective and impartial judgement.” The Soviet Union, he wrote, also bore responsibility as an aggressor in the conflict, and its lack of accountability would reinforce these unfavorable aspects of the trials. In favor of the trials, he wrote that German and Japanese responsibility for the conflict was beyond serious dispute. In addition, German “ferocious

185 Raymond Moley, “Many Criminals and No Courts: We Have Made Poor Preparation to Try War Offenders,” Wall Street Journal, May 23, 1945.
anti-Semitic policy and... treatment of civilians in occupied countries” and Japanese “handling of prisoners” were, according to Chamberlin, “beyond the limits of what must be regarded as the inevitable brutality of war.” Reconciling his arguments for and against the trials, Chamberlin wrote that they should avoid targeting “whole classes,” such as a “holocaust” of generals, and “punish no German or Japanese for an action which would be considered patriotic if performed by someone in service of the United Nations.” Punishment, he wrote, should be reserved for those responsible for the “maltreatment of prisoners and civilians.”

Following the initial 24 indictments, Moley lauded the prosecutors’ legal approach of portraying a conspiracy against peace. Dismissing charges that the entire prosecution was ex post facto, he suggested that NSDAP membership constituted intent to participate in a conspiracy that resulted in tangible crimes. While he expressed apprehension at some precedents the trials could set, he approved of their core principle of individual responsibility for corporate actions.

One year later, an editorial repeated Chamberlin’s earlier lamentation that the Soviets would not join the Germans as defendants. In 1948, Chamberlin wrote in support of a Nuremberg trial judge who questioned the trials’ impartiality. Distinguishing between wartime killing and court-ordered killing, Chamberlin expressed a variety of doubts on the legal basis for the trials, their “educational” value, and their moral validity.

Nuremberg. Without mentioning Nazi atrocities against the civilians of occupied lands, Chamberlin reasoned that “Lack of moral courage” was “scarcely a punishable offense,” given the “moral courage of a high order” necessary to “repudiate the service of a totalitarian state.” He then repeated his call for the prosecution of Soviets.

In a curious editorial, the Wall Street Journal fawned over Albert Speer’s Nuremberg performance, accepting his defense that technology enabled the highest echelons of “the modern totalitarian state” to control the lowest, including “the concentration-camp system,” without the aid of middlemen. Quoting Speer, the paper argued that “the development of individual freedom and the self-confidence of the individual human being” was the necessary counterweight to the increasing power of technology. Neither Speer nor the paper included “individual responsibility” in this list.

When Anglican priest and renowned Marxist Hewlett Johnson allegedly criticized America for being “a hundred years behind the rest of the world in everything except religion, and in religion a hundred and fifty years behind,” William Chamberlin replied with a laundry list of Europe’s recent atrocities. Describing “human suffering in our time” and the “ferocious persecutions based on racial, class and political grounds,” Chamberlin included “the millions of Jews who fell victims to Nazi ferocity” alongside a variety of victims of both Communism and Fascism. Noting that “Emotional sympathy”

often drew people to emphasize with particular tragedies in his list and not others, he insisted on considering them together in their “cumulative horror.”

America, he wrote, had not fallen to a modern dictatorship because it had managed to come through “a great depression and a great war without killing anyone for his ideas, without setting up the concentration camp as the regular cure for dissenting opinion.”

192 This triumph through inaction Chamberlin attributed to American religion, a passion he shared with Chamberlin. This speaks to another shared value: both writers espoused a fundamentalist bias against change, particularly the rapid change of revolutions.

This hatred for change manifested in a May 1946 article in which Chamberlin argued against the Allied military government of Germany destroying German war memorials and books “glorifying Nazism and militarism.” While his criticism exaggerated the results of the order, his suggestion for an alternative recalled Woodlock’s earlier idea: increased contact particularly economic contact, between Germany and the West would be the most effective method of indoctrinating Germans to freedom.

194 In a September 1946 article criticizing the breadth of Denazification, Chamberlin made a second rare mention of Jewish suffering. A result of prosecuting minor Third Reich officials, he argued, would be that most Germans would remember the Nazi “not as the

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192 The United States government did exactly what Chamberlin described in some of his phrasing, and he even noted the injustice of Japanese internment, but it did not murder millions of people in the twentieth century.


brutal overseer of a concentration camp, not as the adventurer who enriched himself by
buying up confiscated Jewish property, but as a normal, decent fellow.”

5.2 The Palestine Crisis

While pre-war discussion of the British Mandate in Palestine focused on its
relationship to the refugee issue and its strategic role in in the Near East, both the
Saturday Evening Post and the Wall Street Journal began to address the conflict between
Jews and Arabs as it intensified following the conclusion of hostilities with the Axis
powers. The Wall Street Journal neither explicitly approved of nor condemned Zionism,
although as early as 1936, it noted with disdain that the “Jewish Fascists” of Palestine,
presumably the Revisionist Zionists, had formed a “terroristic section,” likely the
Irgun.196

In a November 1945 editorial, Moley pondered the future of “this perennial
irritant,” noting the plight of Jewish and non-Jewish refugees in Europe and the
importance of considering both Arab and Muslim reactions to Jewish migration. While he
stated that a significant Jewish presence in Palestine was “an accomplished fact,” he
noted “differences among Jewish leaders themselves” and various other proposed homes
for Jewish refugees from Siberia to Africa.197 An article reflecting on how British
restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine burdened DP camps in the American-
occupied sector of Germany included mention of ongoing Polish violence against the

195 William Henry Chamberlin, “The Denazification Fiasco: It Is Reaching Down Too Far in Its Purge,
Creating General Insecurity and Making Ready Converts for Communism and Nationalist Propaganda,”
197 Raymond Moley, “The Future of Palestine: Current Arab Unrest Points Up the Unsettled Question Of
Jewish survivors of German persecution. “It is scarcely remarkable that Zionism should so dominate the thinking of these homeless wanders of Europe,” read the article as it compared the Israelite exodus from Egypt to “concentration camp survivors” fleeing a continually violent and unwelcoming Europe in the aftermath of German persecution. Critical of the Polish government and people, as well as the American government’s apparent reluctance to act on the issue, the article also addressed the refugees’ desire to leave Europe for Palestine, commenting, “Hitler could scarcely have wished for more.”

The *Saturday Evening Post* shared the *Wall Street Journal*’s awe at the power Zionism had over Jewish displaced persons, attributing their passion and tenacity to “six years of systematic extermination.” The “ruthless Darwinism of the crematoriums,” wrote the author, selected for and produced a generation of Jews “with a desperation to live.” Reveling in the metaphor of the exodus from Egypt, the article did not offer the same hedged rebukes of illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine, focusing on the persistent climate of Jew hatred, especially that in Poland. Even as it considered the broader implications of the increasing conflict in Palestine, the magazine continued to celebrate the story of Jewish Zionists, such as a 26-year-old Polish Jew who had fought as a partisan and soldier in the Polish Army before setting off to become an officer in the new Jewish army in Palestine. This romanticism was not blind; just as the *Wall Street*
Journal criticized the Irgun, the Saturday Evening Post harbored no sympathies for the Stern gang.201

As tensions grew in Palestine, the Saturday Evening Post complained that “globoliberals” calling on the British to withdraw from the region would leave a power vacuum and pose a danger to Western economic and political interests.202 When the United Nations approved partition, Kermit Roosevelt Jr. opined that the crisis provided an opportunity for Muslim religious fanaticism to combined with xenophobic Arab nationalism into a potent motivating force for conflict. Connecting the issue of displaced persons to the Palestine question, he explained that Americans felt a sense of obligation to find a home for the persecuted Jews of Europe. Roosevelt’s concern did not end with Jewish survival: he also feared that Americans would develop a racial hostility towards the Arabs and that the Arabs would form an anti-Western bloc, allying themselves with the Soviets.203 Another article reiterated a hesitancy to take either side in the conflict, fearful that it would necessitate American military intervention.204

