V. I. LENIN

*From War and Revolution*

One of the great casualties of the First World War was the Russian empire, including the czar, his family, many of the members of their class, and its centuries-old autocratic system. The burden of war was simply too much for Russian society to bear. The disillusionment in the army and civilian society, along with the overwhelming costs of war, fueled uprisings among civilians and the army and Czar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate in February of 1917. The government that emerged, under Alexander Kerensky, proved unable to satisfy the growing demands of peasants, veterans, and urban workers for “land, peace, and bread,” a slogan that V. I. Lenin (1870–1924) and the communists exploited, successfully seizing power from the moderate parliamentarians in October of that year.

As a Marxist, Lenin believed that he could establish a socialist society in Russia, but he argued that Russian conditions (e.g., economic underdevelopment; the devastation of war; the opposition of Europe, the United States, and Russian nobles to the revolution) made a democratic transition impossible. According to Lenin, a self-appointed government acting in the interests of the working class was the only way to a socialist Soviet Union. Lenin called this government “the dictatorship of the proletariat.” Rosa Luxemburg was one of Lenin’s fiercest critics on this point, arguing that capitalism in Russia was not sufficiently developed to allow for a democratic socialist revolution, and that dictatorial means would result in dictatorial ends.

Lenin delivered his “War and Revolution” address in May of 1917, during the fateful summer that followed the liberal February revolution and preceded the Bolshevik revolution in October. How did Lenin view the First World War and Russia’s continued participation in it? What did he hope to accomplish in the summer of 1917? How did he hope to accomplish it? The most important news for Russia’s allies, England and France, in the summer of 1917 was the United States’ entry into the war on their behalf. What was Lenin’s reaction to this development?

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Thinking Historically

According to Lenin, what were the causes of the First World War? What did he believe to be the main cause of the Russian revolution that occurred in February? What were the consequences of that revolution? What did he think would be the causes of a new revolution in Russia?

What we have at present is primarily two leagues, two groups of capitalist powers. We have before us all the world's greatest capitalist powers — Britain, France, America, and Germany — who for decades have doggedly pursued a policy of incessant economic rivalry aimed at achieving world supremacy, subjugating the small nations, and making threefold and tenfold profits on banking capital, which has caught the whole world in the net of its influence. That is what Britain's and Germany's policies really amount to. . . .

These policies show us just one thing — continuous economic rivalry between the world's two greatest giants, capitalist economies. On the one hand we have Britain, a country which owns the greater part of the globe, a country which ranks first in wealth, which has created this wealth not so much by the labour of its workers as by the exploitation of innumerable colonies, by the vast power of its banks which have developed at the head of all the others into an insignificantly small group of some four or five super-banks handling billions of rubles, and handling them in such a way that it can be said without exaggeration that there is not a patch of land in the world today on which this capital has not laid its heavy hand, not a patch of land which British capital has not enmeshed by a thousand threads. . . .

On the other hand, opposed to this, mainly Anglo-French group, we have another group of capitalists, an even more rapacious, even more predatory one, a group who came to the capitalist banqueting table when all the seats were occupied, but who introduced into the struggle new methods for developing capitalist production, improved techniques, and superior organization, which turned the old capitalism, the capitalism of the free-competition age, into the capitalism of giant trusts, syndicates, and cartels. This group introduced the beginnings of state-controlled capitalist production, combining the colossal power of capitalism with the colossal power of the state into a single mechanism and bringing tens of millions of people within the single organization of state capitalism. Here is economic history, here is diplomatic history, covering several decades, from which no one can get away. It is the one and only guide-post to a proper solution of the problem of war; it leads you to the conclusion that the present war, too, is the outcome of the policies of the classes who have come to grips in it, of the two
supreme giants, who, long before the war, had caught the whole world, all countries, in the net of financial exploitation and economically divided the globe up among themselves. They were bound to clash, because a redivision of this supremacy, from the point of view of capitalism, had become inevitable.

The present war is a continuation of the policy of conquest, of the shooting down of whole nationalities, of unbelievable atrocities committed by the Germans and the British in Africa, and by the British and the Russians in Persia — which of them committed most it is difficult to say. It was for this reason that the German capitalists looked upon them as their enemies. Ah, they said, you are strong because you are rich? But we are stronger, therefore we have the same “sacred” right to plunder. That is what the real history of British and German finance capital in the course of several decades preceding the war amounts to. That is what the history of Russo-German, Russo-British, and German-British relations amounts to. There you have the clue to an understanding of what the war is about. That is why the story that is current about the cause of the war is sheer duplicity and humbug. Forgetting the history of finance capital, the history of how this war had been brewing over the issue of redivision, they present the matter like this: Two nations were living at peace, then one attacked the other, and the other fought back. All science, all banks are forgotten, and the peoples are told to take up arms, and so are the peasants, who know nothing about politics.

... What revolution did we make? We overthrew Nicholas. The revolution was not so very difficult compared with one that would have overthrown the whole class of landowners and capitalists. Who did the revolution put in power? The landowners and capitalists — the very same classes who have long been in power in Europe. ... The [February] Russian revolution has not altered the war, but it has created organizations which exist in no other country and were seldom found in revolutions in the West. ... We have all over Russia a network of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies. Here is a revolution which has not said its last word yet.

... In the two months following the revolution the industrialists have robbed the whole of Russia. Capitalists have made staggering profits; every financial report tells you that. And when the workers, two months after the revolution, had the “audacity” to say they wanted to live like human beings, the whole capitalist press throughout the country set up a howl.

On the question of America entering the war I shall say this. People argue that America is a democracy, America has the White House. I say: Slavery was abolished there half a century ago. The anti-slave war ended in 1865. Since then multimillionaires have mushroomed. They have the whole of America in their financial grip. They are making
ready to subdue Mexico and will inevitably come to war with Japan over a carve-up of the Pacific. This war has been brewing for several decades. All literature speaks about it. America’s real aim in entering the war is to prepare for this future war with Japan. The American people do enjoy considerable freedom and it is difficult to conceive them standing for compulsory military service, for the setting up of an army pursuing any aims of conquest—a struggle with Japan, for instance. The Americans have the example of Europe to show them what this leads to. The American capitalists have stepped into this war in order to have an excuse, behind a smoke-screen of lofty ideals championing the rights of small nations, for building up a strong standing army. . . .

. . . Tens of millions of people are facing disaster and death; safeguarding the interests of the capitalists is the last thing that should bother us. The only way out is for all power to be transferred to the Soviets, which represent the majority of the population. Possibly mistakes may be made in the process. No one claims that such a difficult task can be disposed of offhand. We do not say anything of the sort. We are told that we want the power to be in the hands of the Soviets, but they don’t want it. We say that life’s experience will suggest this solution to them, and the whole nation will see that there is no other way out. We do not want a “seizure” of power, because the entire experience of past revolutions teaches us that the only stable power is the one that has the backing of the majority of the population. “Seizure” of power, therefore, would be adventurism, and our Party will not have it. . . .

Nothing but a workers’ revolution in several countries can defeat this war. The war is not a game, it is an appalling thing taking a toll of millions of lives, and it is not to be ended easily.

. . . The war has been brought about by the ruling classes and only a revolution of the working class can end it. Whether you will get a speedy peace or not depends on how the revolution will develop.

Whatever sentimental things may be said, however much we may be told: Let us end the war immediately—this cannot be done without the development of the revolution. When power passes to the Soviets the capitalists will come out against us. Japan, France, Britain—the governments of all countries will be against us. The capitalists will be against, but the workers will be for us. That will be the end of the war which the capitalists started. There you have the answer to the question of how to end the war.
WOODROW WILSON

Fourteen Points

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) was president of the United States during the First World War. He presented these “Fourteen Points” to Congress in January 1918 as a basis for a just peace treaty to end the war.

You may wish to compare these proposals with the actual peace settlement. Only points VII, VIII, X, and XIV were realized. Point IV was applied only to the defeated nations. The Versailles Treaty, which the defeated Germans were forced to sign on June 28, 1919, contained much harsher terms, including the famous “war guilt” clause (Article 231):

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

Why do you think there was such a gap between Wilson’s ideals and the actual treaty? How might Wilson have improved on these Fourteen Points? Could he reasonably expect all of them to be accepted?

Thinking Historically

What does the first paragraph suggest Wilson thought was one cause of the war? What does the beginning of the second paragraph suggest about the cause for U.S. entry into the war? What would have been the consequences of a peace fashioned along the lines Wilson envisioned in his Fourteen Points?

It will be our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open, and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. The day of

conquest and aggrandizement is gone; so is also the day of secret
covenants entered into in the interest of particular Governments and
likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world. It
is this happy fact, now clear to the view of every public man whose
thoughts do not still linger in an age that is dead and gone, which
makes it possible for every nation whose purposes are consistent with
justice and the peace of the world to avow now or at any other time the
objects it has in view.

We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which
touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible
unless they were corrected and the world secured once for all against
their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing pe-
culiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in;
aparticularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation
which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own insti-
tutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of
the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the
world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see
very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to
us. The program of the world's peace, therefore, is our program; and
that program, the only possible program, as we see it, is this:

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there
shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplo-
macy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territori-
al waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in
whole or in part by international action. . . .

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the
establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations
consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments
will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all
colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in
determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the popu-
lations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of
the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The Evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of
all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooper-
tion of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unham-
pered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determina-
tion of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a
sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her
own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind
that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia
by her sister nations the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.
For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and
to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish
the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be se-
cured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this pro-
gram does remove. We have no jealousy of German greatness, and
there is nothing in this program that impairs it. We grudge her no
achievement or distinction of learning or of pacific enterprise such as
have made her record very bright and very enviable. We do not wish
to injure her or to block in any way her legitimate influence or power.
We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrange-
ments of trade if she is willing to associate herself with us and the
other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law
and fair dealing. We wish her only to accept a place of equality among
the peoples of the world,—the new world in which we now live—instead of a place of mastery.

. . . An evident principle runs through the whole program I have
outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities,
and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one an-
other, whether they be strong or weak. Unless this principle be made its
foundation no part of the structure of international justice can stand.
The people of the United States could act upon no other principle; and
to the vindication of this principle they are ready to devote their lives,
their honor, and everything that they possess. The moral climax of this
the culminating and final war for human liberty has come, and they are
ready to put their own strength, their own highest purpose, their own
integrity and devotion to the test.

REFLECTIONS

By studying causes and consequences of world events, we learn how
things change but more important we learn how to avoid repeating past
mistakes. History is full of lessons that breed humility as well as confi-
dence. In The Origins of the First World War,1 historian James Joll
points out how unprepared people were for the war as late as the sum-
er of 1914. Even after the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was issued on
July 23 (almost a month after the assassination of the Archduke Franz
Ferdinand on June 28), diplomats across Europe left for their summer
holidays. By August, all of Europe was at war, though as Sally Marks
noted, the expectation was that it would be over in a month.

We could make a good case for diplomatic blundering as an important cause of the First World War. It is safe to say that few statesmen had any inkling of the consequences of their actions in 1914. And yet, if we concentrate on the daily decisions of diplomats that summer, we may pay attention only to the tossing of lit matches by people sitting on powder kegs rather than on the origins of the powder kegs themselves.

President Wilson blamed secret diplomacy, the international system of alliances, and imperialism as the chief causes of the war. On the importance of imperialism, Wilson's conclusion was the same as that of Lenin and Luxemburg, though he certainly did not share their conviction that capitalism was the root cause of imperialism and, in 1919, neither alliances nor imperialism were regarded as un-American or likely to end any time soon. Still, Wilson's radical moral aversion to reviving Old World empires might have prevented a new stage of imperialism in the League of Nations mandate system. One of the consequences of a Wilsonian peace might have been the creation of independent states in the Middle East and Africa a generation earlier.

The principle of the “self-determination of nations” that Wilson espoused, however, was a double-edged sword. The fact that the war had been “caused” by a Bosnian Serb nationalist assassin in 1914 might have been a warning that national self-determination could become an infinite regress in which smaller and smaller units sought to separate themselves from “foreign” domination. On the issue of nationalism versus internationalism, Wilson might have benefited from listening to Rosa Luxemburg. When asked about anti-Semitism, Luxemburg, a Jew from Russian Poland, answered:

What do you want with this particular suffering of the Jews? The poor victims of the rubber plantations of Putumayo, the Negroes of Africa with whose bodies the Europeans play a game of catch are just as near to me. . . . I have no special corner of my heart reserved for the ghetto: I am at home wherever in the world there are clouds, birds, and human tears.  

Woodrow Wilson was a historian and president of Princeton University before he became president of the United States. Rosa Luxemburg was a professional revolutionary — perhaps the leading socialist theorist in Europe. Both were trained to think historically. Which of the two better understood the causes and consequences of the First World War? Which of the two had a better appreciation of the problems of nationalism that were to continue to haunt the twentieth century?

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The rise of nationalist movements and international organizations were only two consequences of the First World War. Historians have attributed many other aspects of the twentieth century to the war. In an engaging account of his own search for the evidence of war along the Western Front, Stephen O'Shea writes:

It is generally accepted that the Great War and its fifty-two months of senseless slaughter encouraged, or amplified, among other things: the loss of a belief in progress, a mistrust of technology, the loss of religious faith, the loss of a belief in Western cultural superiority, the rejection of class distinctions, the rejection of traditional sexual roles, the birth of the Modern [in art], the rejection of the past, the elevation of irony to a standard mode of apprehending the world, the unbuckoning of moral codes, and the conscious embrace of the irrational.\(^3\)

What evidence can you find of any of these consequences in the accounts of this chapter?

World War II and Genocide

*Europe, Japan, China, Rwanda, and Guatemala, 1931–1994*

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

It is easier to understand the causes of the Second World War than of the First World War. In 1914, we might have pointed to Serbia or Austria, Germany or England, even the bellicosity of Russia and France. But in 1939, it was Hitler’s invasion of Poland that led to war with France (which was occupied by the Germans along with most of Europe in 1940), England, and the nations of the British Commonwealth, followed by the Soviet Union after 1940 and the United States after 1941. As in 1914, Germany was allied with Austria (a remnant of the former empire annexed by Germany after 1937) and the new Axis alliance of Japan and Italy.

World War II was even more of a global conflict than World War I. That conflict began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, continuing with Japan’s conquest of most of China in 1937 and of Southeast Asia and the Pacific in 1941. For Africans, the war began with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. After 1940, North Africa became an increasingly important battleground. As in World War I, soldiers were drawn from all over the world, from Africa and India, the Caribbean and Middle East, but especially in the end, from the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The death toll from World War II may have approached one hundred million, soldiers and civilians combined. Civilian casualties in an age of lightning tank attacks, military occupation of cities, and aerial bombing were enormous. World War I blurred the distinction between soldiers and civilians; World War II ended it. Millions of civilians died in Eastern Europe — along the paths of invading armies — in the great cities of China, and in the bombed-out cities of Germany and Japan. The numbers of wounded, mentally or physically, cannot be counted and the
hunger, disease, and deprivation continued long after the end of the war in 1945.

Death tolls offer a crude glimpse of war, and clearly World War II was one of the worst. This chapter focuses on a terrifying aspect of this and more recent conflicts: genocide. Hitler’s attempt to rid the world of Jews was genocide. The systematic roundup and murder of the Roma and Sinti peoples, homosexuals, and psychiatric patients, among others, was part of his larger attempt at racial “cleansing” and “Aryan” domination for which the war was little more than a pretext. In addition, Hitler undertook the mass slaughter of all leaders and educated civilians in occupied Poland and Russia for the express purpose of turning those nations into docile armies of brute labor for German industry.

The Nazis’ gross indifference to human life, their sadistic killing of defenseless civilians—among them women and children, the helpless, infirm, and aged—reached unimagined heights. Whether or not this was due to factors that distinguish the twentieth century from earlier eras (e.g., the anonymity of mass society, the rise of racist ideas, economic depression, the rise of fascism, the militarization of political life) we do not know. We do know that the Nazi experience was not singular. Imperial Japan, run by a militaristic fascist government in the 1930s, encouraged similar racist and inhumane behavior in its troops in Manchuria, China, and Southeast Asia. Were such barbarities limited to these two countries and this particular era? Certainly not, for aspects of earlier twentieth-century conflicts prepared the ground for mid-century genocide. During the Boer War (1899–1902) British troops in South Africa burned the homes of Dutch “Boer” settlers, forcing women and children into refugee or concentration camps where many died. Shortly thereafter in neighboring German South-West Africa, as recounted in section 73, German colonial officials put the indigenous Herero people in work camps and concentration camps as part of a policy of extermination and control. During World War I, hundreds of thousands of Armenians in Eastern Turkey were evacuated and massacred. Hitler famously commented: “Who, after all, remembers the Armenians?”

Nor, unfortunately, did genocide end with the Second World War. We will look at two recent examples from the early 1990s—Rwanda and Guatemala—where genocide was committed. We might just as readily explore the cases of ethnic cleansing in the breakup of Yugoslavia in the same period, the annihilation of urban Cambodians in the 1970s, or more recent ethnic conflicts in Darfur, Sudan. One might have thought that the horrendous revelation of the Nazi holocaust

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3The West commonly refers to the Roma and Sinti as “Gypsies” — a misnomer based on the mistaken belief that they were from Egypt. These peoples consider this a pejorative term.
would have ensured a global "Amen" to the declaration: "Never Again." We will do our best to understand why it did not.

**THINKING HISTORICALLY**

*Understanding and Explaining the Unforgivable*

Occasionally when we learn of something horrendous, we simply say, "I don't believe it." Our disbelief harbors two feelings: first, our sense of outrage and anger, a rejection of what was done; second, our unwillingness to believe that such a thing could happen or did happen. Our choice of words expresses the difficulty we have making sense of the senseless.

We must try, however, to understand such catastrophes so that we can help to prevent similar horrors in the future. Understanding requires a level of empathy that is often difficult to arouse when we find someone's actions reprehensible. As you read these selections, you will be encouraged to understand and explain, not to forgive.

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JOACHIM C. FEST

The Rise of Hitler

World War II had its origins in World War I. The peace terms imposed by the victors demanded the removal of the kaiser, the demilitarization of Germany, the transfer of Germany's industrial heartland to France, and the payment of enormous sums in reparation for the war. In addition, the revolutionary establishment of a republic by the German socialist party was followed by the unsuccessful uprising by the far more radical Spartacus League, which had raised the specter of a Bolshevik coup that would later turn Germany into a communist state.

