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presumably argue that none of these studies reach acceptable levels of scientific proof.

Franz Boas would be proud.

### 3

## Jews and the Left

I could never understand what Judaism had to do with Marxism, and why questioning the latter was tantamount to being disloyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Ralph de Toledano [1996, 50] discussing his experiences with Eastern European Jewish intellectuals)

Socialism, for many immigrant Jews, was not merely politics or an idea, it was an encompassing culture, a style of perceiving and judging through which to structure their lives. (Irving Howe 1982, 9)

The association between Jews and the political left has been widely noticed and commented on beginning in the nineteenth century. “Whatever their situation... in almost every country about which we have information, a segment of the Jewish community played a very vital role in movements designed to undermine the existing order” (Rothman & Lichter 1982, 110).

On the surface at least, Jewish involvement in radical political activity may seem surprising. Marxism, at least as envisaged by Marx, is the very antithesis of Judaism. Marxism is an exemplar of a universalist ideology in which ethnic and nationalist barriers within the society and indeed between societies are eventually removed in the interests of social harmony and a sense of communal interest. Moreover, Marx himself, though born of two ethnically Jewish parents, has been viewed by many as an anti-Semite.<sup>71</sup> His critique of Judaism (*On the Jewish Question* [Marx 1843/1975]) conceptualized Judaism as fundamentally concerned with egoistic money seeking; it had achieved world domination by making both man and nature into salable objects. Marx viewed Judaism as an abstract principle of human greed that would end in the communist society of the future. However, Marx argued against the idea that Jews must give up their Jewishness to be German citizens, and he envisioned that Judaism, freed from the principle of greed, would continue to exist in the transformed society after the revolution (Katz 1986, 113).

Whatever Marx’s views on the subject, a critical question in the following is whether acceptance of radical, universalist ideologies and participation in radical, universalist movements are compatible with Jewish identification. Does the

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adoption of such an ideology essentially remove one from the Jewish community and its traditional commitment to separatism and Jewish nationhood? Or, to rephrase this question in terms of my perspective, could the advocacy of radical, universalist ideologies and actions be compatible with continued participation in Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy?

Notice that this question is different from the question of whether Jews as a group can be adequately characterized as advocating radical political solutions for gentile societies. There is no implication that Judaism constitutes a unified movement or that all segments of the Jewish community have the same beliefs or attitudes toward the gentile community (see Ch. 1). Jews may constitute a predominant or necessary element in radical political movements and Jewish identification may be highly compatible with or even facilitate involvement in radical political movements without most Jews being involved in these movements and even if Jews are a numerical minority within the movement.

## **RADICALISM AND JEWISH IDENTIFICATION**

The hypothesis that Jewish radicalism is compatible with Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy implies that radical Jews continue to identify as Jews. There is little doubt that the vast majority of the Jews who advocated leftist causes beginning in the late nineteenth century were strongly self-identified as Jews and saw no conflict between Judaism and radicalism (Marcus 1983, 280ff; Levin 1977, 65, 1988, I, 4-5; Mishkinsky 1968, 290, 291; Rothman & Lichter 1982, 92-93; Sorin 1985, passim). Indeed, the largest Jewish radical movements in both Russia and Poland were the Jewish Bunds which had an exclusively Jewish membership and a very clear program of pursuing specifically Jewish interests. The proletarianism of the Polish Bund was really part of an attempt to preserve their national identity as Jews (Marcus 1983, 282). Fraternity with the non-Jewish working class was intended to facilitate their specifically Jewish aims, and a similar statement can be made for the Russian Jewish Bund (Liebman 1979, 111ff). Since the Bunds comprised by far the majority of the Jewish radical movement in these areas, the vast majority of Jews participating in radical movements in this period were strongly identified as Jews.

Moreover, many Jewish members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union appear to have been intent on establishing a form of secular Judaism rather than ending Jewish group continuity. The postrevolutionary Soviet government and the Jewish socialist movements struggled over the issue of the preservation of national identity (Levin 1988; Pinkus 1988). Despite an official ideology in which nationalism and ethnic separatism were viewed as reactionary, the Soviet

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government was forced to come to grips with the reality of very strong ethnic and national identifications within the Soviet Union. As a result, a Jewish Section of the Communist Party (*Evseksiya*) was created. This section “fought hard against the Zionist-Socialist Parties, against democratic Jewish communities, against the Jewish faith and against Hebrew culture. It had, however, succeeded in shaping a secular life pattern based on Yiddish as the recognized national language of the Jewish nationality; in fighting for Jewish national survival in the 1920s; and in working in the 1930s to slow down the assimilatory process of the Sovietization of Jewish language and culture” (Pinkus 1988, 62).<sup>72</sup>

The result of these efforts was the development of a state-sponsored separatist Yiddish subculture, including Yiddish schools and even Yiddish soviets. This separatist culture was very aggressively sponsored by the *Evseksiya*. Reluctant Jewish parents were forced “by terror” to send their children to these culturally separatist schools rather than schools where the children would not have to relearn their subjects in the Russian language in order to pass entrance examinations (Gitelman 1991, 12). The themes of the prominent and officially honored Soviet Jewish writers in the 1930s also bespeak the importance of ethnic identity: “The thrust of their prose, poetry and drama boiled down to one idea—the limitations on their rights under tsarism and the flowering of once-oppressed Jews under the sun of the Lenin-Stalin constitution” (Vaksberg 1994, 115).

Further, beginning in 1942 and extending into the post-war period, the government-sponsored Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) served to promote Jewish cultural and political interests (including an attempt to establish a Jewish republic in the Crimea) until it was dissolved by the government amid charges of Jewish nationalism, resistance to assimilation, and Zionist sympathies in 1948 (Kostyrchenko 1995, 30ff; Vaksberg 1994, 112ff). The leaders of the JAC strongly identified as Jews. The following comments of JAC leader Itsik Fefer on his attitudes during the war indicate a powerful sense of Jewish peoplehood extending backward in historical time:

I spoke that I love my people. But who doesn't love one's own people?... My interests in regard to the Crimea and Birobidzhan [an area of the Soviet Union designated for Jewish settlement] had been dictated by this. It seemed to me that only Stalin could rectify that historical injustice which had been created by the Roman emperors. It seemed to me that only the Soviet government could rectify this injustice, by creating a Jewish nation. (In Kostyrchenko 1995, 39)

Despite their complete lack of identification with Judaism as a religion and despite their battles against some of the more salient signs of Jewish group separatism, membership in the Soviet Communist Party by these Jewish activists was not incompatible with developing mechanisms designed to ensure Jewish group continuity as a secular entity. In the event, apart from the offspring of interethnic marriages, very few Jews lost their Jewish identity during the entire Soviet era (Gitelman 1991, 5),<sup>73</sup> and the post-World War II years saw a powerful strengthening of Jewish culture and Zionism in the Soviet Union. Beginning with the dissolution of the JAC, the Soviet government initiated a campaign of repression against all manifestations of Jewish nationalism and Jewish culture, including closing Jewish theaters and museums and disbanding Jewish writers unions.

The issue of the Jewish identification of Bolsheviks who were Jews by birth is complex. Pipes (1993, 102-104) asserts that Bolsheviks of Jewish background in the czarist period did not identify as Jews, although they were perceived by gentiles as acting on behalf of Jewish interests and were subjected to anti-Semitism. For example, Leon Trotsky, the second most important Bolshevik behind Lenin, took great pains to avoid the appearance that he had any Jewish identity or that he had any interest in Jewish issues at all.<sup>74</sup>

It is difficult to believe that these radicals were wholly without a Jewish identity, given that they were regarded as Jews by others and were the target of anti-Semites. In general, anti-Semitism increases Jewish identification (*SAID*, Ch. 6). However, it is possible that in these cases Jewish identity was largely externally imposed. For example, the conflict in the 1920s between Stalin and the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky, Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Grigory Solkolnikov (all of whom were ethnic Jews), had strong overtones of a Jewish-gentile group conflict: "The obvious 'alienness' allegedly uniting an entire bloc of candidates was a glaring circumstance" (Vaksberg 1994, 19; see also Ginsberg 1993, 53; Lindemann 1997, 452; Pinkus 1988, 85-86; Rapoport 1990, 38; Rothman & Lichter 1982, 94). For all of the participants, the Jewish or gentile backgrounds of their adversaries was highly salient, and indeed Sidney Hook (1949, 464) notes that non-Jewish Stalinists used anti-Semitic arguments against the Trotskyists. Vaksberg quotes Vyacheslav Molotov (Minister of Foreign Affairs and the second most prominent Soviet leader) as saying that Stalin passed over Kamenev because he wanted a non-Jew to head the government. Moreover, the internationalism of the Jewish bloc compared to the nationalism implicit in the Stalinist position (Lindemann 1997, 450) is more congruent with Jewish interests and certainly reflects a common theme of Jewish attitudes in post-Enlightenment societies generally. Throughout this period into the 1930s "for the Kremlin and the Lubyanka [the Russian secret police] it was not religion but blood that determined Jewishness" (Vaksberg 1994, 64). Indeed, the secret police

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used ethnic outsiders (e.g., Jews in the traditionally anti-Semitic Ukraine) as agents because they would have less sympathy with the natives (Lindemann 1997, 443)—a policy that makes excellent evolutionary sense.