Roosevelt returned to the magazine, interviewing Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and leader of the Palestinian Arab cause. Roosevelt began with an overview of charges that the Mufti was anti-Jewish and “a war criminal who not only has fought the British but actively aided the Nazis in their massacres if European Jewry.” Recording the Mufti’s vehement and detailed denial of these charges, Roosevelt

portrayed a man of “fanatical singlemindedness” and considerable diplomatic talents. Kermit Roosevelt, Dorothy Thompson, and Harry Fosdick later came together to form the American Friends of the Middle East, a pro-Arab educational, cultural, and political organization that often criticized American relations with Israel. Rooted in a progressive Protestant social outlook that disdained the nationalist particularism of Nazism and Zionism alike, this convergence of liberal internationalism and Old Right isolationism embraced a narrative of a tradition of Muslim religious tolerance and anti-Imperialism. Many writers for the *Saturday Evening Post* had a different perspective on the conflict, admiring the pioneering Zionist spirit that recalled America’s own founding.

In May 1947, the *Wall Street Journal*’s William Henry Chamberlin came out in favor of partition with the caveats that “neither the Arabs nor the Jewish Extremists” would likely accept such an arrangement, and that the Soviets could “exploit Arab discontent” with it.206 A February 1949 article complained that Truman and his administration were trying to play both sides of partition to their own advantage, appealing to the Zionists in an attempt to win the “Jewish vote.”207 During the June 1948 first truce in the ongoing war in Palestine, Chamberlin discussed American interests in the conflict. Writing that some in America were “passionately and uncritically pro-Zionist” and that a “smaller and less articulate section is passionately and uncritically pro-Arab,” he cautioned against letting the American opinion on the issue devolve into

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partisanship and remarked on the importance of oil reserves under Arab control. Labeling
the “Grand Mufti of Jerusalem,” the Irgun, and the Stern gang as irreconcilable
extremists, he suggested that even efforts to broker a deal between King Hussein and the
Zionist establishment would likely fail on account of Hussein’s domestic concerns.208
Chamberlin later expanded on his earlier criticism of the United Nations for its failure to
broker peace in Palestine, describing the victory of force over negotiation and mentioning
the new Arab refugee issue.209 Regarding the future of the region, he worried that the
influx of Jewish refugees would create a Jewish desire for “Lebensraum, perhaps at the
expense of the neighboring Arab territories,” and undermine the legitimacy of the pro-
Western Arab regimes. That the United Nations was unable to enforce its decided-yet-
fragile will on either the Arabs or the Jews led Chamberlin to worry that that the United
States and Britain would inherit its burden of mediating world conflicts. The Soviet
Union, he feared, would also attempt to take up this role in furtherance of its own
interests.210

5.3 Tweedledum and Tweedledee211

Comparisons between Fascist Italy, Hitler’s Germany, and the Soviet Union
were a staple of American political commentary on Europe from the former regimes’

210 William Henry Chamberlin, “The Divided Nations: U.N. Has Been Powerless to Deal with Peace
211 “Tweedledum and Tweedledee,” Wall Street Journal, March 18, 1946. This rhyming pair of characters
originated with a 1725 English epigram and an 1805 nursery rhyme that satirizes conflicts between similar
parties, as this article satirized the similarities between Hitler and Stalin.
outssets. These comparisons continued with diminished vigor during the war, resuming with greater intensity following Germany’s surrender.

One early post-war article in the *Saturday Evening Post* mused that the Soviet use of the term “cosmopolitan” might “represent a concealed anti-Semitism,” joking that an alliance with the “K.K.K.” might be forthcoming. The incorporation of Jews into comparisons between the Third Reich and U.S.S.R. was not as frequent as direct comparisons between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin or manipulations of the Third Reich’s initial alliance with Soviet Russia and later use of Slavic troops to stoke anti-Russian sentiment.\(^{212}\)

Although the magazine often mentioned Jews as the primary victims of Nazi atrocities, it also mentioned other victims. A 1953 article describing Soviet re-use of the former German concentration camp at Sachsenhausen mentioned the irony of its repeated use for political prisoners.\(^{213}\) The magazine also failed to make the most basic comparisons to Hitler and the Third Reich in some instances, unlike its counterparts in an emerging New Right. A 1951 article documenting “mass murder” in the People’s Republic of China did not mention Hitler, Germany, or Jews.\(^{214}\) A 1959 bulletin rectified this omission with a Hitler comparison as it accused China of “genocide” in Tibet.\(^{215}\)

One 1955 article demanded to know why the American people were not reprising their response to “totalitarian tyrant” Adolf Hitler for the U.S.S.R. This article


explicitly enumerated the former’s actions against Jews, including “the Aryan laws, the pogroms and the incineration chambers,” though it did not provide examples of parallel Soviet crimes.216 The Wall Street Journal’s extensive use of the “totalitarian” paradigm and infrequent mention of Jews in these comparisons highlights the early attention that the Saturday Evening Post gave to the situation of Soviet Jewry that would become a prominent cause among American Jews and anti-Communists. A lengthy 1960 report on the troubles Jews faced in the Soviet Union included the Soviet embrace of Arab anti-Israel sentiment, Slavic cooperation with the Axis in its persecution of Jews, and a variety of details describing various Jewish subjects’ experiences under Axis occupation.217 An article later that year offered a variety of anecdotes accusing Nikita Khrushchev of hatred for and actions against Jews. The Soviet Union, it argued was the true world leader in “anti-Semitism,” not “democratic West Germany.”218

Following the defeat of the Axis Powers, the Wall Street Journal’s William Henry Chamberlin led the paper in intensifying its long-standing equation of Hitler and Stalin.219 A March 1946 editorial noted that it was the third piece in the paper to compare these regimes under the title “Tweedledum and Tweedledee,” adding that the paper received “abusive letters” for “stating the facts.” The editorial cautioned that the coast of

defeating Hitler had been “the adoption of much of Hitler’s philosophy and many of his methods,” and that “the death of the American tradition” might be the cost of defeating Stalin. While it did not fully expound on the meaning of this claim, it quoted “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness” as representative of spiritual, intellectual, and economic freedoms that stood in opposition to a view of man as a “cog in a machine, the beast in the field—and just as expendable.”\textsuperscript{220}

Thomas Woodlock had understood totalitarianism as the unchecked authority of the government over minorities, to include the ultimate minority of the individual. This definition was compatible with, although not identical to, William Chamberlin’s understanding of totalitarianism. Chamberlin saw it as a subversion of constituent individuals to the will and ultimate purposes of the state. In an editorial criticizing Western liberals for allowing critiques of Western democracies to undermine arguments against totalitarianism, Chamberlin emphasized the body counts of Communist Russia and China compared to those of the Great Depression and American lynching. He notably avoided a single explicit reference to Hitler or any of his attempts at racial extermination.\textsuperscript{221} Complaining about the increasingly loose use of words such as “liberal,” “reactionary,” “democratic, “progressive,” “social justice,” and “fascist,” Chamberlin urged readers to demand definitions of these terms, disregarding his own varied use of “liberal” as a pejorative for the progressive left and a value of the


Both Woodlock and Chamberlin understood economic freedoms as conducive to freedom of conscience. Woodlock saw irreligion as the corrupting agent of totalitarianism, eroding the primary moral check on government power. Chamberlin focused on government interference in property rights and economic conduct as a greater danger to a people’s immediate and practical freedoms.