In this essay, historian Joachim Fest explores the response of German conservative, nationalist, and middle-class groups to these developments. The National Socialists (the Nazi party) was just one of many fascist groups in Germany. Initiated by Mussolini in Italy in
1922, fascism was a movement that spread throughout Europe. As defined by Mussolini, in fascism the state dominates everything else:

For the Fascist the state is all-embracing; outside it no human or spiritual values exist, much less have worth. In this sense Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist State — a synthesis and a unity of all values — interprets, develops, and gives power to the whole life of the people.¹

Why did fascism appeal more to the middle class than to the working class? Was Hitler typical of those who were attracted to fascism? Was Hitler out of touch with reality, or was he tuned in to the feelings of many?

**Thinking Historically**

Fest helps us understand some of the appeal of fascism by putting it into the context of Germany’s defeat in World War I and the real or imagined threat of a Bolshevik revolution. Can you imagine empathizing with antirevolutionary fears if you lived then? Imagine how you might have responded to some of the other fascist appeals: fewer politicians, more police? The nobility of sacrificing for higher purposes; challenging the gray ordinariness of modern life; following instinct rather than reason; and war as authentic experience?

At the end of the First World War the victory of the democratic idea seemed beyond question. Whatever its weaknesses might be, it rose above the turmoil of the times, the uprisings, the dislocations, and the continual quarrels among nations as the unifying principle of the new age. For the war had not only decided a claim to power. It had at the same time altered a conception of government. After the collapse of virtually all the governmental structures of Central and Eastern Europe, many new political entities had emerged out of turmoil and revolution. And these for the most part were organized on democratic principles. In 1914 there had been only three republics alongside of seventeen monarchies in Europe. Four years later there were as many republics as monarchies. The spirit of the age seemed to be pointing unequivocally toward various forms of popular rule.

Only Germany seemed to be opposing this mood of the times, after having been temporarily gripped and carried along by it. Those who would not acknowledge the reality created by the war organized into a fantastic swarm of völkisch (racist-nationalist) parties, clubs, and free

¹*Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. xiv, s.v. “fascism,” signed by Mussolini but actually written by the philosopher Giovanni Gentile (1932), 847.
corps. To these groups the revolution had been an act of treason; parliamentary democracy was something foreign and imposed from without, merely a synonym for "everything contrary to the German political will," or else an "institution for pillaging created by Allied capitalism."

Germany's former enemies regarded the multifarious symptoms of nationalistic protest as the response of an inveterately authoritarian people to democracy and civic responsibility. To be sure, the Germans were staggering beneath terrible political and psychological burdens: There was the shock of defeat, the moral censure of the Versailles Treaty, the loss of territory and the demand for reparations, the impoverishment and spiritual undermining of much of the population. Nevertheless, the conviction remained that a great moral gap existed between the Germans and most of their neighbours. Full of resentment, refusing to learn a lesson, this incomprehensible country had withdrawn into its reactionary doctrines, made of them a special virtue, abjured Western rationality and humanity, and in general set itself against the universal trend of the age. For decades this picture of Germany dominated the discussion of the reasons for the rise of National Socialism.

But the image of democracy victorious was also deceptive. The moment in which democracy seemed to be achieving historic fulfillment simultaneously marked the beginning of its crisis. Only a few years later the idea of democracy was challenged in principle as it had never been before. Only a few years after it had celebrated its triumph it was overwhelmed or at least direly threatened by a new movement that had sprung to life in almost all European countries.

This movement recorded its most lasting successes in countries in which the war had aroused considerable discontent or made it conscious of existing discontent, and especially in countries in which the war had been followed by leftist revolutionary uprisings. In some places these movements were conservative, harking back to better times when men were more honorable, the valleys more peaceable, and money had more worth; in others these movements were revolutionary and vied with one another in their contempt for the existing order of things. Some attracted chiefly the petty bourgeois elements, others the peasants, others portions of the working class. Whatever their strange compound of classes, interests, and principles, all seemed to be drawing their dynamic force from the less conscious and more vital lower strata of society. National Socialism was merely one variant of this widespread European movement of protest and opposition aimed at overturning the general order of things.

National Socialism rose from provincial beginnings, from philistine clubs, as Hitler scornfully described them, which met in Munich bars over a few rounds of beer to talk over national and family troubles. No one would have dreamed that they could ever challenge, let alone outdo, the powerful, highly organized Marxist parties. But the following years
proved that in these clubs of nationalistic beer drinkers, soon swelled by disillusioned homecoming soldiers and proletarianized members of the middle class, a tremendous force was waiting to be awakened, consolidated, and applied.

In Munich alone there existed, in 1919, nearly fifty more or less political associations, whose membership consisted chiefly of confused remnants of the prewar parties that had been broken up by war and revolution. . . . What united them all and drew them together theoretically and in reality was nothing but an overwhelming feeling of anxiety.

First of all, and most immediate, there was the fear of revolution, that grande peur which after the French Revolution had haunted the European-bourgeoisie throughout the nineteenth century. The notion that revolutions were like forces of nature, elemental mechanisms operating without reference to the will of the actors in them, following their own logic and leading perforce to reigns of terror, destruction, killing, and chaos — that notion was seared into the public mind. That was the unforgettable experience, not [German philosopher Immanuel] Kant's belief that the French Revolution had also shown the potentiality for betterment inherent in human nature. For generations, particularly in Germany, this fear stood in the way of any practical revolutionary strivings and produced a mania for keeping things quiet, with the result that every revolutionary proclamation up to 1918 was countered by the standard appeal to law and order.

This old fear was revived by the pseudorevolutionary events in Germany and by the menace of the October Revolution in Russia. Diabolical traits were ascribed to the Reds. The refugees pouring into Munich described bloodthirsty barbarians on a rampage of killing. Such imagery had instant appeal to the nationalists. . . .

This threat dominated Hitler's speeches of the early years. In garish colors he depicted the ravages of the "Red squads of butchers," the "murderous communists," the "bloody morass of Bolshevism." In Russia, he told his audiences, more than thirty million persons had been murdered, "partly on the scaffold, partly by machine guns and similar means, partly in veritable slaughterhouses, partly, millions upon millions, by hunger; and we all know that this wave of hunger is creeping on . . . and see that this scourge is approaching, that it is also coming upon Germany." The intelligentsia of the Soviet Union, he declared, had been exterminated by mass murder, the economy utterly smashed. Thousands of German prisoners-of-war had been drowned in the Neva or sold as slaves. Meanwhile, in Germany the enemy was boring away at the foundations of society "in unremitting, ever unchanging undermining work." The fate of Russia, he said again and again, would soon be ours! . . .

National Socialism owed a considerable part of its emotional appeal, its militancy, and its cohesion to this defensive attitude toward the
threat of Marxist revolution. The aim of the National Socialist Party, Hitler repeatedly declared, “is very brief: Annihilation and extermination of the Marxist world view.” This was to be accomplished by an “incomparable, brilliantly orchestrated propaganda and information organization” side by side with a movement “of the most ruthless force and most brutal resolution, prepared to oppose all terrorism on the part of the Marxists with tenfold greater terrorism.” At about the same time, for similar reasons, Mussolini was founding his Fasci di combattimento [battle group]. Henceforth, the new movements were to be identified by the general name of “Fascism.”

But the fear of revolution would not have been enough to endow the movement with that fierce energy, which for a time seemed to stem the universal trend toward democracy. After all, for many people revolution meant hope. A stronger and more elemental motivation had to be added. And in fact Marxism was feared as the precursor of a far more comprehensive assault upon all traditional ideas. It was viewed as the contemporary political aspect of a metaphysical upheaval, as a “declaration of war upon the European . . . idea of culture.” Marxism itself was only the metaphor for something dreaded that escaped definition. . . .

This first phase of the postwar era was characterized both by fear of revolution and anticivilizational resentments; these together, curiously intertwined and reciprocally stimulating each other, produced a syndrome of extraordinary force. Into the brew went the hate and defense complexes of a society shaken to its foundations. German society had lost its imperial glory, its civil order, its national confidence, its prosperity, and its familiar authorities. The whole system had been turned topsy-turvy, and now many Germans blindly and bitterly wanted back what they thought had been unjustly taken from them. These general feelings of unhappiness were intensified and further radicalized by a variety of unsatisfied group interests. The class of white-collar workers, continuing to grow apace, proved especially susceptible to the grand gesture of total criticism. For the industrial revolution had just begun to affect office workers and was reducing the former “non-commissioned officers of capitalism” to the status of last victims of “modern slavery.” It was all the worse for them because unlike the proletarians they had never developed a class pride of their own or imagined that the breakdown of the existing order was going to lead to their own apotheosis. Small businessmen were equally susceptible because of their fear of being crushed by corporations, department stores, and rationalized competition. Another unhappy group consisted of farmers who, slow to change and lacking capital, were fettered to backward modes of production. Another group were the academics and formerly solid bourgeois who felt themselves caught in the tremendous suction of proletarianization. Without outside support you found yourself “at once
despised, declassed; to be unemployed is the same as being a com- 
munist,” one victim stated in a questionnaire of the period. No statistics, 
no figures on rates of inflation, bankruptcies, and suicides can describe 
the feelings of those threatened by unemployment or poverty, or can 
express the anxieties of those others who still possessed some property 
and feared the consequences of so much accumulated discontent. . . . 

The vigilante groups and the free corps that were being organized 
in great numbers, partly on private initiative, partly with covert govern-
ment support, chiefly to meet the threat of Communist revolution, 
formed centers of bewildered but determined resistance to the status 
quo. The members of these paramilitary groups were vaguely looking 
around for someone to lead them into a new system. At first there was 
another reservoir of militant energies alongside the parliamentary 
groups: the mass of homecoming soldiers. Many of these stayed in the 
barracks dragging out a pointless military life, baffled and unable to 
say good-bye to the warrior dreams of their recent youth. In the front-
line trenches they had glimpsed the outlines of a new meaning to life; in 
the sluggishly resuming normality of the postwar period they tried in 
vain to find that meaning again. They had not fought and suffered for 
years for the sake of this weakened regime with its borrowed ideals 
which, as they saw it, could be pushed around by the most con-
temptible of their former enemies. And they also feared, after the exult-
ing sense of life the war had given them, the ignobility of the common-
place bourgeois world.

It remained for Hitler to bring together these feelings and to ap-
point himself their spearhead. Indeed, Hitler regarded as a phenome-
non seems like the synthetic product of all the anxiety, pessimism, nos-
talgia, and defensiveness we have discussed. For him, too, the war had 
been education and liberation. If there is a “Fascistic” type, it was em-
bodied in him. More than any of his followers he expressed the under-
lying psychological, social, and ideological motives of the movement. 
He was never just its leader; he was also its exponent.

His early years had contributed their share to that experience of 
overwhelming anxiety which dominated his intellectual and emotional 
constitution. That lurking anxiety can be seen at the root of almost all 
his statements and reactions. It had everyday as well as cosmic di-
ensions. Many who knew him in his youth have described his pallid, 
“timorous” nature, which provided the fertile soil for his lush fantasies. 
His “constant fear” of contact with strangers was another aspect of 
that anxiety, as was his extreme distrust and his compulsion to wash 
frequently, which became more and more pronounced in later life. The 
same complex is apparent in his oft-expressed fear of venereal disease 
and his fear of contagion in general. He knew that “microbes are rush-
ing at me.” He was ridden by the Austrian Pan-German’s fear of being 
overwhelmed by alien races, by fear of the “locust-like immigration of
Russian and Polish Jews," by fear of "the niggerizing of the Germans," by fear of the Germans' "expulsion from Germany," and finally by fear that the Germans would be "exterminated." He had the Völkische Befehlchter print an alleged French soldier's song whose refrain was: "Germans, we will possess your daughters!" Among his phobias were American technology, the birth rate of the Slavs, big cities, "industrialization as unrestricted as it is harmful," the "economization of the nation," corporations, the "morass of metropolitan amusement culture," and modern art, which sought "to kill the soul of the people" by painting meadows blue and skies green. Wherever he looked he discovered the "signs of decay of a slowly ebbing world." Not an element of pessimistic anticivilizational criticism was missing from his imagination.

What linked Hitler with the leading Fascists of other countries was the resolve to halt this process of degeneration. What set him apart from them, however, was the manic single-mindedness with which he traced all the anxieties he had ever felt back to a single source. For at the heart of the towering structure of anxiety, black and hairy, stood the figure of the Jew: evil-smelling, smacking his lips, lusting after blonde girls, eternal contaminator of the blood, but "racially harder" than the Aryan, as Hitler uneasily declared as late as the summer of 1942. A prey to his psychosis, he saw Germany as the object of a worldwide conspiracy, pressed on all sides by Bolsheviks, Freemasons, capitalists, Jesuits, all hand in glove with each other and directed in their nefarious projects by the "bloodthirsty and avaricious Jewish tyrant." The Jew had 75 per cent of world capital at his disposal. He dominated the stock exchanges and the Marxist parties, the Gold and Red Internationals. He was the "advocate of birth control and the idea of emigration." He undermined governments, bastardized races, glorified fratricide, fomented civil war, justified baseness, and poisoned nobility: "the wirepuller of the destinies of mankind." The whole world was in danger, Hitler cried imploringly; it had fallen "into the embrace of this octopus." He groped for images in which to make his horror tangible, saw "creeping venom," "belly-worms," and "adders devouring the nation's body."...

The appearance of Hitler signaled a union of those forces that in crisis conditions had great political potential. The Fascistic movements all centered on the charismatic appeal of a unique leader. The leader was to be the resolute voice of order controlling chaos. He would have looked further and thought deeper, would know the despairs but also the means of salvation. This looming giant had already been given established form in a prophetic literature that went back to German folklore. Like the mythology of many other nations unfortunate in their history, that of the Germans has its sleeping leaders dreaming away the centuries in the bowels of a mountain, but destined some day to return to rally their people and punish the guilty world....
The success of Fascism in contrast to many of its rivals was in large part due to its perceiving the essence of the crisis, of which it was itself the symptom. All the other parties affirmed the process of industrialization and emancipation, whereas the Fascists, evidently sharing the universal anxiety, tried to deal with it by translating it into violent action and histrionics. . . .

HEINRICH HIMMLER

Speech to the SS

Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) was one of the most powerful leaders of Nazi Germany. He was the head of the SS, or Schutzstaffel, an elite army that was responsible for, among other things, running the many concentration camps. Hitler gave Himmler the task of implementing the “final solution of the Jewish question”: killing the Jewish population of Germany and the other countries the Nazis occupied. The horror that resulted is today often referred to by the biblical word holocaust.

The following reading is an excerpt from a speech Himmler gave to SS leaders on October 4, 1943. What was Himmler’s concern in this speech? What kind of general support for the extermination of the Jews does this excerpt suggest existed?

Thinking Historically

Psychiatrists say that people use various strategies to cope when they must do something distasteful. We might summarize these strategies as denial, distancing, compartmentalizing, ennobling, rationalizing, and scapegoating. Denial is pretending that something has not happened. Distancing removes the idea, memory, or reality from the mind, placing it at a distance. Compartmentalizing separates one action, memory, or idea from others, allowing one to “put away” certain feelings. Ennobling makes the distasteful act a matter of pride rather than guilt, nobility rather than disgrace. Rationalizing creates

“good" reasons for doing something, while scapegoating puts blame on someone else.

What evidence do you see of these strategies in Himmler’s speech? Judging from the speech, which of these strategies do you think his listeners used to rationalize their actions?

I also want to make reference before you here, in complete frankness, to a really grave matter. Among ourselves, this once, it shall be uttered quite frankly; but in public we will never speak of it. Just as we did not hesitate on June 30, 1934, to do our duty as ordered, to stand up against the wall comrades who had transgressed, and shoot them, so we have never talked about this and never will. It was the tact which I am glad to say is a matter of course to us that made us never discuss it among ourselves, never talk about it. Each of us shuddered, and yet each one knew that he would do it again if it were ordered and if it were necessary.

I am referring to the evacuation of the Jews, the annihilation of the Jewish people. This is one of those things that are easily said. “The Jewish people is going to be annihilated,” says every party member. “Sure, it’s in our program, elimination of the Jews, annihilation — we’ll take care of it.” And then they all come trudging, 80 million worthy Germans, and each one has his one decent Jew. Sure, the others are swine, but this one is an A-1 Jew. Of all those who talk this way, not one has seen it happen, not one has been through it. Most of you must know what it means to see a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have stuck this out — excepting cases of human weakness — to have kept our integrity, that is what has made us hard. In our history, this is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory, for we know how difficult we would have made it for ourselves if today — amid the bombing raids, the hardships, and the deprivations of war — we still had the Jews in every city as secret saboteurs, agitators, and demagogues. If the Jews were still ensconced in the body of the German nation, we probably would have reached the 1916-17 stage by now.²

The wealth they had we have taken from them. I have issued a strict order, carried out by SS-Obergruppenfuhrer Pohl, that this wealth in its entirety is to be turned over to the Reich as a matter of course.

¹A reference to the “Night of the Long Knives,” when Hitler ordered the SS to murder the leaders of the SA, a Nazi group he wished to suppress. [Ed.]
²Here Himmler is apparently referring to the stalemate on Germany’s western front in World War I. [Ed.]
We have taken none of it for ourselves. Individuals who transgress will be punished in accordance with an order I issued at the beginning, threatening that whoever takes so much as a mark of it for himself is a dead man. A number of SS men — not very many — have transgressed, and they will die, without mercy. We had the moral right, we had the duty toward our people, to kill this people which wanted to kill us. But we do not have the right to enrich ourselves with so much as a fur, a watch, a mark, or a cigarette, or anything else. Having exterminated a germ, we do not want, in the end, to be infected by the germ, and die of it. I will not stand by and let even a small rotten spot develop or take hold. Wherever it may form, we together will cauterize it. All in all, however, we can say that we have carried out this heaviest of our tasks in a spirit of love for our people. And our inward being, our soul, our character has not suffered injury from it.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS STEINER

From Treblinka

Treblinka, in Poland, was one of several Nazi death camps. (Auschwitz was the largest camp.) (See Map 11.1.) In these “death factories,” the Nazis murdered millions of Jews as well as many thousands of Roma and Sinti, socialists, Soviet prisoners of war, and other people. In this selection, Steiner, who lost his father at Treblinka, reveals how “rational” and “scientific” mass murder can be. How could this happen? Can it happen again?