Jewish ethnic background was thus important not only to gentiles but was subjectively important to Jews as well. When the secret police wanted to investigate a Jewish agent, they recruited a “pure Jewish maiden” to develop an intimate relationship with him—implicitly assuming that the operation would work better if the relationship was intraethnic (Vaksberg 1994, 44n). Similarly, there has been a pronounced tendency for leftist Jews to idolize other Jews such as Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg rather than leftist gentiles, as in Poland (Schatz 1991, 62, 89), even though some scholars have serious doubts about the Jewish identifications of these two revolutionaries. Indeed, Hook (1949, 465) finds a perception among leftists that there was an ethnic basis for the attraction of Jewish intellectuals to Trotsky. In the words of one, “It is not by accident that three quarters of the Trotskyist leaders are Jews.”

There is, then, considerable evidence that Jewish Bolsheviks generally retained at least a residual Jewish identity. In some cases this Jewish identity may indeed have been “reactive” (i.e., resulting from others’ perceptions). For example, Rosa Luxemburg may have had a reactive Jewish identity, since she was perceived as a Jew despite the fact that she “was the most critical of her own people, descending at times to merciless abuse of other Jews” (Shepherd 1993, 118). Nevertheless, Luxemburg’s only important sexual relationship was with a Jew, and she continued to maintain ties to her family. Lindemann (1997, 178) comments that the conflict between Luxemburg’s revolutionary left and the social-democratic reformists in Germany had overtones of German-Jewish ethnic conflict, given the large percentage and high visibility of Jews among the former. By World War I “Luxemburg’s dwindling friendships within the party had become more exclusively Jewish, whereas her contempt for the (mostly non-Jewish) leaders of the party became more open and vitriolic. Her references to the leadership were often laced with characteristically Jewish phrases: The leaders of the Party were ‘shabbesgoyim of the bourgeoisie.’ For many right-wing Germans, Luxemburg became the most detested of all revolutionaries, the personification of the destructive Jewish alien” (p. 402). Given these findings, the possibilities that Luxemburg was in fact a crypto-Jew or that she was engaged in self-deception regarding her Jewish identity—the latter a common enough occurrence among Jewish radicals (see below)—seem to be at least as likely as supposing that she did not identify as a Jew at all.

In terms of social identity theory, anti-Semitism would make it difficult to adopt the identity of the surrounding culture. Traditional Jewish separatist practices combined with economic competition tend to result in anti-Semitism, but anti-Semitism in turn makes Jewish assimilation more difficult because it

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becomes more difficult for Jews to accept a non-Jewish identity. Thus in the interwar period in Poland Jewish cultural assimilation increased substantially; by 1939 one half of Jewish high school students called Polish their native language. However, the continuation of traditional Jewish culture among a substantial proportion of Jews and its correlative anti-Semitism resulted in a barrier for Jews in adopting a Polish identification (Schatz 1991, 34-35).

From the standpoint of gentiles, however, anti-Semitic reactions to individuals like Luxemburg and other outwardly assimilating Jews may be viewed as resulting from an attempt to prevent deception by erring on the side of exaggerating the extent to which people who are ethnically Jews identify as Jews and are consciously attempting to advance specifically Jewish interests (see *SAID*, Ch. 1). Such perceptions of secular Jews and Jews who converted to Christianity have been a common feature of anti-Semitism in the post-Enlightenment world, and indeed, such Jews often maintained informal social and business networks that resulted in marriages with other baptized Jews and Jewish families who had not changed their surface religion (see *SAID*, Chs. 5, 6).<sup>75</sup>

I suggest that it is not possible to conclusively establish the Jewish identification or lack of it of ethnically Jewish Bolsheviks prior to the Revolution and in the postrevolutionary period when ethnic Jews had a great deal of power in the Soviet Union. Several factors favor our supposing that Jewish identification occurred in a substantial percentage of ethnic Jews: (1) People were classified as Jews depending on their ethnic background at least partly because of residual anti-Semitism; this would tend to impose a Jewish identity on these individuals and make it difficult to assume an exclusive identity as a member of a larger, more inclusive political group. (2) Many Jewish Bolsheviks, such as those in *Evsektsiya* and the JAC, aggressively sought to establish a secular Jewish subculture. (3) Very few Jews on the left envisioned a postrevolutionary society without a continuation of Judaism as a group; indeed, the predominant ideology among Jewish leftists was that postrevolutionary society would end anti-Semitism because it would end class conflict and the peculiar Jewish occupational profile. (4) The behavior of American communists shows that Jewish identity and the primacy of Jewish interests over communist interests were commonplace among individuals who were ethnically Jewish communists (see below). (5) The existence of Jewish *crypsis* in other times and places combined with the possibility that self-deception, identificatory flexibility, and identificatory ambivalence are important components of Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy (see *SAID*, Ch. 8).

This last possibility is particularly interesting and will be elaborated below. The best evidence that individuals have really ceased to have a Jewish identity is if they choose a political option that they perceive as clearly not in the interests



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of Jews as a group. In the absence of a clearly perceived conflict with Jewish interests, it remains possible that different political choices among ethnic Jews are only differences in tactics for how best to achieve Jewish interests. In the case of the Jewish members of the American Communist Party (CPUSA) reviewed below, the best evidence that ethnically Jewish members continued to have a Jewish identity is that in general their support for the CPUSA waxed and waned depending on whether Soviet policies were perceived as violating specific Jewish interests, such as support for Israel or opposition to Nazi Germany.

Jewish identification is a complex area where surface declarations may be deceptive. Indeed, Jews may not consciously know how strongly they identify with Judaism. Silberman (1985, 184), for example, notes that around the time of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, many Jews could identify with the statement of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel that “*I had not known how Jewish I was*” (in Silberman 1985, 184; emphasis in text). Silberman comments: “This was the response, not of some newcomer to Judaism or casual devotee but of the man whom many, myself included, consider the greatest Jewish spiritual leader of our time.” Many others made the same surprising discovery about themselves: Arthur Hertzberg (1979, 210) wrote, “The immediate reaction of American Jewry to the crisis was far more intense and widespread than anyone could have foreseen. Many Jews would never have believed that grave danger to Israel could dominate their thoughts and emotions to the exclusion of everything else.”

Consider the case of Polina Zhemchuzhina, the wife of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (Premier of the USSR during the 1930s) and a prominent revolutionary who joined the Communist Party in 1918. (Among other accomplishments, she was a member of the Party Central Committee.) When Golda Meir visited the Soviet Union in 1948, Zhemchuzhina repeatedly uttered the phrase “*Ich bin a Yiddishe tochter*” (I am a daughter of the Jewish people) when Meir asked how she spoke Yiddish so well (Rubenstein 1996, 262). “She parted from the [Israeli delegation] with tears in her eyes, saying ‘I wish all will go well for you there and then it will be good for all the Jews’” (Rubenstein 1996, 262). Vaksberg (1994, 192) describes her as “an iron Stalinist, but her fanaticism did not keep her from being a “good Jewish daughter.”

Consider also the case of Ilya Ehrenburg, the prominent Soviet journalist and anti-fascist propagandist for the Soviet Union whose life is described in a book whose title, *Tangled Loyalties* (Rubenstein 1996), illustrates the complexities of Jewish identity in the Soviet Union. Ehrenburg was a loyal Stalinist, supporting the Soviet line on Zionism and refusing to condemn Soviet anti-Jewish actions (Rubenstein 1996). Nevertheless, Ehrenburg held Zionist views, maintained Jewish associational patterns, believed in the uniqueness of the Jewish people, and was deeply concerned about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Ehrenburg was an organizing member of the JAC, which advocated Jewish cultural revival



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and greater contact with Jews abroad. A writer friend described him as “first of all a Jew... Ehrenburg had rejected his origins with all his being, disguised himself in the West, smoking Dutch tobacco and making his travel plans at Cook’s... But he did not erase the Jew” (p. 204). “Ehrenburg never denied his Jewish origins and near the end of his life often repeated the defiant conviction that he would consider himself a Jew ‘as long as there was a single anti-Semite left on earth’” (Rubenstein 1996, 13). In a famous article, he cited a statement that “blood exists in two forms; the blood that flows inside the veins and the blood that flows out of the veins... Why do I say, ‘We Jews?’ Because of blood” (p. 259). Indeed, his intense loyalty to Stalin’s regime and his silence about Soviet brutalities involving the murder of millions of its citizens during the 1930s may have been motivated largely by his view that the Soviet Union was a bulwark against fascism (pp. 143-145). “No transgression angered him more than anti-Semitism” (p. 313).