In an attack on Poland’s Communist government for its treatment of German displaced persons, the *Wall Street Journal* portrayed the brutalities of Communism. Between detailed accounts of Communist atrocities and constant attacks on Communism, including comparisons to Fascism, the paper’s investment in ideological opposition to Communism outweighed its coverage of Nazism’s crimes and moral failings. Woodlock’s focus on religion as the origin of totalitarianism reinforced the ability of American tradition to protect itself, while Chamberlin’s focus on economics understood the New Deal and increasing American openness to government intervention as a breach in the country’s defenses.

Much of the *Wall Street Journal*’s comparisons between Communism and Fascism omitted mention of the character of Axis atrocities. In one of Chamberlin’s columns, he discussed Fascist race hatred as a parallel to Communist class hatred, further pointing out that the Communist powers also engaged in violence targeting ethnic

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In another editorial, Chamberlin explicitly mentioned “Nazi atrocities against Jews and other ethnic groups” as a failure of the Third Reich because these actions had aroused hatred for Germany. Arguing that utopian goals could never justify evil results, his primary lament for Germany was the loss of its prestige and culture, not the burden of its crimes. Chamberlin made a second reference to “the extermination of millions of Jews by the Nazis,” alongside a mention of “the starving to death of millions of recalcitrant peasants by the Soviet Government,” as an example of the horrors of modernity that were eradicating confidence in human progress. This wavering confidence, he wrote, meant that America would have to lead the world as a beacon of freedom’s promise.

The *Wall Street Journal* missed an opportunity to mention Nazi atrocities outside of Nuremberg, the Palestine crisis, or comparisons in a series of articles addressing America’s split position on the United Nations convention on genocide. Two of the first three articles on the issue addressed examples of genocide, focusing on the Soviet Union and restricting their commentary on “Nazi Germany” to its name alone.

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The third article focused on why the United States should avoid entangling itself by ratifying the treaty.\textsuperscript{229}

On the 25\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Hitler’s victory in the Reichstag, Chamberlin wrote an editorial expressing confidence in the defeat of Nazism. Noting that Hitler used the Jews as “an unpopular scapegoat,” the piece did not refer to any of the regime’s atrocities.\textsuperscript{230} The \textit{Wall Street Journal}’s last mention of Nazism prior to the Eichmann trial was its most direct. Addressing a recent synagogue desecration in West Germany, Chamberlin labeled such acts “a despicable form of delinquency from which no country is exempt.” Adding that the incident recalled “memories of the campaign of Jewish extermination waged by Hitler,” he proceeded to argue that no real threat of “a new Hitler” or serious anti-Jewish violence existed in West Germany. Chamberlin then explained why Hitler and the NSDAP had chosen Jews as a scapegoat, recalling their representation among Communists, business, and the professional class. These factors no longer posed a danger to Jews, he wrote, because “emigration and massacre” had shrunk the Jewish community in Germany and reduced its prominence. A general disregard for authority was the primary culprit, according to Chamberlin, and the lingering effects of Nazi “indoctrination” may have played a role.\textsuperscript{231}

\textsuperscript{229}“To Prevent and To Punish,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, October 10, 1956.
Wealthy, young Yale alumnus William F. Buckley Jr. founded *National Review* in 1955 as a conservative monthly magazine. Capitalizing on the success of *God and Man at Yale*, his critique of American higher education, Buckley sought to create a platform for conservative intellectual thought and strengthen America’s uneasy conservative alliance. Anti-Communism, traditionalist religious and social values, and liberal economics were the early hallmarks of the magazine, which became the core of a new, American conservative movement. Buckley and other conservative Catholics dominated the list of contributors, which also included anti-Communist Jews such as Frank Meyer.

While it did not devote significant space to Nazi German atrocities against the Jews until the 1960s, *National Review*’s third issue of 7 December 1955 was the first to mention Nazi antisemitism. In a review of Nazi press chief Otto Dietrich’s memoir, reviewer Karl Hess decried the recent “rash of anti-Nazi books” as an attack on anti-Communism and a resurgent Germany capable of acting as a “chief bulwark against Soviet aggression.” Contrary to *National Review*’s later stance, Hess also warned against conflating Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. While noting that Dietrich’s memoir was “thin,” he argued that it painted an accurate picture of Nazism as a popular cult of personality with limited ambitions. “Even Hitler's racial policies—beginning with his attack on Jewish financial concentrations—were popular and moderate at first,” wrote Hess.232 The point of this brief mention was Hitler’s popularity, but Hess’s focus on

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Jewish finance and his use of the word “moderate” suggest that he did not see anything particularly remarkable in early Nazi anti-Jewish policy, only in its not-so-moderate culmination.

The 1957 dismissal of a Michigan professor was the first example of what became a common theme in *National Review*’s coverage of Nazism and American Jews. In an article criticizing the left-wing tendency to label ideological deviations as “fascist,” Russell Kirk highlighted the dismissal of a German-born Michigan state college professor over allegations that he had been a member of the Nazi party.²³³ Kirk declined to speculate whether this was true, focusing on the lack of an investigation and the potency of such an accusation. In January 1960, *National Review* printed a letter to the editor criticizing the World Jewish Congress’s advocacy of a plan for West Germany to investigate prominent individuals’ Nazi ties. The writer argued that this was equivalent to Senator Joseph McCarthy’s targeting of former Communists.²³⁴

In the same issue, *National Review* condemned New York City magistrate Milton Solomon for charging a group of young men with treason over painting swastikas on synagogues and their plans to beat up Jews. Calling on the Jewish community to condemn Solomon, *National Review* argued that antisemitism was not a significant issue in the United States and that the men’s admiration for Nazism was a childish hooliganism.²³⁵ While the *Saturday Evening Post*’s earlier coverage of a similar incident in Illinois shared this latter view, it celebrated the community crackdown on the

perpetrators rather than labeling it an overreaction. The *Wall Street Journal*’s response to a synagogue desecration in Germany shared both publication’s belief that juvenile antics were at fault and that America was safe from anti-Jewish prejudice.

The similarity of these responses highlights where they departed from common ground. The *Saturday Evening Post*, representing an American nationalism that took pride in its liberal values, focused on celebrating a community’s response to prejudice against Jews. The *Wall Street Journal*, a bastion of liberal economics, offered a detailed analysis of Germany’s hatred for Jews, attributing it to disproportionate Jewish economic power, and commending that power. *National Review* focused entirely on criticizing the Jewish overreaction to the vandalism, dismissing the viability and therefore the seriousness of reverence for Nazism. Both latter publications explicitly or implicitly believed that hatred for Jews was a consequence of their disproportionate power. The *Wall Street Journal* did not mention Jewish power in America, implying that Jewish overrepresentation only threatened to enflame hatred for Jews in foreign societies that lacked the values and traditions of American liberty. It also understood Jewish power as the result of merit under liberal economic conditions and reactions to this success as inherently anti-Capitalist. *National Review* explicitly addressed American Jewish power, critiquing it.
CHAPTER 6: EICHMANN

Totalitarianism and the Trial of Adolf Eichmann: 1950-1970

The pinnacle of National Review coverage of the controversy over culpability and Nazism came only a few months later in July with the Israeli capture and subsequent trial of Adolf Eichmann. In a news bulletin titled “Let’s All Hate Germany, Comrade,” National Review condemned what it perceived as a wave of anti-Germanism accompanying the trial and alleged the Communists were inflating and capitalizing on the trend.236 The Saturday Evening Post gently chided Israel for violating Argentine sovereignty, although it expressed initial approval that Eichmann would “be brought to justice.”237 The Wall Street Journal accorded the Eichmann affair less attention than the other two publications leading up to the trial, confining its coverage to short news bulletins addressing issues surrounding Eichmann’s capture and the charge that he was complicit in the murder of “six million Jews.” The most notable aspect of these bulletins was their attempt to use a new term for “killing” with each update.238