Thinking Historically

Try to imagine what went through the mind of Lalka as he designed the extermination process at Treblinka. How did concerns for efficiency and humanity enter into his deliberations? Do you think he found his work distasteful? If so, which of the strategies mentioned in the previous selection did he adopt?

What would it have been like to be a sign-painter, guard, or haircutter at Treblinka?

Each poorly organized debarkation [of deportees from trains arriving at Treblinka] gave rise to unpleasant scenes — uncertainties and confusion for the deportees, who did not know where they were going and were sometimes seized with panic.

So, the first problem was to restore a minimum of hope. Lalka¹ had many faults, but he did not lack a certain creative imagination. After a few days of reflection he hit upon the idea of transforming the platform where the convoys [trains] arrived into a false station. He had the ground filled in to the level of the doors of the cars in order to give the appearance of a train platform and to make it easier to get off the trains. . . . On [a] wall Lalka had . . . doors and windows painted in gay and pleasing colors. The windows were decorated with cheerful curtains and framed by green blinds which were just as false as the rest. Each door was given a special name, stencilled at eye level: "Stationmaster," "Toilet," "Infirmary" (a red cross was painted on this door). Lalka carried his concern for detail so far as to have his men paint two doors leading to the waiting rooms, first and second class. The ticket window, which was barred with a horizontal sign reading, "Closed," was a little masterpiece with its ledge and false perspective and its grill, painted line for line. Next to the ticket window a large timetable announced the departure times of trains for Warsaw, Białystok, Wolkowysk, etc. . . . Two doors were cut into the [wall]. The first led to the "hospital," bearing a wooden arrow on which "Wolkowysk" was painted. The second led to the place where the Jews were undressed; that arrow said "Białystok." Lalka also had some flower beds designed, which gave the whole area a neat and cheery look. . . .

Lalka also decided that better organization could save much time in the operations of undressing and recovery of the [deportees'] baggage. To do this you had only to rationalize the different operations, that is, to organize the undressing like an assembly line. But the rhythm of this assembly line was at the mercy of the sick, the old, and the wounded, who, since they were unable to keep the pace, threatened to bog down the operation and make it proceed even more slowly than before. . . . Individuals of both sexes over the age of ten, and children under ten, at a maximum rate of two children per adult, were judged fit to follow the complete circuit,² as long as they did not show

¹Kurt Franz, whom the prisoners called Lalka, designed the highly efficient system of extermination at Treblinka. [Ed.]
²The "complete" circuit was getting off the train, walking along the platform through the door to the men's or women's barracks, undressing, and being led to the gas chamber "showers." [Ed.]
serious wounds or marked disability. Victims who did not correspond to the norms were to be conducted to the "hospital" by members of the blue commando and turned over to the Ukrainians [guards] for special treatment. A bench was built all around the ditch of the "hospital" so that the victims would fall of their own weight after receiving the bullet in the back of the head. This bench was to be used only when Kurland\(^3\) was swamped with work. On the platform, the door which these victims took was surmounted by the Wolkomysł arrow. In the Sibylline language of Treblinka, "Wolkomysł" meant the bullet in the back of the neck or the injection. "Bialystok" meant the gas chamber.

Beside the "Bialystok" door stood a tall Jew whose role was to shout endlessly, "Large bundles here, large bundles here!" He had been nicknamed "Groysse Pack." As soon as the victims had gone through, Groysse Pack and his men from the red commando carried the bundles at a run to the sorting square, where the sorting commandos immediately took possession of them. As soon as they had gone through the door came the order, "Women to the left, men to the right." This moment generally gave rise to painful scenes.

While the women were being led to the left-hand barracks to undress and go to the hairdresser, the men, who were lined up double file, slowly entered the production line. This production line included five stations. At each of these a group of "reds" shouted at the top of their lungs the name of the piece of clothing that it was in charge of receiving. At the first station the victim handed over his coat and hat. At the second, his jacket. (In exchange, he received a piece of string.) At the third he sat down, took off his shoes, and tied them together with the string he had just received. Until then the shoes were not tied together in pairs, and since the yield was at least fifteen thousand pairs of shoes per day, they were all lost, since they could not be matched up again.) At the fourth station the victim left his trousers, and at the fifth his shirt and underwear.

After they had been stripped, the victims were conducted, as they came off the assembly line, to the right-hand barracks and penned in until the women had finished: ladies first. However, a small number, chosen from among the most able-bodied, were singled out at the door to carry the clothing to the sorting square. They did this while running naked between two rows of Ukrainian guards. Without stopping once they threw their bundles onto the pile, turned around, and went back for another.

Meanwhile the women had been conducted to the barracks on the left. This barracks was divided into two parts: a dressing room and a

\(^3\)Kurland was a Jew assigned to the "hospital," where he gave injections of poison to those who were too ill or crippled to make the complete circuit. [Ed.]
beauty salon. “Put your clothes in a pile so you will be able to find them after the shower,” they were ordered in the first room. The “beauty salon” was a room furnished with six benches, each of which could seat twenty women at a time. Behind each bench twenty prisoners of the red commando, wearing white tunics and armed with scissors, waited at attention until all the women were seated. Between haircutting sessions they sat down on the benches and, under the direction of a kapo [prisoner guard] who was transformed into a conductor, they had to sing old Yiddish melodies.

Lalka, who had insisted on taking personal responsibility for every detail, had perfected the technique of what he called the “Treblinka cut.” With five well-placed slashes the whole head of hair was transferred to a sack placed beside each hairdresser for this purpose. It was simple and efficient. How many dramas did this “beauty salon” see? From the very beautiful young woman who wept when her hair was cut off, because she would be ugly, to the mother who grabbed a pair of scissors from one of the “hairdressers” and literally severed a Ukrainian’s arm; from the sister who recognized one of the “hairdressers” as her brother to the young girl, Ruth Dorfman, who, suddenly understanding and fighting back her tears, asked whether it was difficult to die and admitted in a small brave voice that she was a little afraid and wished it were all over.

When they had been shorn the women left the “beauty salon” double file. Outside the door, they had to squat in a particular way also specified by Lalka, in order to be intimately searched. Up to this point, doubt had been carefully maintained. Of course, a discriminating eye might have observed that . . . the smell was the smell of rotting bodies. A thousand details proved that Treblinka was not a transient camp, and some realized this, but the majority had believed in the impossible for too long to begin to doubt at the last moment. The door of the barracks, which opened directly onto the “road to heaven,” represented the turning point. Up to here the prisoners had been given a minimum of hope, from here on this policy was abandoned.

This was one of Lalka’s great innovations. After what point was it no longer necessary to delude the victims? This detail had been the subject of rather heated controversy among the Technicians. At the Nuremberg trials, Rudolf Höss, Commandant of Auschwitz, criticized Treblinka where, according to him, the victims knew that they were going to be killed. Höss was an advocate of the towel distributed at the door to the gas chamber. He claimed that this system not only avoided disorder, but was more humane, and he was proud of it. But Höss did not invent this “towel technique”; it was in all the manuals, and it was utilized at Treblinka until Lalka’s great reform.

Lalka’s studies had led to what might be called the “principle of the cutoff.” His reasoning was simple: Since sooner or later the victims
must realize that they were going to be killed, to postpone this moment was only false humanity. The principle “the later the better” did not apply here. Lalka had been led to make an intensive study of this problem upon observing one day completely by chance, that winded victims died much more rapidly than the rest. The discovery had led him to make a clean sweep of accepted principles. Let us follow his industrialist’s logic, keeping well in mind that his great preoccupation was the saving of time. A winded victim dies faster. Hence, a saving of time. The best way to wind a man is to make him run — another saving of time. Thus Lalka arrived at the conclusion that you must make the victims run. A new question had then arisen: At what point must you make the victims run and thus create panic (a further aid to breathlessness)? The question had answered itself: As soon as you have nothing more to make them do. Franz located the exact point, the point of no return: the door of the barracks.

The rest was merely a matter of working out the details. Along the “road to heaven” and in front of the gas chambers he stationed a cordon of guards armed with whips, whose function was to make the victims run, to make them rush into the gas chambers of their own accord in search of refuge. One can see that this system is more daring than the classic system, but one can also see the danger it represents. Suddenly abandoned to their despair, realizing that they no longer had anything to lose, the victims might attack the guards. Lalka was aware of this risk, but he maintained that everything depended on the pace. “It’s close work,” he said, “but if you maintain a very rapid pace and do not allow a single moment of hesitation, the method is absolutely without danger.” There were still further elaborations later on, but from the first day, Lalka had only to pride himself on his innovation: It took no more than three quarters of an hour, by the clock, to put the victims through their last voyage, from the moment the doors of the cattle cars were unbolted to the moment the great trap doors of the gas chamber were opened to take out the bodies, . . .

But let us return to the men. The timing was worked out so that by the time the last woman had emerged from the left-hand barracks, all the clothes had been transported to the sorting square. The men were immediately taken out of the right-hand barracks and driven after the women into the “road to heaven,” which they reached by way of a special side path. By the time they arrived at the gas chambers the toughest, who had begun to run before the others to carry the bundles, were just as winded as the weakest. Everyone died in perfect unison for the greater satisfaction of that great Technician Kurt Franz, the Stakhanovite [model worker] of extermination.
IRIS CHANG

From The Rape of Nanking

Nazi genocide was not the only systematic murder of civilian populations during World War II. The military government of Japan, a German ally during the war, engaged in some of the same tactics of brutal and indiscriminate mass murder of civilians. In fact, atrocities in Japan preceded those in Germany.

While for Europeans World War II began with the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and for Americans with the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, for the Chinese it began ten years earlier with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. By 1937, Japanese troops occupied Peking and Shanghai as well as the old imperial capital of Nanking. It is estimated that more than twenty-five thousand civilians were killed by Japanese soldiers in the months after the fall of Nanking on December 13, 1937. But it was the appalling brutality of Japanese troops that foreign residents remembered, even those who could recall the brutality of the Chinese nationalist troops who captured the city in 1927. In the Introduction to The Rape of Nanking, Iris Chang writes:

The Rape of Nanking should be remembered not only for the number of people slaughtered but for the cruel manner in which many met their deaths. Chinese men were used for bayonet practice and in decapitation contests. An estimated 20,000 to 80,000 Chinese women were raped. Many soldiers went beyond rape to disembowel women, slice off their breasts, nail them alive to walls. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, and sons their mothers, as other family members watched. Not only did live burials, castration, the carving of organs, and the roasting of people become routine, but more diabolical tortures were practiced, such as hanging people by their tongues on iron hooks or burying people to their waist and watching them get torn apart by German shepherds. So sickening was the spectacle that even the Nazis in the city were horrified, one declaring the massacre to be the work of “bestial machinery.” (p. 6)

In the selection that follows, the author asks how Japanese soldiers were capable of such offenses. What is her answer?

Thinking Historically

What would have happened to these recruits if they had refused an order to kill a prisoner or noncombatant? Once they had killed one prisoner, why did they find it easier to kill another? Did they eventually enjoy it, feel pride, or think it insignificant? The last informant, Nagatomi, says he had been a “devil.” Had he been possessed? By whom?

How then do we explain the raw brutality carried out day after day after day in the city of Nanking? Unlike their Nazi counterparts, who have mostly perished in prisons and before execution squads or, if alive, are spending their remaining days as fugitives from the law, many of the Japanese war criminals are still alive, living in peace and comfort, protected by the Japanese government. They are therefore some of the few people on this planet who, without concern for retaliation in a court of international law, can give authors and journalists a glimpse of their thoughts and feelings while committing World War II atrocities.

Here is what we learn. The Japanese soldier was not simply hardened for battle in China; he was hardened for the task of murdering Chinese combatants and noncombatants alike. Indeed, various games and exercises were set up by the Japanese military to numb its men to the human instinct against killing people who are not attacking.

For example, on their way to the capital, Japanese soldiers were made to participate in killing competitions, which were avidly covered by the Japanese media like sporting events. The most notorious one appeared in the December 7 issue of the Japan Advertiser under the headline “Sub-Lieutenants in Race to Fell 100 Chinese Running Close Contest.”

Sub-Lieutenant Mukai Toshiaki and Sub-Lieutenant Noda Takeshi, both of the Katagiri unit at Kuyung, in a friendly contest to see which of them will first fell 100 Chinese in individual sword combat before the Japanese forces completely occupy Nanking, are well in the final phase of their race, running almost neck to neck. On Sunday [December 5] ... the “score,” according to the Asahi, was: Sub-Lieutenant Mukai, 89, and Sub-Lieutenant Noda, 78.

A week later the paper reported that neither man could decide who had passed the 100 mark first, so they upped the goal to 150. “Mukai’s blade was slightly damaged in the competition,” the Japan Advertiser reported. “He explained that this was the result of cutting a Chinese in half, helmet and all. The contest was ‘fun’ he declared.” ... For new soldiers, horror was a natural impulse. One Japanese wartime memoir describes how a group of green Japanese recruits
failed to conceal their shock when they witnessed seasoned soldiers torture a group of civilians to death. Their commander expected this reaction and wrote in his diary: “All new recruits are like this, but soon they will be doing the same things themselves.”

But new officers also required desensitization. A veteran officer named Tominaga Shozo recalled vividly his own transformation from innocent youth to killing machine. Tominaga had been a fresh second lieutenant from a military academy when assigned to the 232nd Regiment of the 39th Division from Hiroshima. When he was introduced to the men under his command, Tominaga was stunned. “They had evil eyes,” he remembered. “They weren’t human eyes, but the eyes of leopards or tigers.”

On the front Tominaga and other new candidate officers underwent intensive training to stiffen their endurance for war. In the program an instructor had pointed to a thin, emaciated Chinese in a detention center and told the officers: “These are the raw materials for your trial of courage.” Day after day the instructor taught them how to cut off heads and bayonet living prisoners.

On the final day, we were taken out to the site of our trial. Twenty-four prisoners were squatting there with their hands tied behind their backs. They were blindfolded. A big hole had been dug—ten meters long, two meters wide, and more than three meters deep. The regimental commander, the battalion commanders, and the company commanders all took the seats arranged for them. Second Lieutenant Tanaka bowed to the regimental commander and reported, “We shall now begin.” He ordered a soldier on fatigue duty to haul one of the prisoners to the edge of the pit; the prisoner was kicked when he resisted. The soldiers finally dragged him over and forced him to his knees. Tanaka turned toward us and looked into each of our faces in turn. “Heads should be cut off like this,” he said, unsheathing his army sword. He scooped water from a bucket with a dipper, then poured it over both sides of the blade. Swishing off the water, he raised his sword in a long arc. Standing behind the prisoner, Tanaka steadied himself, legs spread apart, and cut off the man’s head with a shout, “Yo!” The head flew more than a meter away. Blood spurted up in two fountains from the body and sprayed into the hole.

The scene was so appalling that I felt I couldn’t breathe.

But gradually, Tominaga Shozo learned to kill. And as he grew more adept at it, he no longer felt that his men’s eyes were evil. For him, atrocities became routine, almost banal. Looking back on his experience, he wrote: “We made them like this. Good sons, good daddies, good elder brothers at home were brought to the front to kill each other. Human beings turned into murdering demons. Everyone became a demon within three months.”
Some Japanese soldiers admitted it was easy for them to kill because they had been taught that next to the emperor, all individual life—even their own—was valueless. Azuma Shiro, the Japanese soldier who witnessed a series of atrocities in Nanking, made an excellent point about his comrades’ behavior in his letter to me. During his two years of military training in the 20th Infantry Regiment of Kyoto-fu Fukuchi-yama, he was taught that “loyalty is heavier than a mountain, and our life is lighter than a feather.” He recalled that the highest honor a soldier could achieve during war was to come back dead: To die for the emperor was the greatest glory, to be caught alive by the enemy the greatest shame. “If my life was not important,” Azuma wrote to me, “an enemy’s life became inevitably much less important. . . . This philosophy led us to look down on the enemy and eventually to the mass murder and ill treatment of the captives.”

In interview after interview, Japanese veterans from the Nanking massacre reported honestly that they experienced a complete lack of remorse or sense of wrongdoing, even when torturing helpless civilians. Nagatomi Hakudo spoke candidly about his emotions in the fallen capital:

I remember being driven in a truck along a path that had been cleared through piles of thousands and thousands of slaughtered bodies. Wild dogs were gnawing at the dead flesh as we stopped and pulled a group of Chinese prisoners out of the back. Then the Japanese officer proposed a test of my courage. He unsheathed his sword, spat on it, and with a sudden mighty swing he brought it down on the neck of a Chinese boy cowering before us. The head was cut clean off and tumbled away on the group as the body slumped forward, blood spurting in two great gushing fountains from the neck. The officer suggested I take the head home as a souvenir. I remember smiling proudly as I took his sword and began killing people.

After almost sixty years of soul-searching, Nagatomi is a changed man. A doctor in Japan, he has built a shrine of remorse in his waiting room. Patients can watch videotapes of his trial in Nanking and a full confession of his crimes. The gentle and hospitable demeanor of the doctor belies the horror of his past, making it almost impossible for one to imagine that he had once been a ruthless murderer.

“Few know that soldiers impaled babies on bayonets and tossed them still alive into pots of boiling water,” Nagatomi said. “They gang-raped women from the ages of twelve to eighty and then killed them when they could no longer satisfy sexual requirements. I beheaded people, starved them to death, burned them, and buried them alive, over two hundred in all. It is terrible that I could turn into an animal and do these things. There are really no words to explain what I was doing. I was truly a devil.”
MAHMOOD MAMDANI

Thinking about Genocide

On December 11, 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared genocide a crime under international law. In 1948 the international body defined genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group." Before the signatures dried on the second document, the world witnessed the bloody partition of British India between Hindus and Muslims and the beginnings of an international balance of terror depending on the threat of mutual nuclear destruction. By and large, the ethnic, national, and religious violence of the immediate post-war was not called genocide. The term was limited to the Nazi attempt to exterminate Jews.