A powerful residual Jewish identity in a prominent Bolshevik can also be seen in the following comment on the reaction of ethnic Jews to the emergence of Israel:

It seemed that all Jews, regardless of age, profession, or social status, felt responsible for the distant little state that had become a symbol of national revival. Even the Soviet Jews who had seemed irrevocably assimilated were now under the spell of the Middle Eastern miracle. Yekaterina Davidovna (Golda Gorbman) was a fanatic Bolshevik and internationalist and wife of Marshal Kliment Voroshilov, and in her youth she had been excommunicated as an unbeliever; but now she struck her relatives dumb by saying, “Now at last we have our motherland, too.” (Kostyrchenko 1995, 102)

The point is that the Jewish identity of even a highly assimilated Jew, and even one who has subjectively rejected a Jewish identity, may surface at times of crisis to the group or when Jewish identification conflicts with any other identity that a Jew might have, including identification as a political radical. As expected on the basis of social identity theory, Elazar (1980) notes that in times of perceived threat to Judaism, there is a great increase in group identification among even “very marginal” Jews, as during the Yom Kippur War. As a result, assertions regarding Jewish identification that fail to take account of perceived threats to Judaism may seriously underestimate the extent of Jewish commitment. Surface declarations of a lack of Jewish identity may be highly misleading.<sup>76</sup> And as we shall see, there is good evidence for widespread self-deception about Jewish identity among Jewish radicals.

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Moreover, there is good evidence that both in the czarist period and in the postrevolutionary period, Jewish Bolsheviks perceived their activities as entirely congruent with Jewish interests. The revolution ended the officially anti-Semitic czarist government and although popular anti-Semitism continued in the postrevolutionary period, the government officially outlawed anti-Semitism. Jews were highly overrepresented in positions of economic and political power as well as cultural influence at least into the 1940s. It was also a government that aggressively attempted to destroy all vestiges of Christianity as a socially unifying force within the Soviet Union while at the same time it established a secular Jewish subculture so that Judaism would not lose its group continuity or its unifying mechanisms such as the Yiddish language.

It is doubtful, therefore, that Soviet Jewish Bolsheviks ever had to choose between a Jewish identity and a Bolshevik identity, at least in the prerevolutionary period and into the 1930s. Given this congruence of what one might term “identificatory self-interest,” it is quite possible that individual Jewish Bolsheviks would deny or ignore their Jewish identities—perhaps aided by mechanisms of self-deception—while they nevertheless may well have retained a Jewish identity that would have surfaced only if a clear conflict between Jewish interests and communist policies occurred.

## **COMMUNISM AND JEWISH IDENTIFICATION IN POLAND**

Schatz’s (1991) work on the group of Jewish communists who came to power in Poland after World War II (termed by Schatz “the generation”) is important because it sheds light on the identificatory processes of an entire generation of communist Jews in Eastern Europe. Unlike the situation in the Soviet Union where the predominantly Jewish faction led by Trotsky was defeated, it is possible to trace the activities and identifications of a Jewish communist elite who actually obtained political power and held it for a significant period.

The great majority of this group were socialized in very traditional Jewish families

whose inner life, customs and folklore”, religious traditions, leisure time, contacts between generations, and ways of socializing were, despite variations, essentially permeated by traditional Jewish values and norms of conduct... The core of cultural heritage was handed down to them through formal

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religious education and practice, through holiday celebrations, tales, and songs, through the stories told by parents and grandparents, through listening to discussions among their elders... The result was a deep core of their identity, values, norms, and attitudes with which they entered the rebellious period of their youth and adulthood. *This core was to be transformed in the processes of acculturation, secularization, and radicalization sometimes even to the point of explicit denial. However, it was through this deep layer that all later perceptions were filtered.* (Schatz 1991, 37-38; my emphasis)

Note the implication that self-deceptive processes were at work here: Members of the generation denied the effects of a pervasive socialization experience that colored all of their subsequent perceptions, so that in a very real sense, they did not know how Jewish they were. Most of these individuals spoke Yiddish in their daily lives and had only a poor command of Polish even after joining the party (p. 54). They socialized entirely with other Jews whom they met in the Jewish world of work, neighborhood, and Jewish social and political organizations. After they became communists, they dated and married among themselves and their social gatherings were conducted in Yiddish (p. 116). As is the case for all of the Jewish intellectual and political movements discussed in this volume, their mentors and principle influences were other ethnic Jews, including especially Luxemburg and Trotsky (pp. 62, 89), and when they recalled personal heroes, they were mostly Jews whose exploits achieved semi-mythical proportions (p. 112).

Jews who joined the communist movement did not first reject their ethnic identity, and there were many who “cherished Jewish culture... [and] dreamed of a society in which Jews would be equal as Jews” (p. 48). Indeed, it was common for individuals to combine a strong Jewish identity with Marxism as well as various combinations of Zionism and Bundism. Moreover, the attraction of Polish Jews to communism was greatly facilitated by their knowledge that Jews had attained high-level positions of power and influence in the Soviet Union and that the Soviet government had established a system of Jewish education and culture (p. 60). In both the Soviet Union and Poland, communism was seen as opposing anti-Semitism. In marked contrast, during the 1930s the Polish government developed policies in which Jews were excluded from public-sector employment, quotas were placed on Jewish representation in universities and the professions, and government-organized boycotts of Jewish businesses and artisans were staged (Hagen 1996). Clearly, Jews perceived communism as good for Jews: It was a movement that did not threaten Jewish group continuity, and it

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held the promise of power and influence for Jews and the end of state-sponsored anti-Semitism.

At one end of the spectrum of Jewish identification were communists who began their career in the Bund or in Zionist organizations, spoke Yiddish, and worked entirely within a Jewish milieu. Jewish and communist identities were completely sincere, without ambivalence or perceived conflict between these two sources of identity. At the other end of the spectrum of Jewish identification, some Jewish communists may have intended to establish a de-ethnicized state without Jewish group continuity, although the evidence for this is less than compelling. In the prewar period even the most “de-ethnicized” Jews only outwardly assimilated by dressing like gentiles, taking gentile-sounding names (suggesting deception), and learning their languages. They attempted to recruit gentiles into the movement but did not assimilate or attempt to assimilate into Polish culture; they retained traditional Jewish “disdainful and supercilious attitudes” toward what, as Marxists, they viewed as a “retarded” Polish peasant culture (p. 119). Even the most highly assimilated Jewish communists working in urban areas with non-Jews were upset by the Soviet-German nonaggression pact but were relieved when the German-Soviet war finally broke out (p. 121)—a clear indication that Jewish personal identity remained quite close to the surface. The Communist Party of Poland (KPP) also retained a sense of promoting specifically Jewish interests rather than blind allegiance to the Soviet Union. Indeed, Schatz (p. 102) suggests that Stalin dissolved the KPP in 1938 because of the presence of Trotskyists within the KPP and because the Soviet leadership expected the KPP to be opposed to the alliance with Nazi Germany.

In *SAID* (Ch. 8) it was noted that identificatory ambivalence has been a consistent feature of Judaism since the Enlightenment. It is interesting that Polish Jewish activists showed a great deal of identificatory ambivalence stemming ultimately from the contradiction between “the belief in some kind of Jewish collective existence and, at the same time, a rejection of such an ethnic communion, as it was thought incompatible with class divisions and harmful to the general political struggle; striving to maintain a specific kind of Jewish culture and, at the same time, a view of this as a mere ethnic form of the communist message, instrumental in incorporating Jews into the Polish Socialist community; and maintaining separate Jewish institutions while at the same time desiring to eliminate Jewish separateness as such” (p. 234). It will be apparent in the following that the Jews, including Jewish communists at the highest levels of the government, continued as a cohesive, identifiable group. However, although they themselves appear not to have noticed the Jewish collective nature of their experience (p. 240), it was observable to others—a clear example of self-deception also evident in the case of American Jewish leftists, as noted below.

