

Making “Peter Bergson:” Historical Memory and a Forgotten Holocaust Hero

By

Emily J. Horne

B.A. May 2000, The George Washington University

A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
of The George Washington University in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

January 31, 2009

Thesis directed by
Dina R. Khoury

Associate Professor of History and International Affairs

For my parents, Pamela and Stephen, and for my sister, Jennifer...
who remind me every day to seek out “story potential.”

Acknowledgements

I am endlessly indebted to my brilliant committee members. Dina Khoury first introduced me to memory studies at the beginning of my graduate career and I would not have finished this process without her guidance, enthusiasm and advice. Many thanks to Walter Reich for all his anecdotes and legends that never appeared in the history books, and for calming me down when the work seemed overwhelming. Every young woman graduate student should be lucky enough to have a role model like Hope Harrison, who first introduced me to the twin joys of contemporary Holocaust memory and *spargel* season in Berlin. I have been deeply privileged to have these three scholars as readers and advisers for this thesis. Also from the GWU History Department I would like to thank Leo Ribuffo, who taught the first history class of my undergraduate career and inspired me to stay for another eight years. Director Geri Rypkema of the Office of Graduate Assistantships and Fellowships has been a wonderful supervisor and friend through much of my graduate career. Many thanks to the historians of the Office of the Historian at the Department of State, in particular Doug Kraft, Joe Wicentowski and Stephanie Hurter. Their support during the final writing stages was invaluable and I am thrilled to be joining their ranks at State. Finally, thank you to the many lovely friends who have allowed me to abuse their patience by talking about this thesis at bars, restaurants, parties, museums, vacations and myriad other locales inappropriate for discussing academia.

Abstract of Thesis

Making “Peter Bergson:” Historical Memory and a Forgotten Holocaust Hero

The work of Revisionist Zionist Hillel Kook, alias Peter Bergson, and his followers, known as the Bergsonites, was instrumental in alerting American public awareness to the horrors of the Holocaust. By the end of 1943 the Bergsonites generated enough congressional support for a resolution to create a government agency to rescue European Jews. Not wanting to appear forced into saving the persecuted, President Franklin Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board (WRB) in January 1944 to pre-empt the congressional resolution. The WRB was subsequently credited with saving as many as 200,000 European Jews. It is therefore possible to trace the creation of the WRB to the Bergsonites and to give them credit for rescuing these Jews.

Given this remarkable feat, how is it that the legacy of the Bergsonites has until recently remained largely unknown? It is the contention of this thesis that there are four related closely factors that have influenced historical memory and scholarship on Peter Bergson and his followers. The first and most important factor is the work of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, which since its creation in 2003 has sought to insert memory of Peter Bergson into a broader narrative of Holocaust history. The second factor is the contentious relations between the Bergsonites and the American Jewish establishment, mirroring a lasting split between Zionists and Revisionist Zionists that carried on independently of and well beyond the Holocaust. The third factor is that

in refocusing their efforts in Israel the Bergsonites neglected to preserve their work for posterity, while their opponents were able to create both a competing narrative and a paper trail to support it. Finally, the fourth factor is a generational shift amongst historians and in American Judaism from victim/outsider to activist/insider status that parallels a rise in scholarship of Peter Bergson.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
<u>The Work</u>	
Peter Bergson and Revisionist Zionism.....	7
The American Jewish Establishment.....	15
From Jewish Army to Jewish Rescue.....	19
<u>The Memory</u>	
The Wyman Institute.....	24
Revisionists Versus Zionists and the Creation of the State of Israel.....	40
Trails of Evidence.....	42
American Jewish Identity and Holocaust Memory.....	45
Conclusion.....	60
Bibliography.....	62

Introduction

To the casual observer, the summer 2008 addition to the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. is not especially noteworthy. In a corner of the second floor gallery “American Rescue Efforts” there is now a large black placard with five paragraphs of text, surrounded by a copy of a newspaper advertisement, an identification card, and several snapshots of Jewish refugees that at first glance are indistinguishable from the miserable, resigned faces displayed throughout the building. The second paragraph of the placard’s text reads:

Throughout 1943, as additional information about Nazi killing operations appeared, U.S. congressmen and Jewish organizations began openly criticizing the State Department for its inaction. Some groups, like the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe—organized by Revisionist Zionist Peter Bergson—campaigns for the creation of a U.S. government rescue agency.¹

The text seems innocuous, another footnote in Holocaust history. Typical museum-goers would not realize that getting the name “Peter Bergson” into a site of collective Holocaust memory like the USHMM was a Herculean effort, the product of a decades-long ideological battle over who gets to control the historical narrative of Holocaust history. They would not know that this individual was deliberately excluded from that narrative for a long time, and that recognition of his work came about largely through the concerted efforts of a Washington nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the way Holocaust history is remembered. They would not understand changes

¹ “Revisionist Zionist” refers to the right-wing, militaristic side of the interwar ideological split within Zionism in Mandatory Palestine. The differences between Revisionist Zionism and Zionism will be explored at length later in this thesis.

in American Jewish identity that helped create a receptive audience for that group's work, or that there had been a massive historiographical shift that coincided with and enabled memory of it to come to light.