In the early 1990s, the specter of genocide returned in the breakup of Yugoslavia and in the African state of Rwanda. (See Map 11.2.) While Yugoslavia died a slow death, the outburst of killing in Rwanda in 1994 was remarkable for its suddenness. Within a matter of months, the majority Hutu population slaughtered almost a million of the minority Tutsis. Under German and then Belgian colonialism, the Tutsis had been designated a superior race and given special power and privileges. This was a common divide-and-rule tactic of European colonial control. In the period of independence (1959–1962), Hutu resentment against Tutsis came to a boil. Thousands of Tutsis were killed and hundreds of thousands were expelled. Hutus took their place and controlled the government and resources. Over the next decades, Tutsis came back to the densely populated country, formed a political party, and became stronger. By 1994, the Hutu president and many of his supporters feared a return of Tutsi rule. When the president and many of his advisors were killed in a plane crash, the Hutu media and militant groups marshaled a campaign of extermination.

In this selection, Mahmood Mamdani, born in Uganda and currently director of the Institute of African Studies at Columbia University, reflects on the meaning of that genocide committed so soon after the world community had declared "never again." How, according to the author, was the Hutu genocide different from that of the Nazis? What is the significance of that difference? Does it matter?

Map 11.2  Rwanda in Africa.

**Thinking Historically**

The author says that the "violence cannot be understood as rational: yet we need to understand it as thinkable" (p. 409). What does he mean? Do you agree? How does he help you to understand it as thinkable?
I visited Rwanda roughly a year after the genocide. On July 22, 1995, I went to Ntarama, about an hour and a half by car from Kigali, on a dirt road going south toward the Burundi border. We arrived at a village church, made of brick and covered with iron sheets. Outside there was a wood and bamboo rack, bearing skulls. On the ground were assorted bones, collected and pressed together inside sacks, but sticking out of their torn cloth...

The church was about twenty by sixty feet. Inside, wooden planks were placed on stones. I supposed they were meant as benches. I peered inside and saw a pile of belongings — shoulder sacks, tattered clothing, a towel, a wooden box, a suferia (cooking pot), plastic mugs and plates, straw mats and hats — the worldly goods of the poor. Then, amidst it all, I saw bones, and then entire skeletons, each caught in the posture in which it had died. Even a year after the genocide, I thought the air smelled of blood, mixed with that of bones, clothing, earth — a human mildew.

I scanned the walls with their gaping holes. The guide explained these were made by the Interahamwe (youth militia of the ruling party) so they could throw grenades into the building. He said that those in the church were lucky. They died, almost instantly. Those outside had a protracted, brutal death, in some cases drawn out as long as a week, with one part of the body cut daily.

I raised my eyes, away from the skeletons, to look at the church wall. Much of it was still covered with some old posters. They read like exhortations common to radical regimes with a developmental agenda, regimes that I was familiar with and had lived under for decades. One read: “Journée Internationale de la Femme.” And below it, was another, this time in bold: “ÉGALITÉ — PAIX — DÉVELOPPEMENT.”

I was introduced to a man called Callixte, a survivor of the massacre in Ntarama. “On the 7th of April [1994], in the morning,” he explained, “they started burning houses over there and moving towards here. Only a few were killed. The burning pushed us to this place. Our group decided to run to this place. We thought this was God’s house, no one would attack us here. On the 7th, 8th, up to the 10th, we were fighting them. We were using stones. They had pangas (machetes), spears, hammers, grenades. On the 10th, their numbers were increased. On the 14th, we were being pushed inside the church. The church was attacked on the 14th and the 15th. The actual killing was on the 15th.

“On the 15th, they brought Presidential Guards. They were supporting Interahamwe, brought in from neighboring communes. I was not in the group here. Here, there were women, children, and old men. The men had formed defense units outside. I was outside. Most men
died fighting. When our defense was broken through, they came and killed everyone here. After that, they started hunting for those hiding in the hills. I and others ran to the swamp.”

I asked about his secteur, about how many lived in it, how many Tutsi, how many Hutu, who participated in the killing. “In my secteur, Hutu were two-thirds, Tutsi one-third. There were about 5,000 in our secteur. Of the 3,500 Hutu, all the men participated. It was like an order, except there were prominent leaders who would command. The rest followed.”

I asked whether there were no intermarriages in the secteur. “Too many. About one-third of Tutsi daughters would be married to Hutu. But Hutu daughters married to Tutsi men were only 1 per cent: Hutu didn’t want to marry their daughters to Tutsi who were poor and it was risky. Because the Tutsi were discriminated against, they didn’t want to give their daughters where there was no education, no jobs . . . risky. Prospects were better for Tutsi daughters marrying Hutu men. They would get better opportunities.

“Tutsi women married to Hutu were killed. I know only one who survived. The administration forced Hutu men to kill their Tutsi wives before they go to kill anyone else — to prove they were true Interahamwe. One man tried to refuse. He was told he must choose between the wife and himself. He then chose to save his own life. Another Hutu man rebuked him for having killed his Tutsi wife. That man was also killed. Kallisa — the man who was forced to kill his wife — is in jail. After killing his wife, he became a convert. He began to distribute grenades all around.

“The killing was planned, because some were given guns. During the war with the RPF, many young men were taken in the reserves and trained and given guns. Those coming from training would disassociate themselves from Tutsi. Some of my friends received training. When they returned, they were busy mobilizing others. They never came to see me. I am fifty-seven. Even people in their sixties joined in the killing, though they were not trained. The trained were Senior 6 or Technical School leavers.” I asked how such killers could have been his friends. “I was a friend to their fathers. It was a father-son relationship. I think the fathers must have known.”

Who were the killers in Ntarama? Units of the Presidential Guard came from Kigali. The Interahamwe were brought in from neighboring communes. Youth who had been trained in self-defense units after the civil war began provided the local trained force. But the truth is that everybody participated, at least all men. And not only men, women, too: cheering their men, participating in auxiliary roles, like the second line in a street-to-street battle.
No one can say with certainty how many Tutsi were killed between March and July of 1994 in Rwanda. In the fateful one hundred days that followed the downing of the presidential plane—and the coup d'état thereafter—a section of the army and civilian leadership organized the Hutu majority to kill all Tutsi, even babies. In the process, they also killed not only the Hutu political opposition, but also many nonpolitical Hutu who showed reluctance to perform what was touted as a “national” duty. The estimates of those killed vary: between ten and fifty thousand Hutu, and between 500,000 and a million Tutsi. Whereas the Hutu were killed as individuals, the Tutsi were killed as a group, recalling German designs to exterminate the country’s Jewish population. This explicit goal is why the killings of Tutsi between March and July of 1994 must be termed “genocide.” This single fact underlines a crucial similarity between the Rwandan genocide and the Nazi Holocaust.

In the history of genocide, however, the Rwandan genocide raises a difficult political question. Unlike the Nazi Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide was not carried out from a distance, in remote concentration camps beyond national borders, in industrial killing camps operated by agents who often did no more than drop Zyklon B crystals into gas chambers from above. The Rwandan genocide was executed with the slash of machetes rather than the drop of crystals, with all the gruesome detail of a street murder rather than the bureaucratic efficiency of a mass extermination. The difference in technology is indicative of a more significant social difference. The technology of the holocaust allowed a few to kill many, but the machete had to be wielded by a single pair of hands. It required not one but many hacks of a machete to kill even one person. With a machete, killing was hard work; that is why there were often several killers for every single victim. Whereas Nazis made every attempt to separate victims from perpetrators, the Rwandan genocide was very much an intimate affair. It was carried out by hundreds of thousands, perhaps even more, and witnessed by millions...

The Rwandan genocide unfolded in just a hundred days. “It was not just a small group that killed and moved,” a political commissar in the police explained to me in Kigali in July 1995. “Because genocide was so extensive, there were killers in every locality—from ministers to peasants—for it to happen in so short a time and on such a large scale.” Opening the international conference on Genocide, Impunity and Accountability in Kigali in late 1995, the country’s president, Pasteur Bizimungu, spoke of “hundreds of thousands of criminals” evenly spread across the land:

Each village of this country has been affected by the tragedy, either because the whole population was mobilized to go and kill elsewhere, or
because one section undertook or was pushed to hunt and kill their fellow villagers. The survey conducted in Kigali, Kibungo, Byumba, Gitarama, and Butare Prefectures showed that genocide had been characterized by torture and utmost cruelty. About forty-eight methods of torture were used countrywide. They ranged from burying people alive in graves they had dug up themselves, to cutting and opening wombs of pregnant mothers. People were quartered, impaled or roasted to death.

On many occasions, death was the consequence of ablation of organs, such as the heart, from alive people. In some cases, victims had to pay fabulous amounts of money to the killers for a quick death. The brutality that characterised the genocide has been unprecedented.

The violence of the genocide was the result of both planning and participation. The agenda imposed from above became a gruesome reality to the extent it resonated with perspectives from below. Rather than accent one or the other side of this relationship and thereby arrive at either a state-centered or a society-centered explanation, a complete picture of the genocide needs to take both sides into account. For this was neither just a conspiracy from above that only needed enough time and suitable circumstance to mature, nor was it a popular jacquerie gone berserk. If the violence from below could not have spread without cultivation and direction from above, it is equally true that the conspiracy of the tiny fragment of génocidaires could not have succeeded had it not found resonance from below. The design from above involved a tiny minority and is easier to understand. The response and initiative from below involved multitudes and presents the true moral dilemma of the Rwandan genocide.

In sum, the Rwandan genocide poses a set of deeply troubling questions. Why did hundreds of thousands, those who had never before killed, take part in mass slaughter? Why did such a disproportionate number of the educated—not just members of the political elite but, as we shall see, civic leaders such as doctors, nurses, judges, human rights activists, and so on—play a leading role in the genocide? Similarly, why did places of shelter where victims expected sanctuary—churches, hospitals, and schools—turn into slaughterhouses where innocents were murdered in the tens and hundreds, and sometimes even thousands?

We may agree that genocidal violence cannot be understood as rational; yet, we need to understand it as thinkable. Rather than run away from it, we need to realize that it is the “popularity” of the genocide that is its uniquely troubling aspect. In its social aspect, Hutu/Tutsi violence in the Rwandan genocide invites comparison with Hindu/Muslim violence at the time of the partition of colonial India. Neither can be explained as simply a state project. One shudders to put the words “popular” and “genocide” together, therefore I put “popularity” in
quotation marks. And yet, one needs to explain the large-scale civilian involvement in the genocide. To do so is to contextualize it, to understand the logic of its development.

Colonialism and Genocide

The genocidal impulse to eliminate an enemy may indeed be as old as organized power. Thus, God instructed his Old Testament disciples through Moses, saying:

Avenge the children of Israel of the Medinanites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people saying, Arm ye men from among you for the war, that they may go against Median, to execute the LORD's vengeance on Median. . . . And they warred against Median, as the LORD commanded Moses, and they slew every male. . . . And the children of Israel took captive the women of Median and their little ones; and all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods, they took for a prey. And all their cities in the places wherein they dwelt, and all their encampments, they burnt with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of man and of beast. . . . And Moses said unto them, Have you saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children that have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

If the genocidal impulse is as old as the organization of power, one may be tempted to think that all that has changed through history is the technology of genocide. Yet, it is not simply the technology of genocide that has changed through history, but surely also how that impulse is organized and its target defined. Before you can try and eliminate an enemy, you must first define that enemy. The definition of the political self and the political other has varied through history. The history of that variation is the history of political identities, be these religious, national, racial, or otherwise.

I argue that the Rwandan genocide needs to be thought through within the logic of colonialism. The horror of colonialism led to two types of genocidal impulses. The first was the genocide of the native by the settler, to become a reality where the violence of colonial pacification took on extreme proportions. The second was the native impulse to eliminate the settler. Whereas the former was obviously despicable, the latter was not. The very political character of native violence made it difficult to think of it as an impulse to genocide. Because it was deriv-
ative of settler violence, the natives’ violence appeared less of an outright aggression and more a self-defense in the face of continuing aggression. Faced with the violent denial of his humanity by the settler, the native’s violence began as a counter to violence. It even seemed more like the affirmation of the native’s humanity than the brutal extinction of life that it came to be. When the native killed the settler, it was violence by yesterday’s victims. More of a culmination of anticolonial resistance than a direct assault on life and freedom, this violence of victims-turned-perpetrators always provoked a greater moral ambiguity than did the settlers’ violence.

Settlers’ Genocide

It is more or less a rule of thumb that the more Western settlement a colony experienced, the greater was the violence unleashed against the native population. The reason was simple: settler colonization led to land depletion. Whereas the prototype of settler violence in the history of modern colonialism is the near-extermination of Amerindians in the New World, the prototype of settler violence in the African colonies was the German annihilation of over 80 percent of the Herero population in the colony of German South West Africa in a single year, 1904. Its context was Herero resistance to land and cattle appropriation by German settlers and their Schutztruppe allies. Faced with continuing armed resistance by the Herero, German opinion divided between two points of views, one championed by General Theodor Leutwein, who commanded the army in the colony, and the other by General Lothar von Trotha, who took over the military command when General Leutwein failed to put down native resistance. The difference between them illuminates the range of political choice in a colonial context.

General Trotha explained the difference in a letter:

Now I have to ask myself how to end the war with the Hereros. The views of the Governor and also a few old Africa hands [alle Afrikaner] on the one hand, and my views on the other, differ completely. The first wanted to negotiate for some time already and regard the Herero nation as necessary labour material for the future development of the country. I believe that the nation as such should be annihilated, or, if this was not possible by tactical measures, have to be expelled from the country by operative means and further detailed treatment. This will be possible if the water-holes from Grootfontein to Gobabis are occupied. The constant movement of our troops will enable us to find the small groups of the nation who have moved back westwards and destroy them gradually.

Equally illuminating is General Trotha’s rationale for the annihilation policy: “My intimate knowledge of many central African tribes (Bantu
and others) has everywhere convinced me of the necessity that the Negro does not respect treaties but only brute force."

The plan Trotha laid out in the letter is more or less the fate he meted to the Herero on the ground. To begin with, the army exterminated as many Herero as possible. For those who fled, all escape routes except the one southeast to the Omheke, a waterless sandveld in the Kalahari Desert, were blocked. The fleeing Herero were forcibly separated from their cattle and denied access to water holes, leaving them with but one option: to cross the desert into Botswana, in reality a march to death. This, indeed, is how the majority of the Herero perished. It was a fate of which the German general staff was well aware, as is clear from the following gleeful entry in its official publication, Der Kampf: "No efforts, no hardships were spared in order to deprive the enemy of his last reserves of resistance; like a half-dead animal he was hunted from water-hole to water-hole until he became a lethargic victim of the nature of his own country. The waterless Omheke was to complete the work of the German arms: the annihilation of the Herero people."

Lest the reader be tempted to dismiss General Lothar von Trotha as an improbable character come to life from the lunatic fringe of the German officer corps, one given a free hand in a distant and unimportant colony, I hasten to point out that the general had a distinguished record in the annals of colonial conquest, indeed the most likely reason he was chosen to squash a protracted rebellion. Renowned for his brutal involvement in the suppression of the Chinese Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and a veteran of bloody suppression of African resistance to German occupation in Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania, General Trotha often enthused about his own methods of colonial warfare: "The exercise of violence with crass terrorism and even with gruesomeness was and is my policy. I destroy the African tribes with streams of blood and streams of money. Only following this cleansing can something new emerge, which will remain."

Opposition to Trotha's annihilation policy had come from two sources: colonial officials who looked at the Herero as potential labor, and church officials who saw them as potential converts. Eventually, the Herero who survived were gathered by the German army with the help of missionary societies and were put in concentration camps, also run by missionaries along with the German army. By 1908, inmates of these concentration camps were estimated at 15,000. Put to slave labor, overworked, hungry, and exposed to diseases such as typhoid and smallpox, more Herero men perished in these camps. Herero women, meanwhile, were turned into sex slaves. At the same time, those who survived were converted en masse to Christianity. When the camps were closed in 1908, the Herero were distributed as laborers among the settlers. Henceforth, all Herero over the age of seven were expected to
carry around their necks a metal disk bearing their labor registration number.

The genocide of the Herero was the first genocide of the twentieth century. The links between it and the Holocaust go beyond the building of concentration camps and the execution of an annihilation policy and are worth exploring. It is surely of significance that when General Trotha wrote, as above, of destroying “African tribes with streams of blood,” he saw this as some kind of a Social Darwinist “cleansing” after which “something new” would “emerge.” It is also relevant that, when the general sought to distribute responsibility for the genocide, he accused the missions of inciting the Herero with images “of the blood-curdling Jewish history of the Old Testament.” . . . It seems to me that Hannah Arendt erred when she presumed a relatively uncomplicated relationship between settlers’ genocide in the colonies and the Nazi Holocaust at home: When Nazis set out to annihilate Jews, it is far more likely that they thought of themselves as natives, and Jews as settlers. Yet, there is a link that connects the genocide of the Herero and the Nazi Holocaust to the Rwandan genocide. That link is race branding, whereby it became possible not only to set a group apart as an enemy, but also to exterminate it with an easy conscience.

Natives’ Genocide

In the annals of colonial history, the natives’ genocide never became a historical reality. Yet, it always hovered on the horizon as a historical possibility. None sensed it better than Frantz Fanon, whose writings now read like a foreboding. For Fanon, the native’s violence was not life denying, but life affirming: “For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely when he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory.” What distinguished native violence from the violence of the settler, its saving grace, was that it was the violence of yesterday’s victims who have turned around and decided to cast aside their victimhood and become masters of their own lives. “He of whom they have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force.” Indeed, “the argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler, and by an ironic turning of the tables it is the native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force.” What affirmed the natives’ humanity for Fanon was not that they were willing to take the settler’s life, but that they were willing to risk their own: “The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence.” If its outcome would be death, of settlers by natives, it would need to be understood as a derivative outcome, a result of a prior logic, the genocidal logic of colonial pacification and occupation infecting anticolonial resistance. “The settler’s work is to make even
dreams of liberty impossible for the native. The native’s work is to imagine all possible methods for destroying the settler. . . For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler . . . for the colonized people, this violence, because it constitutes their only work, invests their character with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler’s violence in the beginning.”

The great crime of colonialism went beyond expropriating the native, the name it gave to the indigenous population. The greater crime was to politicize indigeneity in the first place: first negatively, as a settler libel of the native; but then positively, as a native response, as a self-assertion. The dialectic of the settler and the native did not end with colonialism and political independence. To understand the logic of genocide, I argue, it is necessary to think through the political world that colonialism set into motion. This was the world of the settler and the native, a world organized around a binary preoccupation that was as compelling as it was confining. It is in this context that Tutsi, a group with a privileged relationship to power before colonialism, got constructed as a privileged alien settler presence, first by the great nativist revolution of 1939, and then by Hutu Power propaganda after 1990.