Thomas Stanley Matthews, a former editor of Time Magazine, a Democrat, and an establishment liberal initially covered the Eichmann trial for the Saturday Evening Post. “A bomb has been exploded in Jerusalem,” he wrote, “and has now begun to rain down

236 “Let’s All Hate Germany, Comrade,” National Review 10, no. 11 (March 25, 1961): 172.
237 “In the Eichmann Case, the UN Found a Sensible Solution,” Saturday Evening Post 233, no. 16 (October 15, 1960): 10.
on Europe the ashes of 6,000,000 martyred dead.” Mainstream coverage of the Eichmann trial established patterns of popular reference to the Third Reich’s atrocities against Jews. The phrase “a Nazi plot to exterminate the Jewish people” would not have been out of place in the Saturday Evening Post or Wall Street Journal prior to the trial; the word “exterminate” appeared in several articles. Matthews’s article coupled this phrasing with the “6,000,000” figure, verbiage describing “complicity, “the final solution,” forearm tattoos, “the gas chambers at Auschwitz,” following “his bosses’ orders,” and “the German holocaust.” Matthews devoted a considerable portion of his article to mesmerized descriptions of Israeli culture and Jews’ ideas, often conflicting, behind the trial. Without significant judgment, he listed the issues of Argentine sovereignty, legal jurisdiction, and that dominated critiques of the trial. While the “attempted extirpation of the Jews was only incidental” to the Nuremberg trials, Matthews wrote that the concentration on the horrors of this campaign raised deeper issues about “anti-Semitism” and human complicity in evil. “If the Eichmann trial does nothing else but offer the world convincing proof that any sort of race hatred is a crime which leads inexorably on to national insanity and homicidal mania,” Matthews concluded, “it will not have been fought in vain.”

239 The Saturday Evening Post left the rest of its coverage to an expert on the subject, Israeli Attorney General and lead prosecutor at the trial, Gideon Hausner.240 This coverage was typical of America’s moderate mainstream and one example of the

Saturday Evening Post’s nascent split with a new American right that was increasingly critical in its approach to Nazi atrocity memory.

The Wall Street Journal continued covering the Eichmann trial with short, factual bulletins. These reports did not contain commentary or verbiage that significantly suggested opinions. Like, the Saturday Evening Post, they repeated terms and modes of reference that now define American reference to the Third Reich’s actions against Jews, including one mention that “Holocaust is the word Israel uses to characterize the mass extermination of Jews by the Nazis.” Amid its constant bulletins, articles, and editorials on the ideological and nuclear threats of Communism, Eichmann’s execution only merited the usual bulletin, and only two full articles made significant mention of the affair. An April 1961 report on talks between American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, staff reporter Philip Geyelin wrote that the Eichmann trial and William Shirer’s The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich were making West Germans anxious as they sought to rebuild international respect for Germany so it could return to its seat among leading Western powers. An earlier bulletin connected Shirer’s book to the ongoing trial, praising both works for igniting a popular media interest in Nazi Germany that would educate a new generation about its crimes. The newspaper generally celebrated such media attention, once lampooning a

Waffen SS veterans’ organization for protesting an unfavorable documentary portrayal of the SS.245

In his one editorial on the subject, William Henry Chamberlin wallowed in the trial’s historic drama, utilizing repeated theatric and Biblical metaphors. Describing “An atmosphere of Old Testament retribution,” he celebrated the trial’s location in Jerusalem, “the old historic capitol of the new Jewish state” that proved “the failure of Hitler’s Satanic design.” Chamberlin firmly stated that Eichmann was guilty and bore responsibility for transporting Jews to “extermination centers,” adding that he was too “high up” to plead coercion. The editor then dismissed the relevance of the court’s obvious partiality and the “bizarre” circumstances of Eichmann’s capture. For Chamberlin, the trial’s momentous importance lay in its explication of “one of the darkest pages in modern history.” In contrast to his earlier editorials comparing the Third Reich’s victims to the victims of Communism, he emphasized that the Jewish victims of the Third Reich’s “organized slaughter” were “members of a race or faith.” The scale and manner of the murders eclipsed the “periodic massacres of Jews in the Middle Ages,” he wrote, subtly downplaying the historic religious persecutions of Jews while noting their history of victimhood. Emphasizing the “infinity, enormity” of Eichmann’s crimes and separating concerns for Eichmann from concerns of law, Chamberlin concluded that while the trial lacked a sufficient legal basis, it was better than the alternative of inaction. While he recognized that the trial would cause survivors anguish and mused that private murder would have been a preferable end for the accused, he praised its role in

publicizing the “basic grim” facts and implicating further guilty parties, including Jews who behaved less than heroically “in the shadow of threatened extermination.” While Chamberlin noted the probability that the Soviet Union would use the trial in propaganda against West Germany, he suggested that the “Soviet record on anti-Semitism” and its murder of “probably as many victims as Hitler’s horrible genocidal slaughter of the Jews” would undermine this message. Noting that “Man’s inhumanity to man is not a new theme,” Chamberlin concluded by praising the power of the Jewish state and recalling to the reader that “Soviet Russia and Red China” still practiced genocide.246

The National Review accused William Shirer’s The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany, which featured prominently in mainstream coverage of the trial, of harboring “implicit anti-German bias,” a charge historian Norbert Muhlen repeated in a 1962 review.247 In contrast, the Saturday Evening Post ran articles celebrating a campaign against George Lincoln Rockwell and the “ultraright” and Danes who saved Jews from Nazi persecution.248 While the Wall Street Journal disparaged hate for Germany and Germans in order to bolster the fight against Communism, it consistently did so while maintaining respect for the Third Reich’s victims, including Jews, and did not rave against the Eichmann trial.249

*National Review* saw concern over Nazi ties as a potential hindrance to the fight against Communism. It consistently used legal and moral arguments to criticize Jewish advocacy and actions to further accountability for Nazis. A 1963 review of *The Survivors, A Report on the Jews in Germany Today* lauded the book for its efforts to “evaluate and to explain rather than to castigate” and highlighted a chapter on West German efforts to “disentangle themselves from the web of Nazi guilt.” “The tragedy of great sin,” argued reviewer S.J. Tonsor, “is that it can never be undone, but repentance, which is so notably lacking in the Communist world, is certainly the road to manhood as well as nationhood.”²⁵⁰ *National Review* writers cited their liberal values, particularly free speech, as the basis of their concerns over anti-Nazi efforts and legislation, but their language elevated Christian concepts of sin and forgiveness. This latter sensibility saw little explicit explication, particularly regarding the “repentance” it necessarily entailed, although it consistently demanded blanket forgiveness of Nazi guilt in order to better counter the ongoing Communist threat.