The unassuming displays hides the fact that Hillel Kook, alias Peter Bergson, and his followers, known as Bergsonites, are the kinds of subjects historians dream about. Their story includes a charismatic leader, ferocious and bitter debate between individuals and interest groups, conspiracies at high levels of government, millions of lives at stake and a tangible impact on government policy. Perhaps most crucially, from the historian's perspective, the Bergsonites were successful: through a massive media campaign, public demonstrations and intensive lobbying, by the end of 1943 Peter Bergson and his colleagues generated enough congressional support for a resolution to create an American government agency to rescue Jews in Hitler's Europe. Not wanting to appear forced by Congress into saving the persecuted and helpless, President Franklin Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board (WRB) in January 1944 to pre-empt the congressional resolution. The WRB was subsequently credited with saving as many as 200,000 European Jews. It is therefore possible to trace the creation of the WRB to Peter Bergson and his followers and to give them credit for rescuing these Jews.

Given this remarkable feat, how is it that the legacy of the Bergsonites has until recently remained largely unknown outside of a few small groups of their descendants and historians? In trying to answer this question, there are both simple explanations and complicated, politically sensitive justifications. The narrative of Bergson and his followers is frequently associated with the troublesome questions of why America did not

do more to rescue the Jews of Europe and why the American Jewish community did not strongly pressure the Roosevelt administration for such a rescue.

It is the contention of this thesis that there are four related closely factors that have influenced historical memory and scholarship on Peter Bergson and his followers. The first and most important factor is the work of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies. The Wyman Institute, a nonprofit research and education center located in Washington, D.C. uses a wide variety of outreach methods to inform, cajole and occasionally embarrass those public figures and institutions associated with Holocaust memory that have, for whatever reason, neglected to include Bergson's work in their interpretations of history.

Trends within historical scholarship tend to be shaped according to broad changes in the field, be they generational shifts among leading scholars, the availability of new archival materials, or changes in methodological techniques that develop over long periods of time. Though it is not unheard of for an institution to actively try to alter a particular historical narrative, it is unusual for such a group to succeed so thoroughly and so quickly. The Wyman Institute claims to focus on a broad spectrum of issues concerning American responses to the Holocaust, yet spends the vast majority of its resources and energy working to re-insert Peter Bergson into the narrative of Holocaust history. Since its establishment in 2003, it has been remarkably successful at this mission. It is safe to say that the Wyman Institute has been the most important factor in reviving historical interest in the work of Peter Bergson and his followers.

For the Wyman Institute's message to be received, however, it needed to have a receptive audience within academic and Jewish communities. That audience was

fashioned over several decades' worth of changing tides in both academia and in American Jewish identity politics.

The second factor to influence historical memory of Peter Bergson is the contentious relations between the Bergsonites and the American Jewish establishment that mirrored a lasting split between Zionists and Revisionist Zionists that carried on independently of and well beyond the Holocaust years. Bergson, long-affiliated with the Revisionist Zionist movement, found his historical legacy caught up in a broader ideological battle over how and when a Jewish state in Palestine should be established. The historical memory of Bergson's work was muted by his perpetual presence as an outsider and a perceived gadfly, first as a young Revisionist Zionist in Palestine affiliated with a right-wing outsider community whose leader had been exiled, as a "foreign rabble-rouser" in the United States whose brash activism and refusal to kowtow before an established Protestant elite would forever anger self-appointed leaders within American Judaism, and finally as a defeated political foe in David Ben-Gurion's Israel.

This leads to the third factor to influence memory of the Bergsonites: that in refocusing their efforts in Israel the Bergsonites neglected to preserve their work for posterity while their opponents were able to create both a compelling story and a paper trail to support it. A loosely affiliated group of individuals bound more by common ideology and passion than bureaucracy and infrastructure, the Bergsonites scattered following the establishment of the War Refugee Board, most of them neglecting to preserve tangible records or memoirs of their wartime activism. However, many of the prominent American Jews who opposed their work donated their own papers to archives,

wrote memoirs or were the subject of friendly biographies, and generally had far greater success in accounting for their wartime activities and the motivations behind them.

Finally, the fourth major factor is a generational shift amongst historians and in Judaism across the world that changed the narrative of the Holocaust from Jews as victims to Jews finding strength in their ethnic, religious, and cultural identity. As Jews grew increasingly comfortable with their history and cultural identity, they were able to use that comfort to play a more assertive role in policy lobbying and public life. The rise in scholarship of the Bergsonites parallels a broader shift in American Judaism from victim/outsider to activist/insider status.