In its motivation and construction, I argue that the Rwandan genocide needs to be understood as a natives’ genocide. It was a genocide by those who saw themselves as sons — and daughters — of the soil, and their mission as one of clearing the soil of a threatening alien presence. This was not an “ethnic” but a “racial” cleansing, not a violence against one who is seen as a neighbor but against one who is seen as a foreigner; not a violence that targets a transgression across a boundary into home but one that seeks to eliminate a foreign presence from home soil, literally and physically. From this point of view, we need to distinguish between racial and ethnic violence: ethnic violence can result in massacres, but not genocide. Massacres are about transgressions, excess; genocide questions the very legitimacy of a presence as alien. For the Hutu who killed, the Tutsi was a settler, not a neighbor. Rather than take these identities as a given, as a starting point of analysis, I seek to ask: When and how was Hutu made into a native identity and Tutsi into a settler identity? The analytical challenge is to understand the historical dynamic through which Hutu and Tutsi came to be synonyms for native and settler.
GLENN GARVIN AND EDWARD HEGSTROM

Report: Maya Indians Suffered Genocide

In 1994, the United Nations–brokered Accord of Oslo brought an end to the civil war that had wracked Guatemala for almost four decades. The Accord created a Guatemalan truth commission, the Commission for Historical Clarification, "in order to clarify with objectivity, equity and impartiality, the human rights violations and acts of violence connected with the armed confrontation that caused suffering among the Guatemalan people."1 The commission examined 42,275 cases of human rights abuses, including the destruction of over 400 villages and more than 626 massacres. It concluded that 93 percent of the abuses were committed by the U.S.-backed military and paramilitary forces and 3 percent were committed by the rebels. (The cause of 4 percent could not be determined.) The report, issued in 1999, concluded that genocide had occurred.

Major U.S. involvement in Guatemala dates back to the early 1950s in the aftermath of the country’s first free election. In 1950, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, a reformer, won 60 percent of the vote and became president of Guatemala. His efforts to redistribute about 1 percent of the land to the poor raised fears in the Eisenhower administration of the spread of communism in the hemisphere. In 1954, the CIA organized a coup that ousted Arbenz and installed a military junta that plunged the country into thirty-six years of political turbulence. (See Map 11.3.) During that period the U.S. government maintained close relations with the junta and trained and aided its army.

This was the first time a United Nations-sponsored report reached the conclusion that events in a Latin American country constituted genocide. Using the categories of genocide suggested by Mahmood Mamdani in the previous selection, what kind of genocide was committed in Guatemala? One commentator, Andrew Reding, writing in the Journal of Commerce2 declared Guatemala America’s Rwanda and urged the creation of a United Nations-sponsored genocide

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2March 18, 1999.

Map 11.3  U.S. Involvement in Central America.
tribunal, similar to that for Rwanda. What do you think of this idea? Should government officials of the United States be held to international laws?

Thinking Historically

How should one respond to charges of genocide? When the report was released, President Clinton apologized to the people of Guatemala. He said: "It is important that I state clearly that support for military forces or intelligence units which engaged in violent and widespread repression of the kind described in the report was wrong. And the United States must not repeat that mistake. We must, and we will, instead continue to support the peace and reconciliation process in Guatemala." What do you think of Clinton's characterization of these events as a "mistake"? Compare his response to that of the diplomats described in the news article. How would you describe the attitude of the reporters for the Miami Herald? If the actions of the United States do not appear to be rational, how were they "thinkable"? In other words, how did this happen?

GUATEMALA CITY — A Guatemalan truth commission investigating the country’s vicious 36-year civil war issued a final report Thursday placing the blame for most of the 200,000 deaths on a “racist” Guatemalan government that received considerable support from the United States. Guatemala’s Maya Indian population, which suffered “acts of genocide,” bore the brunt of the government’s repression, the report said. More than 80 percent of the victims of human rights abuses during the war were Indians, the Commission for Historical Clarification concluded.

“The massacres, scorched-earth operations, forced disappearances, and executions of Maya authorities, leaders, and spiritual guides were not only an attempt to destroy the social base of the guerrillas,” the report said, “but above all, to destroy the cultural values that ensured cohesion and collective action in Maya communities.”

Although the report was couched in relatively moderate language when it came to assigning blame to non-Guatemalan participants, Commission Chairman Christian Tomuschat accused the United States of being responsible for much of the bloodshed. As seething U.S. diplomats looked on, Tomuschat said the Guatemalan army carried out hundreds of massacres of civilians at a time when “the United States government and U.S. private companies exercised pressure to maintain the country’s archaic and unjust socioeconomic structure.”

Tomuschat said the CIA and other U.S. agencies “lent direct and indirect support to some illegal state operations.” This encouraged a
Guatemalan military government that was committing genocide against the country's Indian population, he added.

Tomuschat spoke at the unveiling of the commission's 3,600-page report on human rights abuses during the civil war that ended in 1996. The report took 18 months to assemble. Hundreds of spectators — many of them former Marxist guerrillas who battled the government — burst into wild applause after Tomuschat, a German law professor, finished his attack on the United States.

A contingent of U.S. diplomats, including Ambassador Donald Planty and Mark Schneider, an assistant administrator of the Agency for International Development (USAID), stared solemnly ahead during Tomuschat's speech. Afterward, a clearly furious Planty said the attack was unfair. "Everyone knows the historical context in which the conflict took place," Planty said. "But that doesn't obscure the fact that the violence was committed by Guatemalans against Guatemalans."

The surprise of Planty and other U.S. diplomats was compounded by the fact that USAID financed much of the commission's work with a donation of $1.5 million. One of the three members of the commission, bilingual education expert Ortilia Lux de Coti, is a USAID employee who took a leave of absence to work on the report.

**Cold War Impact Cited**

The report's 100-page executive summary, while noting that Cold War policies in both the United States and Cuba "had a bearing" on the war, said the Guatemalan government used a relatively small Marxist insurgency as an excuse for the "physical annihilation" of all its political opponents in a war that claimed 200,000 lives, the vast majority of them civilians. "The inclusion of all opponents under one banner, democratic or otherwise, pacifist or guerrilla, legal or illegal, communist or noncommunist, served to justify numerous and serious crimes," the report said.

**Coup Attempt Sparked War**

The Guatemalan civil war began in November 1960, when leftist officers attempted a coup against the country's right-wing military government. When they failed, many of the officers went into the countryside to form guerrilla groups. Many political analysts, however, say the roots of the war lay in the 1950s, when a coup supported by the CIA toppled the Marxist government of President Jacobo Arbenz and put in place the first of a series of military governments.

Tomuschat's searing comments on the United States clearly delighted many Guatemalan human rights activists. "Today, Tomuschat
spoke the truth about Guatemala as it has never been spoken before,” said Frank La Rue, who runs a human rights legal foundation.

Others, however, said Guatemalans might be trying to let themselves off the hook, pretending they were merely pawns in the Cold War rather than enthusiastic participants. “Blaming the U.S. is a national pastime here,” said David Holiday, an American political consultant based in Guatemala. “That unjustly exonerates the Guatemala players.”

**Offenders Not Named**

The report does not include names of individual human rights offenders. It does single out a handful of senior officials for blame — like former military strongman Efrain Rios Montt — who already have been excoriated in numerous other human rights reports.

The last time a highly publicized human rights report was unveiled in Guatemala, it was followed 48 hours later by the murder of its principal author. Bishop Juan Gerardi was beaten to death two days after the Roman Catholic Church’s human rights office issued a report similar to the one released Thursday.

Gerardi’s killing remains unsolved and it has not been determined that it was related to the bishop’s human rights work. Nonetheless, all three members of the Commission for Historical Clarification are reportedly leaving Guatemala for lengthy stays overseas.

**REFLECTIONS**

Short of war, the world community has adopted three strategies to counter genocide and mass murder. The first is trial of war criminals. At the conclusion of World War II, war-crime trials of Nazis and Japanese were conducted. The terms war crimes and war criminals are unfortunate misnomers because they suggest a criminalization of military activities. In fact, the crimes recounted in this chapter were not crimes of the battlefield but, rather, massive crimes against civilian populations.

Developing and refining international laws respecting human rights is the second strategy. The “Declaration of Human Rights” passed by the United Nations, itself a shaper and guardian of international law, offers a recognized standard and continuing process for defining and preventing genocide, mass murder, and “crimes against humanity.”

The third strategy, one in which all of us can participate, is the dissemination of information and concerted efforts toward understanding.
To promote understanding, archives must be opened, and laws such as the Freedom of Information Act must be used aggressively. We must develop sensitivity to the plight of victims, knowledge of the victimizers’ motives, and understanding about the ways that the horrendous can happen.

In recent years “truth and reconciliation” commissions have been formed in South Africa and El Salvador to enable those countries to get beyond years of government-sponsored terrorism. In cases like these, when such governments have relinquished power but their personnel are either too powerful or too numerous to be brought to justice, the new democratic governments and their truth and reconciliation commissions have asked for a complete and remorseful accounting of past crimes. Some say these commissions have been able to accept truth instead of revenge; others find it to be truth instead of justice. The cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which have followed the route of international trials rather than truth and justice commissions, continue in the International Court of Justice at the Hague and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Tanzania as this is written. The case of Guatemala has gone no further than the United Nations report issued in 1999. It is the U.S. position that international tribunals are not appropriate for its citizens or officials. Do you think U.S. citizens should be exempt from international law or immune from prosecution in international courts? If so, how would you make that case to citizens of other countries? If international criminal courts are not appropriate, should the United States form a truth and reconciliation commission for events in Guatemala? Truth can be an amazing restorative, especially when it is linked with genuine contrition. The price of amnesty can hardly be less. Forgiveness may be much more. Which, if any, of the crimes recalled in this chapter would you be willing to forgive? What should be necessary for acquittal or amnesty? How do we prevent such things from occurring again and again?
Religion and Politics

Israel, Palestine, and the West,
1896 to the Present

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Many of the political conflicts of the mid- to late twentieth century turned on, or were expressed in, the language of religion: Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; Hindus and Muslims in India, Pakistan, and the disputed areas of Kashmir; Jews and Muslims in Palestine and Israel. None of these conflicts were new to the twentieth century but were continuations of conflicts hundreds or thousands of years old. Yet the post–World War II end of European colonialism unleashed sectarian religious forces that were dormant or suppressed for centuries.

The great colonial empires were not above favoring one religion or ethnic group over another. The British invented their “martial races” to serve as elite enforcers; the Austro-Hungarian Empire favored Austrians and Hungarians over Slavs, Serbs, and almost everyone else. But ethnic or religious sectarianism could be the death of empires. In the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was. Consequently most great empires attempted to stress more universal identities: the Islamic brotherhood of the Ottomans or the Socialist unity of the Soviets. The demise of the great empires left kindling resentments that could be blown into full flame.

This chapter will explore one of these post–World War II political conflicts fueled by religious nationalism. The conflict between Israel and Palestine may not be representative of other struggles, like those between Catholics and Protestants, or Muslims and Hindus. In some ways the creation of a Jewish homeland in the Arab Middle East was a unique event. But nothing under the sun is entirely new, and no two cases are the same. We will study the role of religion and politics in a particular place

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1Sikhs in India, Nepali Gurkhas, Hausas in West Africa, and the Kamba in East Africa were thought to be naturally warlike and were selected for police or army overrepresentation.
at a particular time, but it is a place that has appeared at the very center of world maps for millennia and its conflicts still shake our world.

THINKING HISTORICALLY
Making Use of the Unexpected

The most lasting learning comes from making our own meanings. We do that to a certain extent when we read something and put it in our own words. But most of what we read washes over us. We remember it or not, but generally we do not make our own meaning out of information and ideas that are expected or unexceptional.

Sometimes, however, we come across details, ideas, or statements that surprise us. They stop us in our tracks because they are unexpected: They seem wrong, unbelievable, or senseless. The most common response to the unexpected may be to ignore it and move on, but by doing so we may miss an opportunity to learn something new. The unexpected can provide an entry point into a document, period, culture, or movement that opens up a whole new realm of understanding. In this chapter, you will be encouraged to reflect on the unexpected so that you might use it as an opportunity to create new meaning and deepen your understanding.

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THEODOR HERZL
From The Jewish State

Born and raised in an assimilated Hungarian family, Theodor Herzl* (1860–1904) first experienced anti-Semitism as a student at the University of Vienna, but he was most profoundly shaken by the Dreyfus Affair in France. In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus†, a Jewish officer in the French army, was falsely convicted of treason on a wave of public

*HAVR tzuhi
†DRY fuhs

hostility toward Jews. Herzl, a reporter in Paris at the time, was shocked to hear French mobs shouting “Death to the Jews.” The events, he later wrote, radically transformed him. In 1896 he published The Jewish State. What reasons did he give for forming a Jewish state? How and where did he intend to create this Jewish state? How “religious” was this state to be? What did he see as the potential problems of a Jewish state and how did he propose to solve those problems?

Thinking Historically

Different details may surprise different readers. The more we know, perhaps the smaller or less obvious the surprise. Nevertheless, even the least knowledgeable student of modern history will likely be surprised by the appearance in this text of the word “Argentine.” Why is that a surprise? What does its presence in the text tell you about Herzl or early Zionism? (Uganda, too, was an early candidate for a Jewish homeland.)

Details like this seem unlikely from the perspective of the present. Our contemporary association of Israel as “the home of the Jews” is so strong, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of a different historical outcome. And perhaps there was not. But clearly, the possibilities of the early twentieth century were more fluid than those of today. What other unexpected details do you see in the document? How might they lead to new ways of thinking about the subject?

Chapter 2

The Jewish Question

No one can deny the gravity of the situation of the Jews. Wherever they live in perceptible numbers, they are more or less persecuted. Their equality before the law, granted by statute, has become practically a dead letter. They are debarred from filling even moderately high positions, either in the army, or in any public or private capacity. And attempts are made to thrust them out of business also: “Don’t buy from Jews!”

Attacks in Parliaments, in assemblies, in the press, in the pulpit, in the street, on journeys — for example, their exclusion from certain hotels — even in places of recreation, become daily more numerous. The forms of persecution vary according to the countries and social circles in which they occur. In Russia, imposts are levied on Jewish villages; in Rumania, a few persons are put to death; in Germany, they get a good beating occasionally; in Austria, Anti-Semites exercise terrorism over all public life; in Algeria, there are traveling agitators; in Paris, the Jews
are shut out of the so-called best social circles and excluded from clubs. Shades of anti-Jewish feeling are innumerable. But this is not to be an attempt to make out a doleful category of Jewish hardships.

I do not intend to arouse sympathetic emotions on our behalf. That would be a foolish, futile, and undignified proceeding. I shall content myself with putting the following questions to the Jews: Is it not true that, in countries where we live in perceptible numbers, the position of Jewish lawyers, doctors, technicians, teachers, and employees of all descriptions becomes daily more intolerable? Is it not true, that the Jewish middle classes are seriously threatened? Is it not true, that the passions of the mob are incited against our wealthy people? Is it not true, that our poor endure greater sufferings than any other proletariat? I think that this external pressure makes itself felt everywhere. In our economically upper classes it causes discomfort, in our middle classes continual and grave anxieties, in our lower classes absolute despair.

Everything tends, in fact, to one and the same conclusion, which is clearly enunciated in that classic Berlin phrase: “Juden Raus” (Out with the Jews!).

I shall now put the Question in the briefest possible form: Are we to “get out” now and where to? . . .

The Plan

The whole plan is in its essence perfectly simple, as it must necessarily be if it is to come within the comprehension of all.

Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves.

The creation of a new State is neither ridiculous nor impossible. We have in our day witnessed the process in connection with nations which were not largely members of the middle class, but poorer, less educated, and consequently weaker than ourselves. The Governments of all countries scourged by Anti-Semitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain the sovereignty we want.

The plan, simple in design, but complicated in execution, will be carried out by two agencies: The Society of Jews and the Jewish Company.

The Society of Jews will do the preparatory work in the domains of science and politics, which the Jewish Company will afterwards apply practically.

The Jewish Company will be the liquidating agent of the business interests of departing Jews, and will organize commerce and trade in the new country.

We must not imagine the departure of the Jews to be a sudden one. It will be gradual, continuous, and will cover many decades. The poor-
east will go first to cultivate the soil. In accordance with a preconceived plan, they will construct roads, bridges, railways, and telegraph installations; regulate rivers; and build their own dwellings; their labor will create trade, trade will create markets, and markets will attract new settlers, for every man will go voluntarily, at his own expense and his own risk. The labor expended on the land will enhance its value, and the Jews will soon perceive that a new and permanent sphere of operation is opening here for that spirit of enterprise which has heretofore met only with hatred and obloquy.

The emigrants standing lowest in the economic scale will be slowly followed by those of a higher grade. Those who at this moment are living in despair will go first. They will be led by the mediocre intellects which we produce so superabundantly and which are persecuted everywhere.

This pamphlet will open a general discussion on the Jewish Question, but that does not mean that there will be any voting on it. Such a result would ruin the cause from the outset, and dissidents must remember that allegiance or opposition is entirely voluntary. He who will not come with us should remain behind.

Let all who are willing to join us, fall in behind our banner and fight for our cause with voice and pen and deed.

Those Jews who agree with our idea of a State will attach themselves to the Society, which will thereby be authorized to confer and treat with Governments in the name of our people. The Society will thus be acknowledged in its relations with Governments as a State-creating power. This acknowledgment will practically create the State.

Should the Powers declare themselves willing to admit our sovereignty over a neutral piece of land, then the Society will enter into negotiations for the possession of this land. Here two territories come under consideration, Palestine and Argentine. In both countries important experiments in colonization have been made, though on the mistaken principle of a gradual infiltration of Jews. An infiltration is bound to end badly. It continues till the inevitable moment when the native population feels itself threatened, and forces the Government to stop a further influx of Jews. Immigration is consequently futile unless we have the sovereign right to continue such immigration.

The Society of Jews will treat with the present masters of the land, putting itself under the protectorate of the European Powers, if they prove friendly to the plan. We could offer the present possessors of the land enormous advantages, assume part of the public debt, build new roads for traffic, which our presence in the country would render necessary, and do many other things. The creation of our State would be beneficial to adjacent countries, because the cultivation of a strip of land increases the value of its surrounding districts in innumerable ways.
Palestine or Argentine?