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These Jewish communists were also engaged in elaborate rationalizations and self-deceptions related to the role of the communist movement in Poland, so that one cannot take the lack of evidence for overt Jewish ethnic identity as strong evidence of a lack of a Jewish identity. “Cognitive and emotional anomalies—unfree, mutilated, and distorted thoughts and emotions—became the price for retaining their beliefs unchanged... Adjusting their experiences to their beliefs was achieved through mechanisms of interpreting, suppressing, justifying, or explaining away” (p. 191). “As much as they were able to skillfully apply their critical thinking to penetrative analyses of the sociopolitical system they rejected, as much were they blocked when it came to applying the same rules of critical analysis to the system they regarded as the future of all mankind” (p. 192).

This combination of self-deceptive rationalization as well as considerable evidence of a Jewish identity can be seen in the comments of Jacob Berman, one of the most prominent leaders of the postwar era. (All three communist leaders who dominated Poland between 1948 and 1956, Berman, Boleslaw Bierut, and Hilary Minc, were Jews.) Regarding the purges and murders of thousands of communists, including many Jews, in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Berman states:

I tried as best I could to explain what was happening; to clarify the background, the situations full of conflict and internal contradictions in which Stalin had probably found himself and which forced him to act as he did; and to exaggerate the mistakes of the opposition, which assumed grotesque proportions in the subsequent charges against them and were further blown up by Soviet propaganda. You had to have a great deal of endurance and dedication to the cause then in order to accept what was happening despite all the distortions, injuries and torments. (In Toranska 1987, 207)

As to his Jewish identity, Berman responded as follows when asked about his plans after the war:

I didn’t have any particular plans. But I was aware of the fact that as a Jew I either shouldn’t or wouldn’t be able to fill any of the highest posts. Besides, I didn’t mind not being in the front ranks: not because I’m particularly humble by nature, but because it’s not at all the case that you have to project yourself into a position of prominence in order to wield real power. The important thing to me was to exert my influence, leave my stamp on the complicated government formation, which was being

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created, but without projecting myself. Naturally, this required a certain agility. (In Toranska 1987, 237)

Clearly Berman identifies himself as a Jew and is well aware that others perceive him as a Jew and that therefore he must deceptively lower his public profile. Berman also notes that he was under suspicion as a Jew during the Soviet anti-"Cosmopolite" campaign beginning in the late 1940s. His brother, an activist in the Central Committee of Polish Jews (the organization for establishing a secular Jewish culture in communist Poland), emigrated to Israel in 1950 to avoid the consequences of the Soviet-inspired anti-Semitic policies in Poland. Berman comments that he did not follow his brother to Israel even though his brother strongly urged him to do so: "I was, of course, interested in what was going on in Israel, especially since I was quite familiar with the people there" (in Toranska 1987, 322). Obviously, Berman's brother viewed Berman not as a non-Jew but, rather, as a Jew who should emigrate to Israel because of incipient anti-Semitism. The close ties of family and friendship between a very high official in the Polish communist government and an activist in the organization promoting Jewish secular culture in Poland also strongly suggest that there was no perceived incompatibility with identifications as a Jew and as a communist even among the most assimilated Polish communists of the period.

While Jewish members saw the KPP as beneficial to Jewish interests, the party was perceived by gentile Poles even before the war as "pro-Soviet, anti-patriotic, and ethnically 'not truly Polish'" (Schatz 1991, 82). This perception of lack of patriotism was the main source of popular hostility to the KPP (Schatz 1991, 91).

On the one hand, for much of its existence the KPP had been at war not only with the Polish State, but with its entire body politic, including the legal opposition parties of the Left. On the other hand, in the eyes of the great majority of Poles, the KPP was a foreign, subversive agency of Moscow, bent on the destruction of Poland's hard-won independence and the incorporation of Poland into the Soviet Union. Labeled a "Soviet agency" or the "Jew-Commune," it was viewed as a dangerous and fundamentally un-Polish conspiracy dedicated to undermining national sovereignty and restoring, in a new guise, Russian domination. (Coutouvidis & Reynolds 1986, 115)

The KPP backed the Soviet Union in the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1920 and in the Soviet invasion of 1939. It also accepted the 1939 border with the USSR and was relatively unconcerned with the Soviet massacre of Polish prisoners of

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war during World War II, whereas the Polish government in exile in London held nationalist views of these matters. The Soviet army and its Polish allies “led by cold-blooded political calculation, military necessities, or both” allowed the uprising of the Home Army, faithful to the noncommunist Polish government-in-exile, to be defeated by the Germans resulting in 200,000 dead, thus wiping out “the cream of the anti- and noncommunist activist elite” (Schatz 1991, 188). The Soviets also arrested surviving non-communist resistance leaders immediately after the war.

Moreover, as was the case with the CPUSA, actual Jewish leadership and involvement in Polish Communism was much greater than surface appearances; ethnic Poles were recruited and promoted to high positions in order to lessen the perception that the KPP was a Jewish movement (Schatz 1991, 97). This attempt to deceptively lower the Jewish profile of the communist movement was also apparent in the ZPP. (The ZPP refers to the Union of Polish Patriots—an Orwellian-named communist front organization created by the Soviet Union to occupy Poland after the war.) Apart from members of the generation whose political loyalties could be counted on and who formed the leadership core of the group, Jews were often discouraged from joining the movement out of fear that the movement would appear too Jewish. However, Jews who could physically pass as Poles were allowed to join and were encouraged to state they were ethnic Poles and to change their names to Polish-sounding names. “Not everyone was approached [to engage in deception], and some were spared such proposals because nothing could be done with them: they just looked too Jewish” (Schatz 1991, 185).

When this group came to power after the war, they advanced Soviet political, economic, and cultural interests in Poland while aggressively pursuing specifically Jewish interests, including the destruction of the nationalist political opposition whose openly expressed anti-Semitism derived at least partly from the fact that Jews were perceived as favoring Soviet domination.<sup>77</sup> The purge of Wladyslaw Gomulka’s group shortly after the war resulted in the promotion of Jews and the complete banning of anti-Semitism. Moreover, the general opposition between the Jewish-dominated Polish communist government supported by the Soviets and the nationalist, anti-Semitic underground helped forge the allegiance of the great majority of the Jewish population to the communist government while the great majority of non-Jewish Poles favored the anti-Soviet parties (Schatz 1991, 204-205). The result was widespread anti-Semitism: By the summer of 1947, approximately 1,500 Jews had been killed in incidents at 155 localities. In the words of Cardinal Hlond in 1946 commenting on an incident in which 41 Jews were killed, the pogrom was “due to the Jews who today occupy leading positions in Poland’s government and endeavor to



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introduce a governmental structure that the majority of the Poles do not wish to have” (in Schatz 1991, 107).

The Jewish-dominated communist government actively sought to revive and perpetuate Jewish life in Poland (Schatz 1991, 208) so that, as in the case of the Soviet Union, there was no expectation that Judaism would wither away under a communist regime. Jewish activists had an “ethnopolitical vision” in which Jewish secular culture would continue in Poland with the cooperation and approval of the government (Schatz 1991, 230). Thus while the government campaigned actively against the political and cultural power of the Catholic Church, collective Jewish life flourished in the postwar period. Yiddish and Hebrew language schools and publications were established, as well as a great variety of cultural and social welfare organizations for Jews. A substantial percentage of the Jewish population was employed in Jewish economic cooperatives.

Moreover, the Jewish-dominated government regarded the Jewish population, many of whom had not previously been communists, as “a reservoir that could be trusted and enlisted in its efforts to rebuild the country. Although not old, ‘tested’ comrades, they were not rooted in the social networks of the anti-communist society, they were outsiders with regard to its historically shaped traditions, without connections to the Catholic Church, and hated by those who hated the regime.”<sup>78</sup> Thus they could be depended on and used to fill the required positions” (Schatz 1991, 212-213).

Jewish ethnic background was particularly important in recruiting for the internal security service: The generation of Jewish communists realized that their power derived entirely from the Soviet Union and that they would have to resort to coercion in order to control a fundamentally hostile noncommunist society (p. 262). The core members of the security service came from the Jewish communists who had been communists before the establishment of the Polish communist government, but these were joined by other Jews sympathetic to the government and alienated from the wider society. This in turn reinforced the popular image of Jews as servants of foreign interests and enemies of ethnic Poles (Schatz 1991, 225).