Praising the magazine as “America's leading intellectual monthly” and “one of the most alert and intelligent periodicals in America today,” journalist Jack Jones’s 1966 article criticized the American Jewish Committee’s *Commentary* for “muddled thinking” on “the day's dominant issues,” including “Nazi war crimes.”²⁵¹ *National Review* ridiculed German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers over his support for

²⁵¹ Jack E. Jones, “A Letter to *Commentary,*” *National Review* 18, no. 40 (October 4, 1966): 983–988. In *NR*’s next issue, Jack Jones wrote a letter to the editor complaining that the piece he submitted differed significantly, especially in tone, with the piece that *NR* printed. It is unclear whether the article’s initial praise was sincere.
extending the statute of limitations for war crimes and his criticism of West German
governance, particularly its refusal to bar many former Nazis from public service.
Arguing that “trials against Nazi criminals” were “political acts,” it denounced efforts to
hold Germans legally responsible as attempts to undermine West German legitimacy. It
accused Commentary of reprinting the Jaspers interview, which initially appeared in Der
Spiegel, for the “thrill” attached to Nazism and decried “the undying campaign to
represent Germans as evil.” The writer accepted that Germany bore a degree of
communal guilt, adding that neither the Nazi “genocide” of Jews and others nor such
collective guilt was “unique and unprecedented.” He cited the Armenian Genocide and
US treatment of Native Americans as examples of his argument that “Genocide is a
recurrent phenomenon,” furthering arguing that Jews, “though we so often hear of them
as victims,” perpetrated genocide in the Biblical era. The degree to which this article
marginalized the importance of Nazi crimes against Jews stands out even in its time,
although its discussion of genocide is consistent with National Review’s tendency to
universalize Nazi evils. Its treatment of Jews, particularly its association between Jewish
and Communist interests, is more direct than in similar articles but not unique. The article
addressed the inevitable comparison of “the German Massacre” to Communist murders,
pointing out that “between four and six million” Jews paled in comparison to the
innumerable and increasing victims of Communism, including Soviet Jewry, and
implicating Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

If National Review was skeptical of where Jewish loyalties lay in the fight
against Communism, it made some effort to criticize anti-Jewish sentiment. A November
1962 note chastised Americans for distributing and believing copies of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, adding that, “in an age of genocide and concentration camps and crematoria, they were more than a joke, and even now they should be treated as a very dangerous joke.”252 This was *National Review*’s first mention of the Nazi murder of Jews, and its explicit, serious language was highly unusual in the magazine’s often flippant news roundup.

In April 1963, American historian Francis Russell wrote about his return to the site of Bergen-Belsen. As a soldier in the Canadian Army, Russell visited the camp soon after the war, when it held displaced persons, and attended the Luneburg trial of its guards. His somber reflection that “Millions of words have been written about this place, and yet the words have been little enough—pebbles added to a cairn in passing,” contrasts with, but does not contradict, later criticisms of memorialization. Russell recalled a series of inconsequential tableaus from the trial, his encounters with the DPs, and his recent visit to the site, focusing on his sympathy for the DPs and the tragedy of the murders. He noted that “The area is almost too well cared for” and suggested that German visitors ignored or did not grasp the horror or meaning of the site. He concluded by pondering the reality and universality of death and evil, “Belsen came to me as something much more vast than the concentration camp, no longer a sign of what Germans had done to Jews, but a symbol of what men can do to their fellow men.”253 Russell’s piece exemplified another, less politically significant aspect of the Nazi’s

atrocities to *National Review*: their moral lessons as a symbol of evil, divorced from their Jewish context.

The ability of *entjudeter* murder of Jews to impart moral lessons also gave it the power to set moral precedent, and *National Review* writers were keenly aware of what that could mean. In a 1963 farewell recapitulation of Konrad Adenauer’s chancellorship, Alistair Horne lauded Adenauer’s opposition to the Nazis as a Weimar politician and resistance to barring former Nazis from government posts as Chancellor of Germany. He also lamented that Adenauer “pioneered” reparations to the State of Israel, proffering it as an example of how the leader could be “susceptible to public opinion.” A 1965 news update outlined the connection between German “partial reparation for the millions of Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II” to the Communist threat. It explained how a secret arms deal between West Germany and Israel provoked Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser to invite East German leader Walter Ulbricht for a state visit, which went ahead even after West Germany canceled the arms deal with Israel. The piece also stated that the United States had instigated the arms deal and mentioned the influence of “Jewish firms” in America.

The *National Review* did not explicitly oppose reparations for Nazi German atrocities against Jews. It did voice concern over their effects on anti-Communist international cooperation, and it conveyed its moral skepticism in its tone. *National Review*’s consistent emphasis on Nazi, not German, culpability and the State of Israel as the recipient of reparations echoed popular concerns over the arrangements and the

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publication’s commitment to support West Germany as a bulwark against Communism. The use of the term “partial reparation” suggests a hesitancy to accept financial compensation as an appropriate means of addressing past crimes on a large scale. This did not prevent Buckley from stating in 1968 that Israel should “make reparations to Palestinian refugees,” although this was a decidedly strategic argument.\textsuperscript{256} \textit{National Review} did not mention reparations to Jews when it discussed reparations to black or Native Americans; it also explicitly and repeatedly opposed both policies.\textsuperscript{257} It was not until 1997 that Buckley directly addressed reparations to Jews, at which time he suggested that historical individual responsibility did not create a collective political guilt.\textsuperscript{258}

\textit{National Review} was not primarily concerned whether or not SD Jewish department logistician Adolf Eichmann was morally guilty; it cared much more about the legal particularities of his case. The magazine published seven critical pieces when Israel abducted Eichmann from his refuge in Argentina in 1960 and put him on trial in 1961 for crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and various Nazi memberships. “No tear will be shed for Eichmann,” the magazine’s first article on the issue stated in June 1961, adding that he “is generally believed to have had a primary hand in exterminating hundreds of thousands of Jews.” The article noted that no trial had established his guilt and that West Germany had long sought him for such a trial. Israel,

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\textsuperscript{257} See the follow articles for examples of these topics: “Blessed Be the Militants,” \textit{National Review} 21, no. 19 (May 20, 1969): 478.
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the piece reported, had recently announced that it held Eichmann and planned to try him “for his life” on charges of crimes against the Jewish people. Although Israel had not released the details of Eichmann’s capture, *National Review* correctly summarized and took issue with what had likely happened. The alleged violation of sovereignty was second to the magazine’s concern over the nature of Israel’s charges. It took issue with Israel’s jurisdiction, noting that the State of Israel had not existed at the time of Eichmann’s alleged crimes. It also noted that crimes against a people had no direct legal precedents “save for those crimes against the German people which the Nazis defined so broadly and punished so grimly.” The implications, it argued, were “disturbing—and dangerous.”

The next piece came only days later and stated in plainer terms that *National Review* thought Eichmann deserved death but that it objected to the legal form of the proceedings. It compared the “mass butcher of human beings” with bogeymen such as “Joseph Goebbels, or Nikita Khrushchev,” labeling him a beast and arguing that, “beasts are, on occasion, best treated bestially.” It did not leave readers in any doubt what it meant: “We should not devote a stick of type to abominating Eichmann's assassination—we should look the other way.” It then decried Israel’s actions as attempts legally to justify assassination, labeling the laws behind the charges “*ex post facto*” and “bills of attainder.” The article followed this dramatic passage by asserting that “Racial extermination is wrong” and comparing Israel’s actions to hypothetical Vatican and

Western extraditions of Communist perpetrators. It concluded by calling on those with a “conservative instinct” to prevent passion from corrupting law.\textsuperscript{260}

In its third bulletin on Eichmann, \textit{National Review} repeated its previous arguments and focused on the issue of the Jewish people as an entity. It called on Jews to “deny the mythical legal entity of World Jewry” and condemn the illegal actions Israel undertook in their name. It conceded that “the Jewish people are a transhistorical phenomenon” bonded by “a cultural and religious tradition” while rejecting the argument that they constituted any sort of international legal body. In \textit{National Review}’s clearest statement on the subject, the piece stated, “The ‘Jewish people’ is not synonymous with the geographically bounded State of Israel.” It further linked the State of Israel’s use of the “Jewish people” concept to antisemitic conceptions of international Jewry and accused the State of Israel of further antisemitism and endangering Jews.\textsuperscript{261}

An April 1961 update announced the impending trial, lamenting that it would be a spectacle and “too long” to focus intently on the Nazis’ “infinite barbarities” or even “concentrate uninterruptedly on evil itself.” Stating that “Everyone knows the facts, and has known them for years,” the update argued that recounting the horrors, especially in a sterile setting, would dull the public’s sensitivity to Nazi atrocities. It suggested that Anne Frank’s diary was a superior method of elucidating the horror of Nazi murders. Although its initial attitude appears dismissive, its thesis that personalizing the Nazi’s victims is a superior educational method to focusing on their murder holds up today and recalls Francis Russell’s contemplation of victims’ humanity. Concluding with a call to

\textsuperscript{260}“The Law and the Eichmann Case,” \textit{National Review} 8, no. 25 (June 18, 1960): 382–383.
\textsuperscript{261}“Israel Against the Jews,” \textit{National Review} 8, no. 27 (July 2, 1960): 415–416.
save victims of Communism, the update noted that the trial would be justified if it “could spare the life of a single Jew.”