Shall we choose Palestine or Argentine? We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion. The Society will determine both these points.

Argentina is one of the most fertile countries in the world, extends over a vast area, has a sparse population and a mild climate. The Argentine Republic would derive considerable profit from the cession of a portion of its territory to us. The present infiltration of Jews has certainly produced some discontent, and it would be necessary to enlighten the Republic on the intrinsic difference of our new movement.

Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvelous potency. If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey. We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral State remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The sanctuaries of Christendom would be safeguarded by assigning to them an extra-territorial status such as is well-known to the law of nations. We should form a guard of honor about these sanctuaries, answering for the fulfillment of this duty with our existence. This guard of honor would be the great symbol of the solution of the Jewish question after eighteen centuries of Jewish suffering.

Chapter 5

Language

It might be suggested that our want of a common current language would present difficulties. We cannot converse with one another in Hebrew. Who amongst us has a sufficient acquaintance with Hebrew to ask for a railway ticket in that language! Such a thing cannot be done. Yet the difficulty is very easily circumvented. Every man can preserve the language in which his thoughts are at home. Switzerland affords a conclusive proof of the possibility of a federation of tongues. We shall remain in the new country what we now are here, and we shall never cease to cherish with sadness the memory of the native land out of which we have been driven.

We shall give up using those miserable stunted jargons, those Ghetto languages which we still employ, for these were the stealthy tongues of prisoners. Our national teachers will give due attention to this matter; and the language which proves itself to be of greatest utility for general intercourse will be adopted without compulsion as our na-
tional tongue. Our community of race is peculiar and unique, for we are bound together only by the faith of our fathers.

Theocracy

Shall we end by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks. Army and priesthood shall receive honors high as their valuable functions deserve. But they must not interfere in the administration of the State which confers distinction upon them, else they will conjure up difficulties without and within.

Every man will be as free and undisturbed in his faith or his disbelief as he is in his nationality. And if it should occur that men of other creeds and different nationalities come to live amongst us, we should accord them honorable protection and equality before the law. We have learnt toleration in Europe. This is not sarcastically said; for the Anti-Semitism of today could only in a very few places be taken for old religious intolerance. It is for the most part a movement among civilized nations by which they try to chase away the spectres of their own past.

The Army

The Jewish State is conceived as a neutral one. It will therefore require only a professional army, equipped, of course, with every requisite of modern warfare, to preserve order internally and externally.

The Flag

We have no flag, and we need one. If we desire to lead many men, we must raise a symbol above their heads.

I would suggest a white flag, with seven golden stars. The white field symbolizes our pure new life; the stars are the seven golden hours of our working-day. For we shall march into the Promised Land carrying the badge of honor.
DAVID FROMKIN

On the Balfour Declaration

In a brief note, dated November 2, 1917, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour declared that Britain was in favor of the creation of a "national home" for Jews in Palestine. The note, delivered to Lord Rothschild, a leading British Zionist, marked a crucial turning point in British policy. It suddenly turned Zionism from a quixotic dream to a strategic movement. Yet, as the following selection from a history of the Middle East reveals, the Balfour Declaration was issued despite considerable domestic opposition and numerous British misconceptions about the needs and beliefs of its allies and enemies. Recall that the Great War of 1914–1918 pitted England, France, and Russia against Germany, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire until taken from Turkey by British troops and Arab allies shortly after the Declaration was issued. The Arabs expected to govern the land themselves. Neither they nor the French or Russians were consulted or advised of Balfour's plans.

According to Fromkin's history, what were the reasons for the British and American support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine? Who was in favor of a creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and who was opposed? What did the British government expect to gain? Were they successful?

**Thinking Historically**

Here you have the actual document and a modern historian's account of the political considerations that finally led to passage of the Balfour Declaration. What elements in either the Declaration or Fromkin's history surprise you? What do you make of such surprises? How, if at all, are they related to the surprises in the other selections?

The Prime Minister had always planned to carry through a Zionist program; and while he did not express an interest in declaring Britain's intentions in advance, neither did he place any obstacle in the way of his government's doing so once his colleagues thought it useful.

Yet the proposal that Balfour should issue his pro-Zionist declaration suddenly encountered opposition that brought it to a halt. The op-

position came from leading figures in the British Jewish community. Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, led the opposition group within the Cabinet. He, along with his cousin, Herbert Samuel, and Rufus Isaacs (Lord Reading) had broken new ground for their co-religionists: they had been the first Jews to sit in a British Cabinet.\footnote{Disraeli, of course, though of Jewish ancestry, was baptized a Christian.} The second son of a successful financier who had been ennobled, Montagu saw Zionism as a threat to the position in British society that he and his family had so recently, and with so much exertion, attained. Judaism, he argued, was a religion, not a nationality, and to say otherwise was to say that he was less than 100 percent British.

Montagu was regarded as by far the most capable of the younger men in the Liberal ranks, and it was deemed a political masterstroke for the Prime Minister to have taken him and Churchill away from Asquith. Yet a typical political comment at the time (from Lord Derby, the War Minister) was, “The appointment of Montagu, a Jew, to the India Office has made, as far as I can judge, an uneasy feeling both in India and here”; though Derby added that “I, personally, have a very high opinion of his capability and I expect he will do well.” It bothered Montagu that, despite his lack of religious faith, he could not avoid being categorized as a Jew. He was the millionaire son of an English lord, but was driven to lament that “I have been striving all my life to escape from the Ghetto.”

The evidence suggested that in his non-Zionism, Montagu was speaking for a majority of Jews. As of 1913, the last date for which there were figures, only about one percent of the world’s Jews had signified their adherence to Zionism. British Intelligence reports indicated a surge of Zionist feeling during the war in the Pale of Russia, but there were no figures either to substantiate or to quantify it. In Britain, the Conjoint Committee, which represented British Jewry in all matters affecting Jews abroad, had been against Zionism from the start and remained so.

Montagu’s opposition brought all matters to a halt. In disgust, Graham reported that the proposed declaration was “hung up” by Montagu, “who represents a certain section of the rich Jews and who seems to fear that he and his like will be expelled from England and asked to cultivate farms in Palestine.”

The sub-Cabinet officials who were pushing for a pro-Zionist commitment attempted to allay such fears. Amery, who was helping Milner redraft the proposed Declaration, explained the concept behind it to a Cabinet member as not really being addressed to British subjects of the Jewish faith, but to Jews who resided in countries that denied them real citizenship. “Apart from those Jews who have become citizens of this
or any other country in the fullest sense, there is also a large body, more particularly of the Jews in Poland and Russia . . . who are still in a very real sense a separate nation. . . .” Denied the right to become Russians, they would be offered a chance to rebuild their own homeland in Palestine.

Montagu, however, took little interest in the position of Jews in other countries. It was the position of Jews in British society that concerned him; feeling threatened, he fought back with a ferocity that brought the Cabinet’s deliberations on the matter to a standstill.

Montagu was aided by Lord Curzon, who argued that Palestine was too meagre in resources to accommodate the Zionist dream. More important, he was aided by Andrew Bonar Law — leader of the dominant party in the Coalition government and the Prime Minister’s powerful political partner — who urged delay. Bonar Law argued that the time was not yet ripe for a consideration of the Zionist issue.

Montagu was also aided by the United States, which, until mid-October 1917, cautiously counselled delay. President Wilson was sympathetic to Zionism, but suspicious of British motives; he favored a Jewish Palestine but was less enthusiastic about a British Palestine. As the British Cabinet considered issuing the Balfour Declaration, it solicited the advice, and by implication the support, of President Wilson. The proposed Declaration was described by the Cabinet to the American government as an expression of sympathy for Zionist aspirations, as though it were motivated solely by concern for the plight of persecuted Jews. Wilson’s foreign policy adviser, Colonel House, translated this as follows: “The English naturally want the road to Egypt and India blocked, and Lloyd George is not above using us to further this plan.”

This was a fair interpretation of the views of the Prime Minister and of the Milner circle which advised him. According to Chaim Weizmann, Philip Kerr (the former Milner aide who served as Lloyd George’s secretary) “saw in a Jewish Palestine a bridge between Africa, Asia, and Europe on the road to India.” It was not, however, a fair interpretation of the views of the Foreign Office, which had been won over by the argument that a pro-Zionist declaration would prove a crucial weapon against Germany in the war and afterward. The Foreign Office believed that the Jewish communities in America and, above all, Russia, wielded great power. The British ambassador in Petrograd, well aware that Jews were a weak and persecuted minority in imperial Russia and of no political consequence, reported that Zionists could not affect the outcome of the struggle for power in Russia. His government persisted in believing, however, that the Jewish community in Russia could keep the government that ruled them in the Allied camp. As the crisis in Russia deepened, the Foreign Office was seized by a sense of urgency in seeking Jewish support.
IV

Fear begets fear. In Germany the press was aroused by rumors of what the British Foreign Office intended to do. In June 1917 Sir Ronald Graham received from Chaim Weizmann an issue of a Berlin newspaper known for its close relationship to the government, reporting that the British were flirting with the idea of endorsing Zionism in order to acquire the Palestinian land bridge on the road from Egypt to India, and proposing that Germany forestall the maneuver by endorsing Zionism first. (Though the British did not know it, the German government took little interest in adopting a pro-Zionist stance; it was the German press that took an interest in it.)

That summer Graham communicated his fears to Balfour. In his minute, Graham wrote that he had heard there was to be another postponement which he believed would “jeopardise the whole Jewish situation.” This endangered the position in Russia where, he asserted, the Jews were all anti-Ally and, to a lesser extent, it would antagonize public opinion in the United States. Warning that Britain must not “throw the Zionists into the arms of the Germans,” he argued that “We might at any moment be confronted by a German move on the Zionist question and it must be remembered that Zionism was originally if not a German Jewish at any rate an Austrian Jewish idea.”

Graham attached to his minute a list of dates showing how extensive the government’s delays had been in dealing with the Zionist matter. In October, Balfour forwarded the minute to the Prime Minister, along with the list of dates which he said showed that the Zionists had reasonable cause to complain, to which he added his own recommendation that the question be taken up by the Cabinet as soon as possible.

On 26 October 1917, The Times published a leading article attacking the continuing delay. Stating that it was no secret that British and Allied governments had been considering a statement about Palestine, The Times argued that the time had come to make one.

Do our statesmen fail to see how valuable to the Allied cause would be the hearty sympathy of the Jews throughout the world which an unequivocal declaration of British policy might win? Germany has been quick to perceive the danger to her schemes and to her propaganda that would be involved in the association of the Allies with Jewish national hopes, and she has not been idle in attempting to forestall us.

On 31 October 1917 the Cabinet overrode the opposition of Mornagu and Curzon and authorized the Foreign Secretary to issue a much-diluted version of the assurance of support that Weizmann had requested. An ebullient Sykes rushed over with the news, “Dr. Weizmann, it’s a boy!”; but the Zionist leader was unhappy that the original language had been so watered down.
Addressed to the most illustrious name in British Jewry, the Foreign Secretary's letter of 2 November 1917 stated:

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Britain's leaders anticipated no adverse reaction from their Arab allies; they had seen France as their only problem in this connection, and that had been resolved. The Prime Minister later wrote of the Arab leaders that "Palestine did not seem to give them much anxiety." He pointed out that his government had informed King Hussein and Prince Feisal of its plans to re-create a Jewish homeland in the Holy Land. He caustically added that "We could not get in touch with the Palestinian Arabs as they were fighting against us."

The public announcement of the Balfour Declaration was delayed until the following Friday, the publication date of the weekly Jewish Chronicle. By then the news was overshadowed by reports from Petrograd that Lenin and Trotsky had seized power. The Foreign Office had hoped the Balfour Declaration would help to swing Russian Jewish support to the Allied side and against Bolshevism. This hope remained alive until the Bolsheviks decisively won the Russian Civil War in the early 1920s. In November of 1917 the battle against Bolshevism in Russia had just begun, and those Britons who supported the Balfour Declaration, because they mistakenly believed Russian Jews were powerful and could be valuable allies, were driven to support it all the more by the dramatic news from Petrograd.

It was not until 9 November that The Times was able to report the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, and not until 3 December that it published comments approving it. The comments followed upon a celebration at the London Opera House on 2 December organized by the British Zionist Federation. In addition to the Zionist leaders, speakers included Lord Robert Cecil, Sir Mark Sykes, and William Ormsby-Gore, as well as a Syrian Christian, an Arab nationalist, and spokesmen for Armenia. The theme of the meeting, eloquently pursued by many of the speakers, was the need for Jews, Arabs, and Armenians to help one another and to move forward in harmony. The opinion of The Times...
was that “The presence and the words of influential representatives of the Arab and Armenian peoples, and their assurances of agreement and cooperation with the Jews, would alone have sufficed to make the meeting memorable.”

Of the meeting, The Times wrote that “its outstanding features were the Old Testament spirit which pervaded it and the feeling that, in the somewhat incongruous setting of a London theatre, the approaching fulfillment of ancient prophecy was being celebrated with faith and fervour.” It was appropriate that it should be so: Biblical prophecy was the first and most enduring of the many motives that led Britons to want to restore the Jews to Zion.

The Prime Minister planned to foster a Jewish home in Palestine, in any event, and later wrote that the peace treaty would have provided that Palestine should be a homeland for the Jews “even had there been no previous pledge or promise.” The importance of the Balfour Declaration, he wrote, was its contribution to the war effort. He claimed that Russian Jews had given invaluable support to the war against Germany because of it. The grateful Zionist leaders had promised to work toward an Allied victory — and had done so. Writing two decades later, as the British government was about to abandon the Balfour Declaration, he said that the Zionists “kept their word in the letter and the spirit, and the only question that remains now is whether we mean to honour ours.”

The Prime Minister underestimated the effect of the Balfour Declaration on the eventual peace settlement. Its character as a public document — issued with the approval of the United States and France and after consultation with Italy and the Vatican, and greeted with approval by the public and the press throughout the western world — made it a commitment that was difficult to ignore when the peace settlement was being negotiated. It took on a life and momentum of its own.

V

The Declaration also played a role in the development of the Zionist movement in the American Jewish community. American Zionism had been a tiny movement when the war began. Of the roughly three million Jews who then lived in the United States, only 12,000 belonged to the often ephemeral groups loosely bound together in the amateurishly led Zionist Federation. The movement’s treasury contained 15,000 dollars; its annual budget never exceeded 5,200 dollars. The largest single donation the Federation ever received prior to 1914 was 200 dollars. In New York the movement had only 500 members.

Louis D. Brandeis, an outstanding Boston lawyer not previously identified with specifically Jewish causes, had become a Zionist in 1912
and took over leadership of the movement in 1914. As the intellectual giant of the Progressive movement in American politics, he was believed to exert great influence over President Wilson. Brandeis was perhaps the first Jew to play an important part in American politics since the Civil War. Only one Jew had ever been a member of a president's cabinet, and Brandeis himself was to become the first Jewish member of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The great waves of Jewish immigration into the United States were recent, and most immigrants were anxious to learn English, to shed their foreign accents and ways, and to become American. American-born Jews, too, wanted to distance themselves from any foreign taint and feared that attachment to Zionism on their part might make them seem less than wholehearted in their loyalty to the United States.

It was this issue, above all, that Brandeis set out to address. As he saw it, American Jews lacked something important that other Americans possessed: a national past. Others could point to an ancestral homeland and take pride in it and in themselves. Brandeis especially admired Irish-Americans in this respect and for manifesting their opposition to continued British rule in Ireland.

Arguing that this kind of political concern and involvement is entirely consistent with American patriotism, and indeed enhances it, he proclaimed that "Every Irish-American who contributed towards advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine...will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so."

The ethical idealism of Brandeis made a powerful impression on Arthur Balfour when the British Foreign Secretary visited the United States in 1917 and discussed the future of Palestine. In turn, the Balfour Declaration vindicated the arguments that Brandeis had used in his appeals to the American Jewish community. It showed that Zionism was in harmony with patriotism in wartime because a Jewish Palestine was an Allied war goal. Soon afterward it also became an officially supported American goal. On the occasion of the Jewish New Year in September 1918, President Wilson endorsed the principles of the Balfour Declaration in a letter of holiday greetings to the American Jewish community.

Whether because of the Balfour Declaration or because of Brandeis's effective and professional leadership, support for Zionism within the Jewish community grew dramatically. In 1919 membership of the Zionist Federation grew to more than 175,000, though Zionist supporters remained a minority group within American Jewry and still en-

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2Oscar Straus, Secretary of Commerce and Labor from 1906 to 1909.
countered fierce opposition from the richer and more established Jews — opposition that was not really overcome until the 1940s. But Brandeis had made American Zionism into a substantial organization along the lines pioneered by Irish-Americans who supported independence for Ireland; and the Balfour Declaration had helped him to do so — even though the Foreign Office had issued the declaration in part because they supposed such a force was already in existence and needed to be appeased.

The Zionist and Arab Cases to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry

After World War I, the victorious allies transferred control of Palestine from defeated Turkey to Britain. The new League of Nations sanctioned the mandate system as a preparatory stage to eventual independence. Jewish immigration to Palestine continued, but in response to Arab rebellions from 1936 to 1939, Britain effectively rescinded the Balfour Declaration and ended Jewish immigration in 1939. In 1942, in the midst of World War II, leading figures in the Zionist movement gathered at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City. Their “Biltmore Program” demanded renewed immigration, a British return to the policy of the Balfour Declaration, and the establishment of Palestine not only as “a home” for Jews, but as a Jewish state.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, in November 1945, the new United Nations established the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to find a solution. The committee took testimony from Jews and Arabs, in Europe, America, Palestine, and the Middle East. In the following selections the committee’s report, published in May 1946, summarized what it called “The Jewish Attitude” and “The Arab Attitude” towards the British Mandate of Palestine. What were the arguments of both sides in 1946? Were these two sides reconcilable?