Jewish members of the internal security force often appear to have been motivated by personal rage and a desire for revenge related to their Jewish identity:

Their families had been murdered and the anti-Communist underground was, in their perception, a continuation of essentially the same anti-Semitic and anti-Communist tradition. They hated those who had collaborated with the Nazis and those who opposed the new order with almost the same intensity and

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knew that as Communists, or as both Communists and Jews, they were hated at least in the same way. In their eyes, the enemy was essentially the same. The old evil deeds had to be punished and new ones prevented and a merciless struggle was necessary before a better world could be built. (Schatz 1991, 226)

As in the case of post-World War II Hungary (see below), Poland became polarized between a predominantly Jewish ruling and administrative class supported by the rest of the Jewish population and by Soviet military power, arrayed against the great majority of the native gentile population. The situation was exactly analogous to the many instances in traditional societies where Jews formed a middle layer between an alien ruling elite, in this case the Soviets, and the gentile native population (see *PTSDA*, Ch. 5). However, this intermediary role made the former outsiders into an elite group in Poland, and the former champions of social justice went to great lengths to protect their own personal prerogatives, including a great deal of rationalization and self-deception (p. 261). Indeed, when a defector's accounts of the elite's lavish lifestyle (e.g., Boleslaw Bierut had four villas and the use of five others [Toranska 1987, 28]), their corruption, as well as their role as Soviet agents became known in 1954, there were shock waves throughout the lower levels of the party (p. 266). Clearly, the sense of moral superiority and the altruistic motivations of this group were entirely in their own self-deceptions.

Although attempts were made to place a Polish face on what was in reality a Jewish-dominated government, such attempts were limited by the lack of trustworthy Poles able to fill positions in the Communist Party, government administration, the military and the internal security forces. Jews who had severed formal ties with the Jewish community, or who had changed their names to Polish-sounding names, or who could pass as Poles because of their physical appearance or lack of a Jewish accent were favored in promotions (p. 214). Whatever the subjective personal identities of the individuals recruited into these government positions, the recruiters were clearly acting on the perceived ethnic background of the individual as a cue to dependability, and the result was that the situation resembled the many instances in traditional societies where Jews and crypto-Jews developed economic and political networks of coreligionists: "Besides a group of influential politicians, too small to be called a category, there were the soldiers; the apparatchiks and the administrators; the intellectuals and ideologists; the policemen; the diplomats; and finally, the activists in the Jewish sector. There also existed the mass of common people—clerks, craftsmen, and workers—whose common denominator with the others was a shared ideological vision, a past history, and the essentially similar mode of ethnic aspiration" (p. 226).

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It is revealing that when Jewish economic and political domination gradually decreased in the mid- to late-1950s, many of these individuals began working in the Jewish economic cooperatives, and Jews purged from the internal security service were aided by Jewish organizations funded ultimately by American Jews. There can be little doubt of their continuing Jewish identity and the continuation of Jewish economic and cultural separatism. Indeed, after the collapse of the communist regime in Poland, “numerous Jews, some of them children and grandchildren of former communists, came ‘out of the closet’” (*Anti-Semitism Worldwide 1994*, 115), openly adopting a Jewish identity and reinforcing the idea that many Jewish communists were in fact crypto-Jews.

When the anti-Zionist-anti-Semitic movement in the Soviet Union filtered down to Poland following the Soviet policy change toward Israel in the late 1940s, there was another crisis of identity resulting from the belief that anti-Semitism and communism were incompatible. One response was to engage in “ethnic self-abnegation” by making statements denying the existence of a Jewish identity; another advised Jews to adopt a low profile. Because of the very strong identification with the system among Jews, the general tendency was to rationalize even their own persecution during the period when Jews were gradually being purged from important positions: “Even when the methods grew surprisingly painful and harsh, when the goal of forcing one to admit uncommitted crimes and to frame others became clear, and when the perception of being unjustly treated by methods that contradicted communist ethos came forth, the basic ideological convictions stayed untouched. Thus the holy madness triumphed, even in the prison cells” (p. 260). In the end, an important ingredient in the anti-Jewish campaign of the 1960s was the assertion that the communist Jews of the generation opposed the Soviet Union’s Mideast policy favoring the Arabs.

As with Jewish groups throughout the ages (see *PTSDA*, Ch. 3), the anti-Jewish purges did not result in their abandoning their group commitment even when it resulted in unjust persecutions. Instead, it resulted in increased commitment, “unswerving ideological discipline, and obedience to the point of self-deception... They regarded the party as the collective personification of the progressive forces of history and, regarding themselves as its servants, expressed a specific kind of teleological-deductive dogmatism, revolutionary haughtiness, and moral ambiguity” (pp. 260-261). Indeed, there is some indication that group cohesiveness increased as the fortunes of the generation declined (p. 301). As their position was gradually eroded by a nascent anti-Semitic Polish nationalism, they became ever more conscious of their “groupness.” After their final defeat they quickly lost any Polish identity they might have had and quickly assumed overtly Jewish identities, especially in Israel, the destination of most Polish Jews.

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They came to see their former anti-Zionism as a mistake and became now strong supporters of Israel (p. 314).

In conclusion, Schatz's treatment shows that the generation of Jewish communists and their ethnically Jewish supporters must be considered as an historic Jewish group. The evidence indicates that this group pursued specifically Jewish interests, including especially their interest in securing Jewish group continuity in Poland while at the same time attempting to destroy institutions like the Catholic Church and other manifestations of Polish nationalism that promoted social cohesion among Poles. The communist government also combated anti-Semitism, and it promoted Jewish economic and political interests. While the extent of subjective Jewish identity among this group undoubtedly varied, the evidence indicates submerged and self-deceptive levels of Jewish identity even among the most assimilated of them. The entire episode illustrates the complexity of Jewish identification, and it exemplifies the importance of self-deception and rationalization as central aspects of Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy (see *SAID*, Chs. 7, 8). There was massive self-deception and rationalization regarding the role of the Jewish-dominated government and its Jewish supporters in eliminating gentile nationalist elites, of its role in opposing Polish national culture and the Catholic Church while building up a secular Jewish culture, of its role as the agent of Soviet domination of Poland, and of its own economic success while administering an economy that harnessed the economy of Poland to meet Soviet interests and demanded hardship and sacrifices from the rest of the people.

## **RADICALISM AND JEWISH IDENTIFICATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND**

From the origins of the movement in the late nineteenth century, a strong sense of Jewish identification also characterized American Jewish radicals (e.g., the Union of Hebrew Trades and the Jewish Socialist Federation; see Levin 1977; Liebman 1979). In Sorin's (1985) study of Jewish radicals who immigrated to the United States early in the twentieth century, only 7 percent were hostile to any form of Jewish separatism. Over 70 percent "were imbued with positive Jewish consciousness. The great majority were significantly caught up in a web of overlapping institutions, affiliations, and Jewish social formations" (p. 119). Moreover, "at the very most" 26 of 95 radicals were in Sorin's "hostile, ambivalent, or assimilationist" categories, but "in some if not all of the cases, these were persons struggling, often creatively, to synthesize new identities" (p.

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115). A major theme of this chapter is that a great many avowedly “de-racinated” Jewish radicals had self-deceptive images of their lack of Jewish identification.

The following comment about a very prominent American Jewish radical, Emma Goldman, illustrates the general trend:

The pages of the magazine *Mother Earth* that Emma Goldman edited from 1906 to 1917 are filled with Yiddish stories, tales from the Talmud, and translations of Morris Rosenfeld’s poetry. Moreover, her commitment to anarchism did not divert her from speaking and writing, openly and frequently, about the *particular* burdens Jews faced in a world in which antisemitism was a living enemy. Apparently, Emma Goldman’s faith in anarchism, with its emphasis on *universalism*, did not result from and was not dependent on a casting off of Jewish identity. (Sorin 1985, 8; italics in text)

Twentieth-century American Jewish radicalism was a specifically Jewish subculture, or “contraculture” to use Arthur Liebman’s (1979, 37) term. The American Jewish left never removed itself from the wider Jewish community, and, indeed, membership of Jews in the movement fluctuated depending on whether these movements clashed with specifically Jewish interests.<sup>79</sup>

Fundamentally, the Jewish Old Left, including the unions, the leftist press, and the leftist fraternal orders (which were often associated with a synagogue [Liebman 1979, 284]), were part of the wider Jewish community, and when the Jewish working class declined, specifically Jewish concerns and identity gained increasing prominence as the importance of radical political beliefs declined. This tendency for Jewish members of leftist organizations to concern themselves with specifically Jewish affairs increased after 1930 primarily because of recurring gaps between specific Jewish interests and universalist leftist causes at that time. This phenomenon occurred within the entire spectrum of leftist organizations, including organizations such as the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, whose membership also included gentiles (Liebman 1979, 267ff).