*National Review* did not provide extensive coverage of the trial; its final articles on the subject addressed Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. In a 1963 review, controversial German-born Jewish sociologist and conservative writer Ernest van den Haag labeled the book “brilliant” and commended it for problematizing how people understood the “extermination” of Jews. He wrote that while “Surviving Jews” would prefer to think their experiences were “beyond their control,” he agreed with Arendt’s criticisms of Jewish leadership and theorized that further non-cooperation or resistance would have saved Jewish lives. He also noted that “victims’ failure to escape” did not diminish “murderers’ responsibility” and condemned the world for not doing more to aid the Jews. While he concurred with her argument regarding the irrationally rational behavior of Europe’s Jews, he opined that Arendt’s language was too harsh and that she bore some responsibility for the backlash she faced. Van den Haag summarized Arendt’s banality of evil thesis and argued that understanding history and the circumstances that result in “ordinary men” committing unthinkable evil is essential in the fight against such evil. While he praised the role that the trial played in establishing the facts of Nazi crimes, he dedicated the majority of his article to musing on the trial’s legal faults, Communist crimes, and issues concerning Eichmann’s legal guilt. Comparing Eichmann’s decision to follow orders with American bombers’ decisions to drop atomic

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bombs on Japan, Van den Haag argued that the most important moral dilemmas over following orders had little to do with the legality of such orders.  

Writer and stage manager Max Geltman authored a 1964 article lauding Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and panning its critics, primarily the Jewish New York Intellectuals. Casting critics of her work on the Jewish leadership as socialists seeking to mythologize “Jewish proletarian resistance to Nazism,” Geltman painted skeptics of her banality of evil thesis as simple-minded optimists. He devoted the majority of his article to addressing scholarly critiques of Arendt’s claims, primarily those regarding Jewish leadership. Using a combination of prior scholarly works, documentary evidence, and witness testimony, he delivered a succinct defense of her claims and argued that the contemporary Jewish establishment was perpetuating a false narrative out of negligence and, in some cases, the desire to further its political and financial interests. Addressing historian Jacob Robinson’s criticism of Arendt, Geltman attacked the Jewish establishment for attempting to create a “noble legend as the true story of the Holocaust” and for using this legend to further “Jewish fund-raising activities.” Concluding with a return to the issue of socialist Jewish resistance, Geltman argued that partisan efforts were insignificant, that conservative Revisionist Zionists contributed equally to resistance efforts, and that Communism ultimately sought the spiritual and cultural eradication of Jews. A variety of readers penned bitter letters to the editor attacking Geltman and

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accusing him of blaming Jews for their own murder and ignoring antisemitism on the
right.  

*National Review*’s praise for Arendt, whose scholarship meshed well with its legal
perspective, emphasis on individual responsibility, and critical attitude towards group
identity. The idea that even ordinary people were capable of tremendous evil when
deprived of religion and subject to totalitarian government was perfectly tailored for
*National Review*’s brand of civil liberalism and social conservatism. Its contributors
believed that a liberal civil framework discouraged ideological radicalization and
protected the rights of vulnerable groups. They interpreted Arendt’s banality of evil thesis
as an expression of man’s natural inclination to evil. For conservative religious
contributors and readers, this demonstrated the necessity of conservative moral traditions
as a bulwark against such inclinations.

While commending liberals for generally supporting due process and labeling
them hypocritical in this case, *National Review* exemplified its jaunty, intellectual style
with its own contradictory insistence on Israel’s moral right to violate due process in its
June 1961 update:

> Let the Israelis hoist Eichmann upon a lamppost, and hang upon his neck the
> legend: Behold the Solution to Those Who Would Solve the Jewish Problem! But
to rewrite the laws of objective justice, to excuse an international apparatus of
vengeance by improvisations on international law, is an ill-suited memorial to the

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265 Myron Conn, Max Geltman, Norbert Guterman, Samuel Rabinove, “Geltman on Arendt,” *National
Review* 16, no. 52 (December 29, 1964): 1130, 1160.
Jews whose obdurate adherence to ancient laws made them so objectionable to the Nazi Reich. This short passage offered a delicate perversion of Christian iconography surrounding the trial and execution of Jesus. While the writer’s choice of a hanging Eichmann almost certainly referenced Eichmann’s eventual form of execution and not the Toldedot Yeshu’s portrayal of a hanged Jesus, the public execution featuring a sign distinctly resembled the execution of Jesus and its accompanying sign proclaiming him King of the Jews. The ironic fate of the sign from the Christian Bible leaves this passage from *National Review* with myriad possible interpretations: it could reference the Nazi murder of Jews as a sacrifice for the redemption of the Jewish people in the State of Israel; level the accusation that Jews have a propensity for sham trials; or highlight the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the messiah as the reason for centuries of anti-Jewish violence.

This study’s title calls attention to the passage’s final clause, which, if taken at face-value, argued that the Israeli trial of Eichmann was an ill-suited memorial to the Jewish victims of Nazism, the Nazis persecuted Jews because of their commitment to Jewish law, and the Jewish victims of Nazism were committed to Jewish law. This passage is also open to symbolic and ironic interpretation, including the earlier libel of Jewish legalism and an additional satire of Jewish theological liberalization, although this may be far beyond the author’s knowledge or intent. This clause represents a different perspective than the passage’s first tableau: Lamppost Eichmann’s sign indicates that the writer understood Nazi persecution of Jews as a result of the Jewish Problem, in which

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266 “The Law and the Eichmann Case.”

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the success of liberal nationalism in Europe made Jews citizens of nation-states and a
nation unto themselves. This conception of Jews as victims of ethnic violence contrasts
with the latter characterization of Jews as victims of ideological violence. It is further
distinct from the first passage in that it presents a concrete opinion of actual events and
not an opinion regarding a hypothetical. The author of this short news bulletin, in
typically academic and opaque National Review style, explains that he respects the Jews
inasmuch as they are victims of conscience, especially religiously orthodox victims of
conscience. It is also clear that he holds little regard for a Jewish national or ethnic
identity, which he believes undermines Jewish religious identity. By his logic, the
particularization of the Holocaust as a crime of ethnic hatred against the Jewish people
debases its meaning as a crime against Jewish religion and symbol of all attacks against
the freedom of conscience.