*Reports of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Confidential Files, Re, Palestine, 1944–1946, Chapter 5, “The Jewish Attitude,” and Chapter 6, “The Arab Attitude.” Available online at [http://www.mideastweb.org/ Angloamerican.htm](http://www.mideastweb.org/ Angloamerican.htm).*
The report purports to present the two sides to the Palestine debate in an evenhanded way. Clearly, the committee interviewed many people, official and otherwise. Yet, the debate is filtered through the committee's lens. Even the terms *Jewish* and *Arab* focus the issue in a particular way. What do these terms capture, and what do they miss? How balanced does the report seem? How can you tell? Do you see any signs that the committee favors a particular political outcome? The Committee recommended the immediate acceptance of 100,000 Jewish refugees and the development of a binational state (including Jews and Arabs) under United Nations auspices. (See Map 12.1.) Which groups would have accepted, which opposed, a binational state?

*Thinking Historically*

It is difficult, if not impossible, to view this debate apart from the knowledge of what later occurred. This report was issued only two years before Israel declared, fought for, and won its independence. Yet one is struck by the lack of unanimity on this issue among the Jews of Palestine as well as the West. Why did some Jews object to Zionism? Are there any arguments from either side that surprise you? Are there any arguments for or against a Jewish state in Palestine that you would expect to find here, but do not? If so, how do you account for the absence of these arguments?

*The Jewish Attitude*

1. The Committee heard the Jewish case, presented at full length and with voluminous written evidence, in three series of public hearings—in Washington by the American Zionists, in London by the British Zionists, and finally and most massively by the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. The basic policy advocated was always the same, the so-called Biltmore Program of 1942, with the additional demand that 100,000 certificates for immigration into Palestine should be issued immediately to relieve the distress in Europe. This policy can be summed up in three points: (1) that the Mandatory should hand over control of immigration to the Jewish Agency; (2) that it should abolish restrictions on the sale of land; and (3) that it should proclaim as its ultimate aim the establishment of a Jewish State as soon as a Jewish majority has been achieved. It should be noted that the demand for a Jewish State goes beyond the obligations of either the Balfour Declaration or the Mandate, and was expressly disowned by the Chairman of the Jewish Agency as late as 1932.

2. In all the hearings, although evidence was given by those sections of the Zionist movement which are critical of the Biltmore Program, most
Map 12.1 The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan as a Reflection of Patterns of Land Ownership in Palestine by Subdistrict.
of the witnesses took the official Zionist line. The Committee also
heard the Jewish opponents of Zionism: first, the small groups in
America and Britain who advocate assimilation as an alternative to
Jewish nationalism; second, Agudath Israel, an organization of ortho-
dox Jews which supports unrestricted Jewish immigration into Pale-
stine while objecting to the secular tendencies of Zionism; and third,
representatives of important sections of Middle Eastern Jewry, many of
whom fear that their friendly relations with the Arabs are being endan-
ergized by political Zionism.

3. As the result of the public hearings and of many private conversa-
tions, we came to the conclusion that the Biltmore Program has the
support of the overwhelming majority of Zionists. Though many Jews
have doubts about the wisdom of formulating these ultimate demands,
the program has undoubtedly won the support of the Zionist move-
ment as a whole, chiefly because it expresses the policy of Palestinian
Jewry which now plays a leading role in the Jewish-Agency.

Whether this almost universal support for the demand for a Jewish
State is based on full knowledge of the implications of the policy and of
the risks involved in carrying it out is, of course, quite another matter.

4. The position in Palestine itself is somewhat different. Here, where the
issue is not the achievement of a remote idea, but is regarded as a matter
of life and death for the Jewish nation, the position is naturally more
complex. Palestinian Jewry is riddled with party differences. The num-
ber of political newspapers and periodicals bears witness to the variety
and vitality of this political life, and, apart from pressure exerted on
Jews considered to be disloyal to the National Home, we found little evi-
dence to support the rumors that it was dangerous to advocate minority
views. Of the major political parties, Mapai (the Labor Party) is far the
biggest and largely determines the official line. Opposed to the Agency's
policy are two main groups. On the one side stand two small but impor-
tant parties: the Conservative Aliyah Hadashah (New Settlers), drawn
chiefly from colonists of German and western European extraction, and
Hashomer Hatzair, a socialist party which, while demanding the right of
unrestricted immigration and land settlement, challenges the concept of
the Jewish State and particularly emphasizes the need for cooperation
with the Arabs. Hashomer Hatzair, though it did not appear before us,
published shortly before we left Jerusalem a striking pamphlet in sup-
port of bi-nationalism. Very close to Hashomer Hatzair, but without its
socialist ideology, stands Dr. Magnes and his small Thud group, whose
importance is far greater than its numbers. Taken altogether, these
Palestinian critics of the Biltmore Program certainly do not exceed at the
moment one quarter of the Jewish population in Palestine. But they re-
represent a constructive minority.
5. On the other side stands the Revisionist Party, numbering some one percent of the Jewish community, and beyond it the various more extreme groups, which call for active resistance to the White Paper\(^1\) and participate in and openly support the present terrorist campaign. This wing of Palestinian Jewry derives its inspiration and its methods from the revolutionary traditions of Poland and eastern Europe. Many of these extremists are boys and girls under twenty, of good education, filled with a political fanaticism as self-sacrificing as it is pernicious.

6. The Biltmore Program can only be fully understood if it is studied against this background of Palestinian life. Like all political platforms, it is a result of conflicting political pressures, an attempt by the leadership to maintain unity without sacrificing principle. The Jew who lives and works in the National Home is deeply aware both of his achievements and of how much more could have been achieved with whole-hearted support by the Mandatory Power. His political outlook is thus a mixture of self-confident pride and bitter frustration: pride that he has turned the desert and the swamp into a land flowing with milk and honey; frustration because he is denied opportunity of settlement in nine-tenths of that Eretz Israel which he considers his own by right; pride that he has disproved the theory that the Jews cannot build a healthy community based on the tilling of the soil; frustration that the Jew is barred entry to the National Home, where that community is now in being; pride that he is taking part in a bold collective experiment; frustration because he feels himself hampered by British officials whom he often regards as less able than himself; pride because in Palestine he feels himself at last a free member of a free community; frustration because he lives, not under a freely elected government, but under an autocratic if humane regime.

7. The main complaint of the Jews of Palestine is that, since the White Paper of 1930, the Mandatory Power has slowed up the development of the National Home in order to placate Arab opposition. The sudden rise of immigration after the Nazi seizure of power had as its direct result the three and a half years of Arab revolt, during which the Jew had to train himself for self-defence, and to accustom himself to the life of a pioneer in an armed stockade. The high barbed wire and the watchtowers, manned by the settlement police day and night, strike the eye of the visitor as he approaches every collective colony. They are an outward symbol of the new attitude to life and politics which developed among the Palestinian Jews between 1936 and 1938. As a Jewish settler said to a member of the Committee: “We are the vanguard of a great army, de-

\(^1\)The White Paper of 1939 rescinded British support of the Balfour Declaration. Instead Britain promised to create a Palestinian Arab state and reduce the immigration of Jews. [Ed.]
fending the advanced positions until the reinforcements arrive from Europe."

8. The Jews in Palestine are convinced that Arab violence paid [off]. Throughout the Arab rising, the Jews in the National Home, despite every provocation, obeyed the orders of their leaders and exercised a remarkable self-discipline. They shot, but only in self-defence; they rarely took reprisals on the Arab population. They state bitterly that the reward for this restraint was the Conference and the White Paper of 1939. The Mandatory Power, they argue, yielded to force, cut down immigration, and thus caused the death of thousands of Jews in Hitler's gas chambers. The Arabs, who had recourse to violence, received substantial concessions, while the Jews, who had put their faith in the Mandatory, were compelled to accept what they regard as a violation of the spirit and the letter of the Mandate.

The Arab Attitude

1. The Committee heard a brief presentation of the Arab case in Washington, statements made in London by delegates from the Arab States to the United Nations, a fuller statement from the Secretary General and other representatives of the Arab League in Cairo, and evidence given on behalf of the Arab Higher (committee) and the Arab Office in Jerusalem. In addition, subcommittees visited Baghdad, Riyadh, Damascus, Beirut, and Amman, where they were informed of the views of Government and of unofficial spokesmen.

2. Stripped to the bare essentials, the Arab case is based upon the fact that Palestine is a country which the Arabs have occupied for more than a thousand years, and a denial of the Jewish historical claims to Palestine. In issuing the Balfour Declaration, the Arabs maintain, the British Government were giving away something that did not belong to Britain, and they have consistently argued that the Mandate conflicted with the Covenant of the League of Nations from which it derived its authority. The Arabs deny that the part played by the British in freeing them from the Turks gave Great Britain a right to dispose of their country. Indeed, they assert that Turkish was preferable to British rule, if the latter involves their eventual subjection to the Jews. They consider the Mandate a violation of their right of self-determination since it is forcing upon them an immigration which they do not desire and will not tolerate — an invasion of Palestine by the Jews.

3. The Arabs of Palestine point out that all the surrounding Arab States have now been granted independence. They argue that they are just as
5. On the other side stands the Revisionist Party, numbering some one percent of the Jewish community, and beyond it the various more extreme groups, which call for active resistance to the White Paper\(^1\) and participate in and openly support the present terrorist campaign. This wing of Palestinian Jewry derives its inspiration and its methods from the revolutionary traditions of Poland and eastern Europe. Many of these extremists are boys and girls under twenty, of good education, filled with a political fanaticism as self-sacrificing as it is pernicious.

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sider the Mandate a violation of their right of self-determination since it is forcing upon them an immigration which they do not desire and will not tolerate — an invasion of Palestine by the Jews.

3. The Arabs of Palestine point out that all the surrounding Arab States have now been granted independence. They argue that they are just as
advanced as are the citizens of the nearby States, and they demand independence for Palestine now. The promises which have been made to them in the name of Great Britain, and the assurances concerning Palestine given to Arab leaders by Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, have been understood by the Arabs of Palestine as a recognition of the principle that they should enjoy the same rights as those enjoyed by the neighboring countries. Christian Arabs unite with Moslems in all of these contentions. They demand that their independence should be recognized at once, and they would like Palestine, as a self-governing country, to join the Arab League.

4. The Arabs attach the highest importance to the fulfilment of the promises made by the British Government in the White Paper of 1939. King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, when he spoke with three members of the Committee at Riyadh, made frequent reference both to these promises and to the assurances given him by the late President Roosevelt at their meeting in February, 1945. His Majesty made clear the strain which would be placed upon Arab friendship with Great Britain and the United States by any policy which Arabs regarded as a betrayal of these pledges. The same warning was repeated by an Arab witness in Jerusalem, who said that "Zionism for the Arabs has become a test of Western intentions."

5. The suggestion that self-government should be withheld from Palestine until the Jews have acquired a majority seems outrageous to the Arabs. They wish to be masters in their own house. The Arabs were opposed to the idea of a Jewish National Home even before the Biltmore Program and the demand for a Jewish State. Needless to say, however, their opposition has become more intense and more bitter since that program was adopted.

6. The Arabs maintain that they have never been anti-Semitic; indeed, they are Semites themselves. Arab spokesmen profess the greatest sympathy for the persecuted Jews of Europe, but they point out that they have not been responsible for this persecution and that it is not just that they should be compelled to atone for the sins of Western peoples by accepting into their country hundreds of thousands of victims of European anti-Semitism. Some Arabs even declare that they might be willing to do their share in providing for refugees on a quota basis if the United States, the British Commonwealth, and other Western countries would do the same.
ABBA EBAN

The Refugee Problem

The United Nations did not create a binational state as the Anglo-American committee recommended. By 1947 the immigration of Jewish European refugees, many who were survivors of the Nazi holocaust, had increased the Jewish population of Palestine to 600,000, but the Arab population had risen to 1.2 million. A single state would have been two-thirds Arab and one-third Jewish. Zionists wanted a state where Jews were in the majority. With U.S. support, the United Nations passed a resolution in November 1947 that partitioned Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, to be established when the British Mandate ended in 1948. (See Map 12.2.) Immediately Palestinian Arabs went on strike in protest. Zionist forces readily took over towns and cities, forcing Arabs to leave. The conflict came to a head in May 1948, when Israel declared its independence and the armies of surrounding Arab states went to war to prevent it. By the time of the armistice in 1949, Israel had increased its territory by 20 percent. Arabs numbering 750,000 had left their homes and become refugees. The conditions of their departure became a matter of contention in future years.

In 1958, Abba Eban, who later became Israeli foreign minister, gave the following explanation in his address to the United Nations. What, according to Eban, were the reasons why so many Palestinian Arabs left their homes in 1948? Who was responsible?

Thinking Historically

Diplomatic speeches before the United Nations rarely contain big surprises, and this is no exception. There may be, however, elements of Abba Eban's address that raise questions. Does he give you a clear idea of how these refugees were created? Could he be clearer about the process? What questions would you want to ask if you were in the audience?

Map 12.2 1948 War and Israeli Expansion beyond the Partition Lines to 1949.
How Was the Refugee Problem Caused?

Aggression by Arab States Created Refugee Problem

The Arab refugee problem was caused by a war of aggression, launched by the Arab States against Israel in 1947 and 1948. Let there be no mistake. If there had been no war against Israel, with its consequent harvest of bloodshed, misery, panic, and flight, there would be no problem of Arab refugees today. Once you determine the responsibility for that war, you have determined the responsibility for the refugee problem. Nothing in the history of our generation is clearer or less controversial than the initiative of Arab governments for the conflict out of which the refugee tragedy emerged. The historic origins of that conflict are clearly defined by the confessions of Arab governments themselves: “This will be a war of extermination,” declared the Secretary General of the Arab League speaking for the governments of six Arab States; “It will be a momentous massacre to be spoken of like the Mongolian massacre and the Crusades.”

Palestine Arabs Urged to Flee by Arab Leaders

The assault began on the last day of November 1947. From then until the expiration of the British Mandate in May 1948 the Arab States, in concert with Palestinian Arab leaders, plunged the land into turmoil and chaos. On the day of Israel’s Declaration of Independence, on May 14, 1948, the armed forces of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, supported by contingents from Saudi Arabia and the Yemen, crossed their frontiers and marched against Israel. The perils which then confronted our community; the danger which darkened every life and home; the successful repulse of the assault and the emergence of Israel into the life of the world community are all chapters of past history, gone but not forgotten. But the traces of that conflict still remain deeply inscribed upon our region’s life. Caught up in the havoc and tension of war; demoralized by the flight of their leaders; urged on by irresponsible promises that they would return to inherit the spoils of Israel’s destruction — hundreds of thousands of Arabs sought the shelter of Arab lands. A survey by an international body in 1957 described these violent events in the following terms:

As early as the first months of 1948 the Arab League issued orders exhorting the people to seek a temporary refuge in neighboring countries, later to return to their abodes in the wake of the victorious Arab armies and obtain their share of abandoned Jewish property (Research Group for European Migration Problems Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 1, 1957, p. 10).
Contemporary statements by Arab leaders fully confirm this version. On 16 August 1948 Msgr. George Hakim, the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Galilee, recalled:

The refugees had been confident that their absence from Palestine would not last long; that they would return within a few days—within a week or two; their leaders had promised them that the Arab armies would crush the “Zionist gangs” very quickly and that there would be no need for panic or fear of a long exile.

A month later on September 15, 1948, Mr. Emile Ghoury who had been the Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee at the time of the Arab invasion of Israel declared:

I do not want to impugn anyone but only to help the refugees. The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the action of the Arab States in opposing partition and the Jewish State. The Arab States agreed upon this policy unanimously and they must share in the solution of the problem.

Misery Is Result of Unlawful Resort to Force by Arabs

No less compelling than these avowals by Arab leaders are the judgments of United Nations organs. In April 1948, when the flight of the refugees was in full swing, the United Nations Palestine Commission inscribed its verdict on the tablets of history:

Arab opposition to the plan of the Assembly of 29 November 1947 has taken the form of organized efforts by strong Arab elements, both inside and outside Palestine, to prevent its implementation and to thwart its objectives by threats and acts of violence, including repeated armed incursions into Palestine territory. The Commission has had to report to the Security Council that powerful Arab interests, both inside and outside Palestine, are defying the resolution of the General Assembly and are engaged in a deliberate effort to alter by force the settlement envisaged therein.

This is a description of the events between November 1947 and May 1948 when the Arab exodus began. Months later, when the tide of battle rolled away, its consequences of bereavement, devastation and panic were left behind. At the General Assembly meetings in 1948 the United Nations Acting Mediator recorded a grave international judgment:

The Arab States had forcibly opposed the existence of the Jewish State in Palestine in direct opposition to the wishes of two-thirds of the members of the Assembly. Nevertheless their armed intervention proved useless. The [Mediator's] report was based solely on the fact
that the Arab States had no right to resort to force and that the United Nations should exert its authority to prevent such a use of force.

The significance of the Arab assault upon Israel by five neighboring States had been reflected in a letter addressed by the Secretary General of the United Nations to representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council on 16 May 1948:—

"The Egyptian Government," wrote the Secretary-General, "has declared in a cablegram to the President of the Security Council on 15 May that Egyptian armed forces have entered Palestine and it has engaged in 'armed intervention' in that country. On 16 May I received a cablegram from the Arab League making similar statements on behalf of the Arab States. I consider it my duty to emphasize to you that this is the first time since the adoption of the Charter that Member States have openly declared that they have engaged in armed intervention outside their own territory."

Arab Governments Must Accept Responsibility

These are only a few of the documents which set out the responsibility of the Arab Governments for the warfare of which the refugees are the main surviving victims. Even after a full decade it is difficult to sit here with equanimity and listen to Arab representatives disengaging themselves from any responsibility for the travail and anguish which they caused. I recall this history not for the purpose of recrimination, but because of its direct bearing on the Committee's discussion. Should not the representatives of Arab States, as the authors of this tragedy, come here in a mood of humility and repentance rather than in shrill and negative indignation? Since these governments have, by acts of policy, created this tragic problem, does it not follow that the world community has an unimpeachable right to claim their full assistance in its solution? How can governments create a vast humanitarian problem by their action — then wash their hands of all responsibility for its alleviation? The claim of the world community on the cooperation of Arab governments is all the more compelling when we reflect that these States, in their vast lands, command all the resources and conditions which would enable them to liberate the refugees from their plight, in full dignity and freedom.

With this history in mind the Committee should not find it difficult to reject the assertion that the guilt for the refugee problem lies with the United Nations itself. The refugee problem was not created by the General Assembly’s recommendation for the establishment of Israel. It was created by the attempts of Arab governments to destroy that recommendation by force. The crisis arose not as Arab spokesmen have said because the United Nations adopted a resolution eleven years ago; it
arose because Arab governments attacked that resolution by force. If the United Nations proposal had been peacefully accepted, there would be no refugee problem today hanging as a cloud upon the tense horizons of the Middle East.