Jewish separatism in leftist movements was facilitated by a very traditional aspect of Jewish separatism—the use of an ingroup language. Yiddish eventually became highly valued for its unifying effect on the Jewish labor movement and its ability to cement ties to the wider Jewish community (Levin 1977, 210; Liebman 1979, 259-260). “The *landsmanshaften* [Jewish social clubs], the Yiddish press and theatre, East Side socialist cafés, literary societies and *fereyns*, which were so much a part of Jewish socialist culture, created an unmistakable Jewish milieu, which the shop, union, or Socialist party could not possibly

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duplicate. Even the class enemy—the Jewish employer—spoke Yiddish” (Levin 1977, 210).

Indeed, the socialist educational program of the Workman’s Circle (the largest Jewish labor fraternal order in the early twentieth century) failed at first (prior to 1916) because of the absence of Yiddish and Jewish content: “Even radical Jewish parents wanted their children to learn Yiddish and know something about their people” (Liebman 1979, 292). These schools succeeded when they began including a Jewish curriculum with a stress on Jewish peoplehood. They persisted through the 1940s as Jewish schools with a socialist ideology which stressed the idea that a concern for social justice was the key to Jewish survival in the modern world. Clearly, socialism and liberal politics had become a form of secular Judaism. The organization had been transformed over its history “from a radical labor fraternal order with Jewish members into a Jewish fraternal order with liberal sentiments and a socialist heritage” (Liebman 1979, 295).

Similarly, the communist-oriented Jewish subculture, including organizations such as the International Workers Order (IWO), included Yiddish-speaking sections. One such section, the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order (JPFO), was an affiliate of the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) and was listed as a subversive organization by the U.S. Attorney General. The JPFO had 50,000 members and was the financial and organizational “bulwark” of the CPUSA after World War II; it also provided critical funding for the *Daily Worker* and the *Morning Freiheit* (Svonkin 1997, 166). Consistent with the present emphasis on the compatibility of communism-radicalism and Jewish identity, it funded children’s educational programs that promulgated a strong relationship between Jewish identity and radical concerns. The IWO Yiddish schools and summer camps, which continued into the 1960s, stressed Jewish culture and even reinterpreted Marxism not as a theory of class struggle but as a theory of struggle for Jewish freedom from oppression. Although the AJCongress eventually severed its ties with the JPFO during the cold war period and stated that communism was a threat, it was “at best a reluctant and unenthusiastic participant” (Svonkin 1997, 132) in the Jewish effort to develop a public image of anti-communism—a position reflecting the sympathies of many among its predominantly second- and third-generation Eastern European immigrant membership.

David Horowitz (1997, 42) describes the world of his parents who had joined a “shul” run by the CPUSA in which Jewish holidays were given a political interpretation. Psychologically these people might as well have been in eighteenth-century Poland:

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What my parents had done in joining the Communist Party and moving to Sunnyside was to return to the ghetto. There was the same shared private language, the same hermetically sealed universe, the same dual posturing revealing one face to the outer world and another to the tribe. More importantly, there was the same conviction of being marked for persecution and specially ordained, the sense of moral superiority toward the stronger and more numerous *goyim* outside. And there was the same fear of expulsion for heretical thoughts, which was the fear that riveted the chosen to the faith.

A strong sense of Jewish peoplehood was also characteristic of the leftist Yiddish press. Thus a letter writer to the radical *Jewish Daily Forward* complained that his nonreligious parents were upset because he wanted to marry a non-Jew. “He wrote to the *Forward* on the presumption that he would find sympathy, only to discover that the socialist and freethinking editors of the paper insisted... that it was imperative that he marry a Jew and that he continue to identify with the Jewish community... [T]hose who read the *Forward* knew that the commitment of Jews to remain Jewish was beyond question and discussion” (Hertzberg 1989, 211-212). The *Forward* had the largest circulation of any Jewish periodical in the world into the 1930s and maintained close ties to the Socialist Party.

Werner Cohn (1958, 621) describes the general milieu of the immigrant Jewish community from 1886 to 1920 as “one big radical debating society”:

By 1886 the Jewish community in New York had become conspicuous for its support of the third-party (United Labor) candidacy of Henry George, the theoretician of the Single Tax. From then on Jewish districts in New York and elsewhere were famous for their radical voting habits. The Lower East Side repeatedly picked as its congressman Meyer London, the only New York Socialist ever to be elected to Congress. And many Socialists went to the State Assembly in Albany from Jewish districts. In the 1917 mayoralty campaign in New York City, the Socialist and anti-war candidacy of Morris Hillquit was supported by the most authoritative voices of the Jewish Lower East Side: The United Hebrew Trades, the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, and most importantly, the very popular Yiddish *Daily Forward*. This was the period in which extreme radicals—like Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman—were giants in the Jewish community, and when



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almost all the Jewish giants—among them Abraham Cahan, Morris Hillquit, and the young Morris R. Cohen—were radicals. Even Samuel Gompers, when speaking before Jewish audiences, felt it necessary to use radical phrases.

In addition, *The Freiheit*, which was an unofficial organ of the Communist Party from the 1920s to the 1950s, “stood at the center of Yiddish proletarian institutions and subculture... [which offered] identity, meaning, friendship, and understanding” (Liebman 1979, 349-350). The newspaper lost considerable support in the Jewish community in 1929 when it took the Communist Party position in opposition to Zionism, and by the 1950s it essentially had to choose between satisfying its Jewish soul or its status as a communist organ. Choosing the former, by the late 1960s it was justifying not returning the Israeli-occupied territories in opposition to the line of the CPUSA.

The relationship of Jews and the CPUSA is particularly interesting because the party often adopted anti-Jewish positions, especially because of its close association with the Soviet Union. Beginning in the late 1920s Jews played a very prominent role in the CPUSA (Klehr 1978, 37ff). Merely citing percentages of Jewish leaders does not adequately indicate the extent of Jewish influence, however, because it fails to take account of the personal characteristics of Jewish radicals as a talented, educated and ambitious group (see pp. 5, 95-96), but also because efforts were made to recruit gentiles as “window dressing” to conceal the extent of Jewish dominance (Klehr 1978, 40; Rothman & Lichter 1982, 99). Lyons (1982, 81) quotes a gentile Communist who said that many working-class gentiles felt that they were recruited in order to “diversify the Party’s ethnic composition.” The informant recounts his experience as a gentile representative at a communist-sponsored youth conference:

It became increasingly apparent to most participants that virtually all of the speakers were Jewish New Yorkers. Speakers with thick New York accents would identify themselves as “the delegate from the Lower East Side” or “the comrade from Brownsville.” Finally the national leadership called a recess to discuss what was becoming an embarrassment. How could a supposedly national student organization be so totally dominated by New York Jews? Finally, they resolved to intervene and remedy the situation by asking the New York caucus to give “out-of-towners” a chance to speak. The convention was held in Wisconsin.

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Klehr (1978, 40) estimates that from 1921 to 1961, Jews constituted 33.5 percent of the Central Committee members, and the representation of Jews was often above 40 percent (Klehr 1978, 46). Jews were the only native-born ethnic group from which the party was able to recruit. Glazer (1969, 129) states that at least half of the CPUSA membership of around 50,000 were Jews into the 1950s and that the rate of turnover was very high; thus perhaps ten times that number of individuals were involved in the party and there were “an equal or larger number who were Socialists of one kind or another.” Writing of the 1920s, Buhle (1980, 89) notes that “most of those favorable to the party and the *Freiheit* simply did not join—no more than a few thousand out of a following of a hundred times that large.”

Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who were convicted of spying for the Soviet Union, exemplify the powerful sense of Jewish identification among many Jews on the left. Svonkin (1997, 158) shows that they viewed themselves as Jewish martyrs. Like many other Jewish leftists, they perceived a strong link between Judaism and their communist sympathies. Their prison correspondence, in the words of one reviewer, was filled with a “continual display of Judaism and Jewishness,” including the comment that “in a couple of days, the Passover celebration of our people’s search for freedom will be here. This cultural heritage has an added meaning for us, who are imprisoned away from each other and our loved ones by the modern Pharaohs” (pp. 158-159). (Embarrassed by the self-perceptions of the Rosenbergs as Jewish martyrs, the Anti-Defamation League [ADL] interpreted Julius Rosenberg’s professions of Jewishness as an attempt to obtain “every possible shred of advantage from the faith that he had repudiated” [Svonkin 1997, 159]—another example of the many revisionist attempts, some recounted in this chapter, to render incompatible Jewish identification and political radicalism and thus completely obscure an important chapter of Jewish history.)