While the Wall Street Journal shared National Review’s understanding of the
Holocaust as an attack on freedom of conscience, it did not share the magazine’s vitriol
against Jewish ethnic identity. National Review’s early coverage of Nazis and their
crimes focused on the priority of defeating Communism and took a conservative
approach to the legal and social treatment of defeated military adversaries. It was also
skeptical of Jews and of Israel for their perceived domestic and international political
leanings and their domestic influence, which was part of its broader apprehensions
regarding minority identity in the United States.
CHAPTER 7: EPOLOGUE

Comparisons, Crises, and Holocaust Criticism, 1962-2001

National Review’s first use of the word “holocaust” was in reference to the concept of nuclear holocaust.267 It was not until November 1964 that Max Geltman’s “Hannah Arendt and Her Critics” associated the term with the Nazi murder of Jews.268 A December 1970 review of Henry Feingold’s The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust 1938-1945 offered the next reference to the Holocaust by that name.269 The anonymous reviewer summarized Feingold’s thesis that the Roosevelt administration was guilty of negligence during the Holocaust, defending his praise with positive reviews from Commentary and the Jewish Book News. He then turned to an ongoing American prisoner rescue effort in Vietnam, implying that Nixon’s opponents were hypocritical for criticizing the rescue while condemning Roosevelt for not saving “foreign nationals, for whom he had no legal responsibility.” Aside from its utility as criticism of Roosevelt, the reviewer primarily valued the book as a rhetorical tool to rally support for anti-Communist military intervention and criticize liberals. It is unclear if his references to Commentary and the Jewish Book News also functioned to single out Nixon’s Jewish opponents. In contrast to early criticisms of Holocaust mythologizing, National Review declined to engage in academic criticism when doing so might undermine or simply fail to benefit its political priorities.

268 “Hannah Arendt and Her Critics,” 1008.
A reserved anti-Catholic attitude marked much of the *Saturday Evening Post*’s coverage of hatred against Jews. This extended to a broader distaste for religious orthodoxy, whose dogmatic adherence to alien laws made it objectionable to an American base that prized liberty dearly and equality more. This manifested in its equivocation of a young Israeli ambassador’s decision to serve ham and spirits with a spirit of “tolerance,” (presumably referring to the sandwiches, not the Ambassador’s ability to consume spirits) placing the humane imperative of tolerance on the orthodox minority instead of the christian (in two senses of the term) majority.  

Just as the *Saturday Evening Post* embraced Vatican II for its muting of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, in the form of an enlightened attitude towards Jews, the Catholics of *National Review* lamented Jews turning away from their dogged adherence to their ancient laws.  

As part of its 1966 criticism of *Commentary*’s treatment of the Julius and Ethel Rosenberg case, a *National Review* writer argued that just as Pope Pius XII’s plea for their lives went unheeded, so too would his hypothetical appeals to Hitler on behalf of the Jews. *National Review* was never a Catholic or Christian publication, but the traditional Catholic views of Buckley and many other contributors lent it a broadly Christian and often particularly conservative Catholic outlook during his tenure. Catholic writer and skier Arnold Lunn exemplified an attitude typical of *National Review* contributors when he criticized Jews for not condemning Communist persecution of Catholics in a 1960 letter to the editor. Noting that he had protested Nazi treatment of

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271 “Good News from Rome,” *Saturday Evening Post* 237, no. 36 (October 17, 1964): 60.  
Jews as an Olympic skier, Lunn lamented, “I wish there were more Jews in high official positions who were as active in protesting against the persecution of Catholics as all Catholic bishops have been in protesting against anti-Semitism.”

Lunn’s assumptions regarding Jewish political leanings, Jewish identity among prominent Jews, and Jewish understanding of Catholic attitudes and actions towards Jews continued to be significant issues in National Review coverage of later controversies.

In April 1975, Catholic scholar Peter Wells addressed a growing controversy surrounding Pope Pius XII, focusing on Dutch photographer and writer Sam Waagenaar’s 1974 book The Pope’s Jews. Wells accused the book of perpetuating the myths that “Christians are natural haters of Jews” and that Christians, motivated by religious hatred, were “silent partners of Nazi executioners.” Lamenting the setback to Catholic-Jewish relations, Wells attributed recent “rapprochement” in part to American Catholic soldiers who fought in the Second World War, claiming the “chief immorality in Catholic eyes was the murder of innocent Jews.” Wells did not mention the Second Vatican Council and the role it played in improving Catholic-Jewish relations prior to the controversy.

Painting a rosy picture of Catholic and Christian-Jewish relations in America surrounding the Second World War, he described how Christians and Jews were aware of Nazi persecution and later murder of Jews, how this was a primary motivation for many Americans fighting the war, and how both communities celebrated Christian heroism in saving Jewish lives. According to Wells, the “news media and publishing industry” began exploiting the “lasting trauma of the Jewish community” within 15 years of the war’s

end, playing into anti-Catholic sentiment by turning the Pope and Catholics into villains. He outlined early popular attempts to paint Pius XII as an antisemite without addressing academic arguments on either side of the issue. Wells suggested that the Jewish community had fallen victim to such lies because of the inadequacy of explanations for the tragedy it had suffered and its rejection of the true explanation, the Christian understanding of “nature of fallen man.” His answer to those who suggested that Pius XII knew about Nazi persecution of Jews and did not publicly condemn it was that Pius XII, like Jewish leadership, knew such an action would be futile or even counter-productive. Wells outlined various Catholic efforts on behalf of Jews during the war, then delved into a summary of Jewish-Christian relations that relegated discord to isolated “excesses.”

Wells’s sanitized perspective on the history of Jewish-Christian relations and his bright picture of American public sentiment regarding the Nazi persecution of Jews stood at odds with National Review’s intellectual tradition. Like Lunn, Wells failed to understand the complexity of Jews’ conception of Christianity and Catholicism. In a September 1975 rejoinder, Waagenaar addressed some of the historical issues with Wells’s article and defended his criticisms of Pius XII. He also noted that Wells was preoccupied with a theological understanding of Jewish-Christian relations that placed official church doctrine over a historical and cultural analysis. Waagenaar’s observation that Wells analyzed Jewish-Christian relations theologically and not historically holds true for many National Review commentaries on Jewish-Christian

relations. It also speaks to the magazine’s broader difficulty with understanding issues from a Jewish perspective, particularly Jewish memory of historic persecutions culminating with Nazi crimes.

In stark contrast to his 1963 “Meditation on Bergen Belsen,” historian Francis Russell penned an upbeat September 1970 review of Heinz Höhne’s *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS*. Focusing on the organization’s personalities and mythos, he sidelined its crimes. Russell summarized how the SS began by deporting Jews, pointing out that more would have survived if not for “immigration barriers maintained by Great Britain and the United States.” Concluding with the standard reminder of the persistent evil of Communism, Russell’s review focused on Nazi ideology, almost lamenting that “The SS will no doubt be remembered longest as a mass killer, the Jews being the chief, though not the only, victims.”

His 1963 article, a personal reflection on the meaning of his encounter with the Holocaust, was a far cry from his 1970 review of a popular history. Max Geltman, who decried mythologizing the Holocaust in 1964, reviewed Frederick Forsyth’s novel *The Odessa File* in 1972. Gone were concerns about anti-German sentiment setting faulty, if fictional, precedent.

While the anti-Communism that marked most *National Review* commentary on the Holocaust stayed the same, the magazine’s treatment shifted from a unique perspective on a relatively recent event and its aftermath to predominantly historiographical commentary.

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National Review’s frequent comparisons between the Holocaust and Communist atrocities dated back to its earlier treatment of the subject. In the late 1970s, it began to compare the Holocaust to other phenomena and use it as a metaphor. In 1969, it criticized a Democratic accusation that Nixon would help Arabs “finish Hitler’s work” by destroying Israel. A 1973 article responded to European criticism of American treatment of blacks by labeling Europeans hypocritical “Jew-baiters.” National Review’s early use of the Holocaust as a universalized symbol of evil was a central part of its intellectual conception of the event. Even its frequent Communist parallels attempted to establish academic connections between the two regimes. By the 1970s, the Holocaust had become a political metaphor distinct from its historical context.