The next question is — why has the problem endured?

Why Does the Refugee Problem Endure?

Refugee Problem Cannot Be Solved by Repatriation

In his statement to the Committee on November 10, 1958, the representative of the United States said:

In our view it is not good enough consciously to perpetuate for over a decade the dependent status of nearly a million refugees.

Other speakers in this debate have echoed a similar sense of frustration.

Apart from the question of its origin, the perpetuation of this refugee problem is an unnatural event, running against the whole course of experience and precedent. Since the end of the Second World War, problems affecting forty million refugees have confronted Governments in various parts of the world. In no case, except that of the Arab refugees, amounting to less than two percent of the whole, has the international community shown constant responsibility and provided lavish aid. In every other case a solution has been found by the integration of refugees into their host countries. Nine million Koreans; 900,000 refugees from the conflict in Viet Nam; 8½ million Hindus and Sikhs leaving Pakistan for India; 6½ million Moslems fleeing India to Pakistan; 700,000 Chinese refugees in Hong Kong; 13 million Germans from the Sudetenland, Poland, and other East European States reaching West and East Germany; thousands of Turkish refugees from Bulgaria; 440,000 Finns separated from their homeland by a change of frontier; 450,000 refugees from Arab lands arrived destitute in Israel; and an equal number converging on Israel from the remnants of the Jewish holocaust in Europe — these form the tragic procession of the world’s refugee population in the past two decades. In every case but that of the Arab refugees now in Arab lands the countries in which the refugees sought shelter have facilitated their integration. In this case alone has integration been obstructed.

The paradox is the more astonishing when we reflect that the kinship of language, religion, social background and national sentiment existing between the Arab refugees and their Arab host countries has been at least as intimate as those existing between any other host countries and any other refugee groups. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the integration of Arab refugees into the life of the
Arab world is an objectively feasible process which has been resisted for political reasons.

In a learned study on refugee problems published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in November 1957 under the title “Century of the Homeless Man” Dr. Elfan Rees, Advisor on Refugees to the World Council of Churches, sums up the international experience in the following terms:

No large scale refugee problem has ever been solved by repatriation, and there are certainly no grounds for believing that this particular problem can be so solved. Nothing can bring it about except wars which in our time would leave nothing to go back to. War has never solved a refugee problem and it is not in the books that a modern war would.

ARI SHAVIT

An Interview with Benny Morris

Benny Morris is the leader of the academic Israeli “New History,” which has challenged many of the founding myths of Israel and the Zionist movement. His book The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem (1987) showed that Palestinian Arabs did not leave voluntarily in 1948, but were terrorized and forced from their villages by militarized Zionists. His upending of some of the sacred Israeli founding myths gave Morris the reputation of a radical anti-Zionist, but in this interview in the Israeli newspaper Ha’aretz in January 2004, Morris revealed he was not.

How did Morris’s research challenge older Israeli views like that of Abba Eban in the previous selection? How were Morris’s conclusions from that research different from what you might expect?
Thinking Historically

In this selection, the interviewer, Ari Shavit, cues the surprises for us. They are on both the factual level of Benny Morris’s research and the personal level of Morris’s response to his research. What do you find surprising or unexpected in this interview? How do those unexpected discoveries deepen your understanding of the conflict?

Benny Morris, in the month ahead the new version of your book on the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem is due to be published. Who will be less pleased with the book — the Israelis or the Palestinians?

“The revised book is a double-edged sword. It is based on many documents that were not available to me when I wrote the original book, most of them from the Israel Defense Forces Archives. What the new material shows is that there were far more Israeli acts of massacre than I had previously thought. To my surprise, there were also many cases of rape. In the months of April-May 1948, units of the Haganah [the pre-state defense force that was the precursor of the IDF] were given operational orders that stated explicitly that they were to uproot the villagers, expel them, and destroy the villages themselves.

“At the same time, it turns out that there was a series of orders issued by the Arab Higher Committee and by the Palestinian intermediate levels to remove children, women, and the elderly from the villages. So that on the one hand, the book reinforces the accusation against the Zionist side, but on the other hand it also proves that many of those who left the villages did so with the encouragement of the Palestinian leadership itself.”

According to your new findings, how many cases of Israeli rape were there in 1948?

“About a dozen. In Acre four soldiers raped a girl and murdered her and her father. In Jaffa, soldiers of the Kiryatı Brigade raped one girl and tried to rape several more. At Hunin, which is in the Galilee, two girls were raped and then murdered. There were one or two cases of rape at Tantura, south of Haifa. There was one case of rape at Qula, in the center of the country. At the village of Abu Shusha, near Kibbutz Gezer [in the Ramle area] there were four female prisoners, one of whom was raped a number of times. And there were other cases. Usually more than one soldier was involved. Usually there were one or two Palestinian girls. In a large proportion of the cases the event ended with murder. Because neither the victims nor the rapists liked to report these events, we have to assume that the dozen cases of rape that were
reported, which I found, are not the whole story. They are just the tip of the iceberg."

According to your findings, how many acts of Israeli massacre were perpetuated in 1948?

"Twenty-four. In some cases four or five people were executed, in others the numbers were 70, 80, 100. There was also a great deal of arbitrary killing. Two old men are spotted walking in a field—they are shot. A woman is found in an abandoned village—she is shot. There are cases such as the village of Dawayima [in the Hebron region], in which a column entered the village with all guns blazing and killed anything that moved.

"The worst cases were Saliha (70–80 killed), Deir Yassin (100–110), Lod (250), Dawayima (hundreds), and perhaps Abu Shusha (70). There is no unequivocal proof of a large-scale massacre at Tantura, but war crimes were perpetrated there. At Jaffa there was a massacre about which nothing had been known until now. The same at Arab al Muwasi, in the north. About half of the acts of massacre were part of Operation Hiram [in the north, in October 1948]: at Safsaf, Saliha, Jish, Elaboun, Arab al Muwasi, Deir al Asad, Majdal Krum, Sasa. In Operation Hiram there was a unusually high concentration of executions of people against a wall or next to a well in an orderly fashion.

"That can't be chance. It's a pattern. Apparently, various officers who took part in the operation understood that the expulsion order they received permitted them to do these deeds in order to encourage the population to take to the roads. The fact is that no one was punished for these acts of murder. Ben-Gurion silenced the matter. He covered up for the officers who did the massacres."

What you are telling me here, as though by the way, is that in Operation Hiram there was a comprehensive and explicit expulsion order. Is that right?

"Yes. One of the revelations in the book is that on October 31, 1948, the commander of the Northern Front, Moshe Carmel, issued an order in writing to his units to expedite the removal of the Arab population. Carmel took this action immediately after a visit by Ben-Gurion to the Northern Command in Nazareth. There is no doubt in my mind that this order originated with Ben-Gurion. Just as the expulsion order for the city of Lod, which was signed by Yitzhak Rabin, was issued immediately after Ben-Gurion visited the headquarters of Operation Dani [July 1948]."
Are you saying that Ben-Gurion was personally responsible for a deliberate and systematic policy of mass expulsion?

"From April 1948, Ben-Gurion is projecting a message of transfer. There is no explicit order of his in writing, there is no orderly comprehensive policy, but there is an atmosphere of [population] transfer. The transfer idea is in the air. The entire leadership understands that this is the idea. The officer corps understands what is required of them. Under Ben-Gurion, a consensus of transfer is created."

Ben-Gurion was a "transferist"?

"Of course. Ben-Gurion was a transferist. He understood that there could be no Jewish state with a large and hostile Arab minority in its midst. There would be no such state. It would not be able to exist."

I don't hear you condemning him.

"Ben-Gurion was right. If he had not done what he did, a state would not have come into being. That has to be clear. It is impossible to evade it. Without the uprooting of the Palestinians, a Jewish state would not have arisen here."

When Ethnic Cleansing Is Justified

Benny Morris, for decades you have been researching the dark side of Zionism. You are an expert on the atrocities of 1948. In the end, do you in effect justify all this? Are you an advocate of the transfer of 1948?

"There is no justification for acts of rape. There is no justification for acts of massacre. Those are war crimes. But in certain conditions, expulsion is not a war crime. I don’t think that the expulsions of 1948 were war crimes. You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs. You have to dirty your hands."

We are talking about the killing of thousands of people, the destruction of an entire society.

"A society that aims to kill you forces you to destroy it. When the choice is between destroying or being destroyed, it’s better to destroy."

There is something chilling about the quiet way in which you say that.
"If you expected me to burst into tears, I'm sorry to disappoint you. I will not do that."

So when the commanders of Operation Dani are standing there and observing the long and terrible column of the 50,000 people expelled from Lod walking eastward, you stand there with them? You justify them?

"I definitely understand them. I understand their motives. I don't think they felt any pangs of conscience, and in their place I wouldn't have felt pangs of conscience. Without that act, they would not have won the war and the state would not have come into being."

You do not condemn them morally?

"No."

They perpetrated ethnic cleansing.

"There are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing. I know that this term is completely negative in the discourse of the twenty-first century, but when the choice is between ethnic cleansing and genocide — the annihilation of your people — I prefer ethnic cleansing."

And that was the situation in 1948?

"That was the situation. That is what Zionism faced. A Jewish state would not have come into being without the uprooting of 700,000 Palestinians. Therefore it was necessary to uproot them. There was no choice but to expel that population. It was necessary to cleanse the hinterland and cleanse the border areas and cleanse the main roads. It was necessary to cleanse the villages from which our convoys and our settlements were fired on."

The term "to cleanse" is terrible.

"I know it doesn't sound nice but that's the term they used at the time. I adopted it from all the 1948 documents in which I am immersed."

What you are saying is hard to listen to and hard to digest. You sound hard-hearted.

"I feel sympathy for the Palestinian people, which truly underwent a hard tragedy. I feel sympathy for the refugees themselves. But if the desire to establish a Jewish state here is legitimate, there was no other
choice. It was impossible to leave a large fifth column in the country. From the moment the Yishuv [pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine] was attacked by the Palestinians and afterward by the Arab states, there was no choice but to expel the Palestinian population. To uproot it in the course of war.

"Remember another thing: the Arab people gained a large slice of the planet. Not thanks to its skills or its great virtues, but because it conquered and murdered and forced those it conquered to convert during many generations. But in the end the Arabs have 22 states. The Jewish people did not have even one state. There was no reason in the world why it should not have one state. Therefore, from my point of view, the need to establish this state in this place overcame the injustice that was done to the Palestinians by uprooting them."

And morally speaking, you have no problem with that deed?

"That is correct. Even the great American democracy could not have been created without the annihilation of the Indians. There are cases in which the overall, final good justifies harsh and cruel acts that are committed in the course of history."

And in our case it effectively justifies a population transfer.

"That's what emerges."

And you take that in stride? War crimes? Massacres? The burning fields and the devastated villages of the Nakba? [catastrophe]

"You have to put things in proportion. These are small war crimes. All told, if we take all the massacres and all the executions of 1948, we come to about 800 who were killed. In comparison to the massacres that were perpetrated in Bosnia, that's peanuts. In comparison to the massacres the Russians perpetrated against the Germans at Stalingrad, that's chicken feed. When you take into account that there was a bloody civil war here and that we lost an entire 1 percent of the population, you find that we behaved very well."

The Next Transfer

You went through an interesting process. You went to research Ben-Gurion and the Zionist establishment critically, but in the end you actually identify with them. You are as tough in your words as they were in their deeds.
"You may be right. Because I investigated the conflict in depth, I was forced to cope with the in-depth questions that those people coped with. I understood the problematic character of the situation they faced and maybe I adopted part of their universe of concepts. But I do not identify with Ben-Gurion. I think he made a serious historical mistake in 1948. Even though he understood the demographic issue and the need to establish a Jewish state without a large Arab minority, he got cold feet during the war. In the end, he faltered."

I'm not sure I understand. Are you saying that Ben-Gurion erred in expelling too few Arabs?

"If he was already engaged in expulsion, maybe he should have done a complete job. I know that this stuns the Arabs and the liberals and the politically correct types. But my feeling is that this place would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had been resolved once and for all. If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion and cleansed the whole country—the whole Land of Israel, as far as the Jordan River. It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake. If he had carried out a full expulsion—rather than a partial one—he would have stabilized the State of Israel for generations."

I find it hard to believe what I am hearing.

"If the end of the story turns out to be a gloomy one for the Jews, it will be because Ben-Gurion did not complete the transfer in 1948. Because he left a large and volatile demographic reserve in the West Bank and Gaza and within Israel itself."

In his place, would you have expelled them all? All the Arabs in the country?

"But I am not a statesman. I do not put myself in his place. But as an historian, I assert that a mistake was made here. Yes. The non-completion of the transfer was a mistake."

And today? Do you advocate a transfer today?

"If you are asking me whether I support the transfer and expulsion of the Arabs from the West Bank, Gaza, and perhaps even from Galilee and the Triangle, I say not at this moment. I am not willing to be a partner to that act. In the present circumstances it is neither moral nor realistic. The world would not allow it, the Arab world would not allow it; it would destroy the Jewish society from within. But I am ready to tell you that in other circumstances, apocalyptic ones, which are liable to be realized in five or ten years, I can see expulsions. If we
find ourselves with atomic weapons around us, or if there is a general Arab attack on us and a situation of warfare on the front with Arabs in the rear shooting at convoys on their way to the front, acts of expulsion will be entirely reasonable. They may even be essential.

Including the expulsion of Israeli Arabs?

“The Israeli Arabs are a time bomb. Their slide into complete Palestinianization has made them an emissary of the enemy that is among us. They are a potential fifth column. In both demographic and security terms they are liable to undermine the state. So that if Israel again finds itself in a situation of existential threat, as in 1948, it may be forced to act as it did then. If we are attacked by Egypt (after an Islamist revolution in Cairo) and by Syria, and chemical and biological missiles slam into our cities, and at the same time Israeli Palestinians attack us from behind, I can see an expulsion situation. It could happen. If the threat to Israel is existential, expulsion will be justified.”

Cultural Dementia

Besides being tough, you are also very gloomy. You weren’t always like that, were you?

“My turning point began after 2000. I wasn’t a great optimist even before that. True, I always voted Labor or Meretz or Sheri [a dovish party of the late 1970s], and in 1988 I refused to serve in the territories and was jailed for it, but I always doubted the intentions of the Palestinians. The events of Camp David and what followed in their wake turned the doubt into certainty. When the Palestinians rejected the proposal of [prime minister Ehud] Barak in July 2000 and the Clinton proposal in December 2000, I understood that they are unwilling to accept the two-state solution. They want it all . . .

The situation as you describe it is extremely harsh. You are not entirely convinced that we can survive here, are you?

“The possibility of annihilation exists.”

Would you describe yourself as an apocalyptic person?

“The whole Zionist project is apocalyptic. It exists within hostile surroundings and in a certain sense its existence is unreasonable. It wasn’t reasonable for it to succeed in 1881 and it wasn’t reasonable for it to succeed in 1948 and it’s not reasonable that it will succeed now. Nevertheless, it has come this far. In a certain way it is miraculous. I live the
events of 1948, and 1948 projects itself on what could happen here. Yes, I think of Armageddon. It's possible. Within the next 20 years there could be an atomic war here."

*If Zionism is so dangerous for the Jews and if Zionism makes the Arabs so wretched, maybe it's a mistake?*

"No, Zionism was not a mistake. The desire to establish a Jewish state here was a legitimate one, a positive one. But given the character of Islam and given the character of the Arab nation, it was a mistake to think that it would be possible to establish a tranquil state here that lives in harmony with its surroundings."

*Which leaves us, nevertheless, with two possibilities: either a cruel, tragic Zionism, or the forgoing of Zionism.*

"Yes. That's so. You have pared it down, but that's correct."

*Would you agree that this historical reality is intolerable, that there is something inhuman about it?*

"Yes. But that's so for the Jewish people, not the Palestinians. A people that suffered for 2,000 years, that went through the Holocaust, arrives at its patrimony but is thrust into a renewed round of bloodshed, that is perhaps the road to annihilation. In terms of cosmic justice, that's terrible. It's far more shocking than what happened in 1948 to a small part of the Arab nation that was then in Palestine."

*So what you are telling me is that you live the Palestinian Nakba of the past less than you live the possible Jewish Nakba of the future?*

"Yes. Destruction could be the end of this process. It could be the end of the Zionist experiment. And that's what really depresses and scares me."

*The title of the book you are now publishing in Hebrew is "Victims." In the end, then, your argument is that of the two victims of this conflict, we are the bigger one.*

"Yes. Exactly. We are the greater victims in the course of history and we are also the greater potential victim. Even though we are oppressing the Palestinians, we are the weaker side here. We are a small minority in a large sea of hostile Arabs who want to eliminate us. So it's possible that when their desire is realized, everyone will understand what I am saying to you now. Everyone will understand we are the true victims. But by then it will be too late."
JOHN MEARSHEIMER AND STEPHEN WALT

The Israel Lobby

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt are American political scientists, not historians, but in this excerpt from a paper they present a history of U.S. policy toward Israel since 1967 that is different from the more traditional interpretations. What is their argument? How might you dispute it? What do you find convincing?

Thinking Historically

This paper was extremely controversial when it was published in March 2006. Even today you are likely to find the claims the authors make well outside the mainstream of public opinion about Israel and the United States. Which of these claims do you find most surprising? On reflection, are there any which you are prone to dismiss? Which lead you to new ways of thinking about the subject?

For the past several decades, and especially since the Six-Day War in 1967, the centrepiece of U.S. Middle Eastern policy has been its relationship with Israel. The combination of unwavering support for Israel and the related effort to spread “democracy” throughout the region has inflamed Arab and Islamic opinion and jeopardised not only U.S. security but that of much of the rest of the world. This situation has no equal in American political history. Why has the U.S. been willing to set aside its own security and that of many of its allies in order to advance the interests of another state? One might assume that the bond between the two countries was based on shared strategic interests or compelling moral imperatives, but neither explanation can account for the remarkable level of material and diplomatic support that the U.S. provides.

Instead, the thrust of U.S. policy in the region derives almost entirely from domestic politics, and especially the activities of the “Israel Lobby.” Other special-interest groups have managed to skew foreign policy, but no lobby has managed to divert it as far from what the na-