As in the case of the Soviet Union in the early years, the CPUSA had separate sections for different ethnic groups, including a Yiddish-speaking Jewish Federation.<sup>80</sup> When these were abolished in 1925 in the interests of developing a party that would appeal to native Americans (who tended to have a low level of ethnic consciousness), there was a mass exodus of Jews from the party, and many of those who remained continued to participate in an unofficial Yiddish subculture within the party.

In the following years Jewish support for the CPUSA rose and fell depending on party support for specific Jewish issues. During the 1930s the CPUSA changed its position and took great pains to appeal to specific Jewish interests, including a primary focus against anti-Semitism, supporting Zionism and eventually Israel, and advocating the importance of maintaining Jewish cultural traditions. As in Poland during this period, “The American radical movement

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glorified the development of Jewish life in the Soviet Union... The Soviet Union was living proof that under socialism the Jewish question could be solved” (Kann 1981, 152-153). Communism was thus perceived as “good for Jews.” Despite temporary problems caused by the Soviet-German nonaggression pact of 1939, the result was an end to the CPUSA’s isolation from the Jewish community during World War II and the immediate postwar years.

Interestingly, the Jews who remained within the party during the period of the nonaggression pact faced a difficult conflict between divided loyalties, indicating that Jewish identity was still important to these individuals. The nonaggression pact provoked a great deal of rationalization on the part of Jewish CPUSA members, often involving an attempt to interpret the Soviet Union’s actions as actually benefiting Jewish interests—clearly an indication that these individuals had not given up their Jewish identities.<sup>81</sup> Others continued to be members but silently opposed the party’s line because of their Jewish loyalties. Of great concern for all of these individuals was that the nonaggression pact was destroying their relationship with the wider Jewish community.

At the time of the creation of Israel in 1948, part of the CPUSA’s appeal to Jews was due to its support for Israel at a time when Truman was waffling on the issue. In 1946 the CPUSA even adopted a resolution advocating the continuation of the Jewish people as an ethnic entity within socialist societies. Arthur Liebman describes CPUSA members during the period as being elated because of the congruity of their Jewish interests and membership in the party. Feelings of commonality with the wider Jewish community were expressed, and there was an enhanced feeling of Jewishness resulting from interactions with other Jews within the CPUSA: During the postwar period “Communist Jews were expected and encouraged to be Jews, to relate to Jews, and to think of the Jewish people and the Jewish culture in a positive light. At the same time, non-Communist Jews, with some notable exceptions [in the non-communist Jewish left]... accepted their Jewish credentials and agreed to work with them in an all-Jewish context” (Liebman 1979, 514). As has happened so often in Jewish history, this upsurge in Jewish self-identity was facilitated by the persecution of Jews, in this case the Holocaust.

This period of easy compatibility of Jewish interests with CPUSA interests evaporated after 1948, especially because of the altered Soviet position on Israel and revelations of state-sponsored anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Many Jews abandoned the CPUSA as a result. Once again, those who remained in the CPUSA tended to rationalize Soviet anti-Semitism in a way that allowed them to maintain their Jewish identification. Some viewed the persecutions as an aberration and the result of individual pathology rather than the fault of the communist system itself. Or the West was blamed as being indirectly responsible. Moreover, the reasons for remaining in the CPUSA appear

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to have typically involved a desire to remain in the self-contained Yiddish communist subculture. Liebman (1979, 522) describes an individual who finally resigned when the evidence on Soviet anti-Semitism became overwhelming: "In 1958, after more than 25 years with the Communist party, this leader resigned and developed a strong Jewish identity which encompassed a fierce loyalty to Israel." Alternatively, Jewish CPUSA members simply failed to adopt the Soviet party line, as occurred on the issue of support for Israel during the 1967 and 1973 wars. Eventually, there was virtually a complete severing of Jews from the CPUSA.

Lyons's (1982, 180) description of a Jewish-Communist club in Philadelphia reveals the ambivalence and self-deception that occurred when Jewish interests clashed with communist sympathies:

The club... faced rising tension over Jewishness, especially as it related to Israel. In the mid-sixties conflict erupted over the club's decision to criticize Soviet treatment of Jews. Some orthodox pro-Soviet club members resigned; others disagreed but stayed. Meanwhile the club continued to change, becoming less Marxist and more Zionist. During the 1967 Middle East War, "we got dogmatic, for one week," as Ben Green, a club leader, puts it. They allowed no discussion on the merits of supporting Israel, but simply raised funds to show their full support. Nevertheless, several members insist that the club is not Zionist and engages in "critical support" of Israel.

As in the case of Poland, there is every reason to suppose that American Jewish Communists regarded the USSR as generally satisfying Jewish interests at least until well into the post-World War II era. Beginning in the 1920s the CPUSA was financially supported by the Soviet Union, adhered closely to its positions, and engaged in a successful espionage effort against the United States on behalf of the Soviet Union, including stealing atomic secrets (Klehr, Haynes & Firsov 1995).<sup>82</sup> In the 1930s Jews "constituted a substantial majority of known members of the Soviet underground in the United States" and almost half of the individuals prosecuted under the Smith Act of 1947 (Rothman & Lichter 1982, 100).

Although all party functionaries may not have known the details of the special relationship with the Soviet Union, 'special work' [i.e., espionage] was part and parcel of the Communist mission in the United States, and this was well known and discussed openly in the CPUSA's Political Bureau... [I]t was

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these ordinary Communists whose lives demonstrate that some rank-and-file members were willing to serve the USSR by spying on their own country. There but for the grace of not being asked went other American Communists. The CPUSA showered hosannas on the USSR as the promised land. In Communist propaganda the survival of the Soviet Union as the one bright, shining star of humankind was a constant refrain, as in the 1934 American Communist poem that described the Soviet Union as “a heaven... brought to earth in Russia.” (Klehr et al. 1995, 324)

Klehr et al. (1995, 325) suggest that the CPUSA had important effects on U.S. history. Without excusing the excesses of the anti-communist movement, they note that “the peculiar and particular edge to American anticommunism cannot be severed from the CPUSA’s allegiance to the Soviet Union; the belief that American communists were disloyal is what made the communist issue so powerful and at times poisonous.”

Communists lied to and deceived the New Dealers with whom they were allied. Those liberals who believed the denials then denounced as mudslingers those anti-Communists who complained of concealed Communist activity. Furious at denials of what they knew to be true, anti-Communists then suspected that those who denied the Communist presence were themselves dishonest. The Communists’ duplicity poisoned normal political relationships and contributed to the harshness of the anti-Communist reaction of the late 1940s and 1950s. (Klehr et al. 1995, 106)

The liberal defense of communism during the Cold War era also raises issues related to this volume. Nicholas von Hoffman (1996) notes the role of the liberal defenders of communism during this period, such as the editors of *The New Republic* and Harvard historian Richard Hofstadter (1965) who attributed the contemporary concern with communist infiltration of the U.S. government to the “paranoid style of American politics.” (Rothman and Lichter [1982, 105] include *The New Republic* as among a group of liberal and radical publications with a large presence of Jewish writers and editors.) The official liberal version was that American Communists were *sui generis* and unconnected to the Soviet Union, so there was no domestic communist threat. The liberals had seized the intellectual and moral high ground during this period. Supporters of McCarthy were viewed as intellectual and cultural primitives: “In the ongoing *kulturkampf* dividing the society, the elites of Hollywood, Cambridge and

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liberal thank-tankery had little sympathy for bow-legged men with their American Legion caps and their fat wives, their yapping about Yalta and the Katyn Forest. Catholic and kitsch, looking out of their picture windows at their flock of pink plastic flamingos, the lower middles and their foreign policy anguish were too *infra dig* to be taken seriously” (von Hoffman 1996, C2).

However, besides poisoning the atmosphere of domestic politics, communist espionage had effects on foreign policy as well:

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Soviet atomic espionage in shaping the history of the Cold War. World War II had ended with Americans confident that the atomic bomb gave them a monopoly on the ultimate weapon, a monopoly expected to last ten to twenty years. The Soviet explosion of a nuclear bomb in 1949 destroyed this sense of physical security. America had fought in two world wars without suffering serious civilian deaths or destruction. Now it faced an enemy led by a ruthless dictator who could wipe out any American city with a single bomb.