Buckley agreed, deploring the commercialization of Nazi atrocities in a May 1978 review of the television show Holocaust. Citing Jack Jones, Buckley argued that the only way society should “profit” from the Holocaust was by using its memory to “never again permit such a thing to happen.” After enumerating past and current Communist atrocities, Buckley noted the “innocent Lebanese… killed by survivors of the Holocaust,” referring to Israel’s invasion of Lebanon. While arguing that Pius XII acted to help Jews during the Holocaust, Buckley exhorted readers to defend victims of Communism and criticized the show for failing to inspire viewers to act. He argued that dwelling on Nazi crimes was pointless and that the show should focus on understanding why Germans were complicit in the murder of Jews. Buckley’s distain for the emphasis on describing

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the horrors of the Holocaust echoed previous sentiments surround the Eichmann trial. Buckley dismissed the reasoning behind this trend as an attempt to sensationalize media for profit, failing to account for additional reasons why the presentation of such a grim reality might be important to Jews and other Americans.

*National Review* failed to understand the horror of the Holocaust in its early years. From its founding in 1955 to the early 1970s, anti-Communist, classically liberal, traditionalist conservative, and Catholic values dictated its coverage of the Holocaust. Its fear of Communism and its unique set of liberal and conservative values led it to oppose action against former Nazis in the United States and West Germany. Its conservative skepticism resulted in criticism of emerging American, particularly Jewish American, understanding of the Holocaust as a unique event. The magazine’s coverage of the Eichmann trial and Hannah Arendt’s scholarship exemplified its dedication to conservative principles including the rule of law and the pursuit of historical truth. While some of its articles used callous language and stereotyped Jews, it understood the Holocaust as the epitome of evil. *National Review*’s primary weakness in its early coverage of the Holocaust was its struggle to understand Jews, particularly American Jews, outside of their religious and political identities. When its coverage of the Holocaust included discussions of Jewish-Christian relations and Jewish left-wing tendencies, it often defaulted to theology and stereotypes instead of historical analysis.

Historian Peter Novick’s 1999 *The Holocaust in American Life* controversially included arguments regarding the American Jewish community’s use of Holocaust memory to further US support of Israel and create a self-sustaining industry. While
Novick did not mention *National Review*’s early iterations of his thesis, he addressed its coverage of the Eichmann trial, focusing on its opposition to the trial’s legal basis. Novick accused the magazine of antisemitism over a satirical article that mentioned Eichmann. While the article undoubtedly satirized a Jewish couple and contained basic Jewish stereotypes, it did not represent anti-Jewish sentiment and the isolated mention of Eichmann served only as a rhetorical device. Novick then excerpted 11 lines of text decrying the spectacle of the impending trial from “Thoughts on Eichmann,” removing key phrases that framed the criticism in a moral and intellectual context. Highlighting the title of “Let’s All Hate Germany, Comrade,” he criticized the magazine’s concern for Germany’s image and preoccupation with Communism. While he cited “The Law and the Eichmann Case,” he neglected the article’s call to hang Eichmann from a lamp post. He then noted that he could not find later mentions of the Eichmann case. Novick fundamentally misinterpreted *National Review*’s criticism of the Eichmann trial and failed to include both its repeated justification for killing Eichmann and its extensive commentary on Hannah Ardent and her critics. A simple reading of *National Review*’s Holocaust coverage might suggest antisemitism among its contributors, as Novick clearly argued; a thorough reading demonstrates a more complex picture.

Michael Joseph Sobran began his tenure at *National Review* in 1972 and served as a senior editor until Buckley fired him over antisemitism in 1993. Sobran’s first article on

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the Holocaust reviewed *Holocaust* under the banner “Prime-Time Genocide.” Mocking the view that any representation of the Holocaust was inadequate to capture its horror, Sobran remarked that the show “smacks of a certain proprietary interest in ethnic oppression.” He further ontologically criticized language describing the Holocaust as “unique” or “ultimate” in its horror. In stark contrast to his earlier tone, he then described the impossibility of capturing “Jewish bereavement” over the prospect of “annihilation” so total that its perpetrators seek to ensure “nothing like them ever exists again.” Stating that the Holocaust was the “being” of evil, Sobran used Catholic imagery to deride not only drama’s ability to portray the sublimity of good and evil but the entire concept of artistic realism. Sobran concluded with the argument that even if drama could capture the evil of genocide, Americans would not be able to conceive of its horror because they lacked “solidarities” and marginalized “the precious and sacred.” Sobran’s derisive tone betrayed his later remarks regarding Jews. The content of his criticism included valid historical and philosophical arguments that persist today and remain as troubling to many as Sobran’s comments were at the time. These truths do not do justice to the eloquence with which Sobran used traditional Catholic language to argue the point he appeared to criticize Elie Wiesel for making: that no media could capture the horror of the Holocaust.

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CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

These reactions to Nazi atrocities in the *Saturday Evening Post, Wall Street Journal,* and *National Review* represent a sampling of the American political right’s understanding, memory, and use of what many came to know as the Holocaust. Fundamental to American Jewish identity, copious scholarship continues to analyze American Holocaust memory on a variety of cultural levels. Few scholarly works have explored the origins of the Holocaust’s outsized role in American political discourse, and fewer have seriously considered the America right’s role in this evolution.

The Holocaust has become the touchstone for evil in American culture and politics. This is not because its horrors are beyond belief, its perpetrators uniquely evil, or its victims so powerful that they have forced it on a diverse and populous nation. Nazi atrocities assumed their role in American politics because they were the earliest and grandest modern horrors available for international media consumption.

A *Saturday Evening Post* reporter wrote of his decision to write about his visit to Majdanek that it constituted either “a story so sublime in its witness to the divinity of man or so loathsome as to make the meanest beast seem clean and wholesome by comparison,” ultimately placing it in the latter category.\(^{285}\) Horror has always been a part of human society, even as the modern world progresses away from mundane violence and suffering. Exceptions to this trend particularly impress our unaccustomed sensibilities when they emerge against an increasingly sterile backdrop. The Third Reich’s atrocities

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continue to serve as a marker of a transition from a world of general suffering to one of extremes.

The Allied Powers’ successful defeat of the Third Reich and subsequent trial of its leaders gave these crimes prolonged exposure. The backdrop of the Cold War brought intense importance to the practical and philosophical repercussions of these trials, culminating in an intense controversy surrounding the Israeli capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann. This trial helped to define the relationship between American political factions and the new State of Israel, just as it marked a coalescence of popular Holocaust memory.

An older, protestant-centric tradition within the American right initially obscured Jewish religious identity as a factor in the atrocities’ meaning to Americans out of respect for American Jews and a desire to promote assimilation. Subsequent generations of primarily-Catholic and later evangelical Protestant conservatives specifically identified with the religious aspect of Nazi persecutions, connecting it to their own narrative of America as a refuge from religious and ideological persecution in an increasingly secularizing world. In this manner, the American right has continued to universalize the meaning of Nazi atrocities, just as American Jews insist on its peculiarity to the Jewish people amid increasing research on the regime’s other victims.

As particular to the Jews as the Holocaust remains in the American conscience, the universal applicability of its moral lessons has been a fixture of its role in American politics from the outset of Hitler’s Jew-baiting. As prejudice against Jews makes a resurgence in American culture and politics, understanding the full breadth of political
reactions to history’s greatest instance of anti-Jewish violence will be an essential step in combating hatred and violence. Simultaneously, exploring the ways in which the memory of Nazi atrocities had played a positive role in American political history will allow community leaders and educators to better understand how we learn from events in our past and around us.
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