Had the American nuclear monopoly lasted longer, Stalin might have refused to allow North Korean Communists to launch the Korean War, or the Chinese Communists might have hesitated to intervene in the war. Had the American nuclear monopoly lasted until Stalin’s death, the restraint on Soviet aggressiveness might have alleviated the most dangerous years of the Cold War. (Klehr et al. 1995, 106)

The Jewish “contraculture” continued to sustain a radical, specifically Jewish subculture into the 1950s—long after the great majority of Jews were no longer in the working class (Liebman 1979, 206, 289ff). The fundamentally Jewish institutions and families that constituted the Old Left then fed into the New Left (Liebman 1979, 536ff). The original impetus of the 1960s student protest movement “almost necessarily began with the scions of the relatively well-to-do, liberal-to-left, disproportionately Jewish intelligentsia—the largest pool of those ideologically disposed to sympathize with radical student action in the population” (Lipset 1971, 83; see also Glazer 1969). Flacks (1967, 64) found that 45 percent of students involved in a protest at the University of Chicago were Jewish, but his original sample was “‘adjusted’ to obtain better balance” (Rothman & Lichter 1982, 82). Jews constituted 80 percent of the students signing a petition to end ROTC at Harvard and 30-50 percent of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)—the central organization of student radicals.

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Adelson (1972) found that 90 percent of his sample of radical students at the University of Michigan were Jewish, and it would appear that a similar rate of participation is likely to have occurred at other schools, such as Wisconsin and Minnesota.<sup>83</sup> Braungart (1979) found that 43 percent of the SDS membership in his sample of ten universities had at least one Jewish parent and an additional 20 percent had no religious affiliation. The latter are most likely to be predominantly Jewish: Rothman and Lichter (1982, 82) found that the “overwhelming majority” of the radical students who claimed that their parents were atheists had Jewish backgrounds.

Jews also tended to be the most publicized leaders of campus protests (Sachar 1992, 804). Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, and Rennie Davis achieved national fame as members of the “Chicago Seven” group convicted of crossing state lines with intent to incite a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Cuddihy (1974, 193ff) notes the overtly ethnic subplot of the trial, particularly the infighting between defendant Abbie Hoffman and Judge Julius Hoffman, the former representing the children of the Eastern European immigrant generation that tended toward political radicalism, and the latter representing the older, more assimilated German-Jewish establishment. During the trial Abbie Hoffman ridiculed Judge Hoffman in Yiddish as “Shande fur de Goyim” (disgrace for the gentiles)—translated by Abbie Hoffman as “Front man for the WASP power elite.” Clearly Hoffman and Rubin (who spent time on a Kibbutz in Israel) had strong Jewish identifications and antipathy to the white Protestant establishment. Cuddihy (1974, 191-192) also credits the origins of the Yippie movement to the activities of the underground journalist Paul Krassner (publisher of *The Realist*, a “daring, scatological, curiously apolitical” journal of “irreverent satire and impolite reportage”) and the countercultural sensibility of comedian Lenny Bruce.

As a group, radical students came from relatively well-to-do families, whereas conservative students tended to come from less affluent families (Gottfried 1993, 53).<sup>84</sup> The movement was therefore initiated and led by an elite, but it was not aimed at advancing the interests of the unionized lower middle class. Indeed, the New Left regarded the working class as “fat, contented, and conservative, and their trade unions reflected them” (Glazer 1969, 123).

Moreover, although mild forms of Jewish anti-Semitism and rebellion against parental hypocrisy did occur among Jewish New Left radicals, the predominant pattern was a continuity with parental ideology (Flacks 1967; Glazer 1969, 12; Lipset 1988, 393; Rothman & Lichter 1982, 82). (Similarly, during the Weimar period the Frankfurt School radicals rejected their parents’ commercial values but did not personally reject their family. Indeed, their families tended to provide moral and financial support for them in their radical political activities [Cuddihy 1974, 154].) Many of these “red diaper babies” came



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from “families which around the breakfast table, day after day, in Scarsdale, Newton, Great Neck, and Beverly Hills have discussed what an awful, corrupt, immoral, undemocratic, racist society the United States is. Many Jewish parents live in the lily-white suburbs, go to Miami Beach in the winter, belong to expensive country clubs, arrange Bar Mitzvahs costing thousands of dollars—all the while espousing a left-liberal ideology” (Lipset 1988, 393). As indicated above, Glazer (1969) estimates that approximately 1 million Jews were members of the CPUSA or were socialists prior to 1950. The result was that among Jews there was “a substantial reservoir of present-day parents for whose children to be radical is not something shocking and strange but may well be seen as a means of fulfilling the best drives of their parents” (Glazer 1969, 129).

Moreover, the “American Jewish establishment never really distanced itself from these young Jews” (Hertzberg 1989, 369). Indeed, establishment Jewish organizations, including the AJCongress, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (a lay Reform group), and the Synagogue Council of America (Winston 1978), were prominent early opponents of the war in Vietnam. The anti-war attitudes of official Jewish organizations may have resulted in some anti-Semitism. President Lyndon Johnson was reported to be “disturbed by the lack of support for the Vietnam war in the American Jewish community at a time when he is taking new steps to aid Israel” (in Winston 1978, 198), and the ADL took steps to deal with an anti-Jewish backlash they expected to occur as a result of Jews tending to be hawks on military matters related to Israel and doves on military matters related to Vietnam (Winston 1978).

As with the Old Left, many of the Jewish New Left strongly identified as Jews (Liebman 1979, 536ff). Chanukah services were held and the “Hatikvah” (the Israeli national anthem) was sung during an important sit-in at Berkeley (Rothman & Lichter 1982, 81). The New Left lost Jewish members when it advocated positions incompatible with specific Jewish interests (especially regarding Israel) and attracted members when its positions coincided with these interests (Liebman 1979, 527ff). Leaders often spent time at Kibbutzim in Israel, and there is some indication that New Leftists consciously attempted to minimize the more overt signs of Jewish identity and to minimize discussion of issues on which Jewish and non-Jewish New Leftists would disagree, particularly Israel. Eventually the incompatibility of Jewish interests and the New Left resulted in most Jews abandoning the New Left, with many going to Israel to join kibbutzim, becoming involved in more traditional Jewish religious observances, or becoming involved in leftist organizations with a specifically Jewish identity. After the 1967 Six-Day War, the most important issue for the Jewish New Left was Israel, but the movement also worked on behalf of Soviet Jews and demanded Jewish studies programs at universities (Shapiro 1992, 225). As SDS activist, Jay Rosenberg, wrote, “From this point on I shall join no movement that

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does not accept and support my people's struggle. If I must choose between the Jewish cause and a 'progressive' anti-Israel SDS, I shall choose the Jewish cause. If barricades are erected, I will fight as a Jew" (in Sachar 1992, 808).

Jews were also a critical component of the public acceptance of the New Left. Jews were overrepresented among radicals and their supporters in the media, the university, and the wider intellectual community, and Jewish leftist social scientists were instrumental in conducting research that portrayed student radicalism in a positive light (Rothman & Lichter 1982, 104). However, in their recent review of the literature on the New Left, Rothman and Lichter (1996, ix, xiii) note a continuing tendency to ignore the role of Jews in the movement and that when the Jewish role is mentioned, it is attributed to Jewish idealism or other positively valued traits. Cuddihy (1974, 194n) notes that the media almost completely ignored the Jewish infighting that occurred during the Chicago Seven trial. He also describes several evaluations of the trial written by Jews in the media (*New York Times*, *New York Post*, *Village Voice*) that excused the behavior of the defendants and praised their radical Jewish lawyer, William Kunstler.

Finally, a similar ebb and flow of Jewish attraction to communism depending on its convergence with specifically Jewish interests occurred also in England. During the 1930s the Communist Party appealed to Jews partly because it was the only political movement that was stridently anti-fascist. There was no conflict at all between a strong Jewish ethnic identity and being a member of the Communist Party: "Communist sympathy among Jews of that generation had about it some of the qualities of a group identification, a means, perhaps, of ethnic self-assertion" (Alderman 1992, 317-318). In the post-World War II period, virtually all the successful communist political candidates represented Jewish wards. However, Jewish support for communism declined with the revelation of Stalin's anti-Semitism, and many Jews left the Communist Party after the Middle East crisis of 1967 when the USSR broke off diplomatic relations with Israel (Alderman 1983, 162).

The conclusion must be that Jewish identity was generally perceived to be highly compatible with radical politics. When radical politics came in conflict with specific Jewish interests, Jews eventually ceased being radical, although there were often instances of ambivalence and rationalization.

## **SOCIAL IDENTITY PROCESSES, PERCEIVED JEWISH GROUP INTERESTS, AND JEWISH RADICALISM**

One view of Jewish radicalism emphasizes the moral basis of Judaism. This is yet another example of the attempt to portray Judaism as a universalist,