Because of the factors described above, the historical memory of the Bergsonites has been suppressed, forgotten and reintroduced in ways that reflect schisms within the historical academy, American Jewish leadership and Judaism the world over. As scholarship on Bergson and his colleagues has exploded in the last twenty-five years, thanks in large part to a major revision within Holocaust history undertaken by the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, Peter Bergson has gradually been reestablished as a hero of the Holocaust in both the academic and popular historical memories.

The focus of this thesis is the historical memory of Peter Bergson's work, not the work itself. The facts of Bergson's biography and wartime activism in America have been established elsewhere, and it is not my intention to supplement or contradict facts contained within these narratives, but instead to explore how such narratives came to be and how they have been shaped by various historical actors and trends. However, the contributions of Bergson and his followers are sufficiently unknown that before

discussing how they are remembered, we must first establish why they deserve remembrance. To understand the historical memory of Peter Bergson, it is essential to establish both the facts of Bergson's biography and further explore why efforts of the Emergency Committee were successful even as fellow Jews attempted to suppress its influence.

To a certain extent, the work of the Wyman Institute can be understood on its own terms. An independent academic and nonprofit identity working long after the history it studies and publicizes, the Wyman Institute is an actor in the historical memory of Bergson but not in Bergson's life and work. Our three other cited factors, however—the Revisionist Zionist/Zionist split, the lack of evidentiary support for the Bergsonites' role in creating the WRB and the generational shift in American Judaism from victim/outsider to activist/insider status—are all deeply intertwined with the details of Peter Bergson's life before, during and after his years with the Emergency Committee. Before developing further explanations for why Bergson was discarded from and eventually inserted into the historical narrative of the Holocaust, we must first fully understand why he merits inclusion within it.

The Work: A History of Bergson's Career and His Opponents

Peter Bergson and Revisionist Zionism

Hillel Kook was born in Lithuania on 24 July 1915 and immigrated with his family to Palestine in 1924.² While studying at the Hebrew University he fell in with a group of students who would come to form the leadership of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the militant, nationalist organization that would lead the cry for an international Jewish army.³ Founded in Jerusalem in 1931 by, the Irgun was ideologically linked with Revisionist Zionism.

Though it is not the focus of this thesis to explore the theological differences between Revisionist Zionism and Zionism, an understanding of the pre-war political split within the Zionist movement is essential to understanding future treatment of the Bergsonites. Though the origins of modern Zionism may be found in Victorian British Gentile influence, by the 1880s the idea of a Jewish Palestine had begun to be embraced by Jewish intellectuals. Theodore Herzl, the Hungarian Jewish journalist who would become the father of modern political Zionism, convened the First Zionist Conference in May 1897, introducing with it what one scholar termed “a principle of directive leadership which maintained a consistency of purpose and prevented an ascendancy of

² Bergson's uncle was Abraham Isaac Kook, one of the most renowned rabbis of the 20th century and the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi for the British Mandate for Palestine. For more information on Bergson's family and relationship with his uncle see Louis Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Earth: Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Rescue the Jews of Europe* (Jerusalem & New York: Gefen Pub. House, 1999), 13-23.

³ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 20-21.

divisive tendencies.”⁴ In claiming to speak for all Jews and linking the notion of Jewish identity with a nationalist ethos, it was a leadership style at odds with the chaotic reality of tremendous contention between Jews the world over. Despite such internal friction over Zionism, the external pressure of the post-World War I popularity of nationalism as a political philosophy helped to propel the Zionist faction to the forefront of Jewish leadership. The Zionist faction was given special sanction by the text of the Balfour Declaration, and as it ascended to power bolstered by non-Jewish authority in the Palestinian Mandate, Zionism was also given further authority as a reaction to systemic anti-Semitism under Hitler. It would be fair to say that by 1939, fidelity to the Jewish religion and community were measured in large part by one’s loyalty to the concept of a Jewish state in Palestine.⁵ Nationalism and religious faith had become fused in Zionism, and the debate within Judaism transitioned from one of Zionist versus non-Zionist to Zionist versus Revisionist Zionists—that is to say, not whether Palestine should be the site of a future Jewish homeland, but how and when it should fulfill its destiny as such.

Revisionist Zionism had originated in 1920s Palestine under the leadership of Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky, who had led the Jewish Legion of the British Army during World War I and whom Bergson would admire and emulate first from afar, and then under direct tutelage in the 1930s. Elected to the World Zionist Organization in 1921, Jabotinsky quit after clashing with chairman Chaim Weizmann over Zionist priorities and subsequently formed a breakaway organization called the Alliance of Revisionist-Zionists that called for the establishment of a Jewish state as its first priority. A military

⁴ Alan R. Taylor, “Zionism and Jewish History” *Journal of Palestine Studies* (University of California Press): 40.

⁵ Ibid., 46.

hawk and an Anglophile, Jabotinsky saw himself as the direct descendant of Herzl's "political Zionism," promoting both a vision of Jewish right to self-defense and a Jewish state in Palestine loosely modeled on the British nation-state. Weizmann and the majority of the WZO maintained that it was still too soon to form a Jewish state in Palestine, since at that time Jews were a mere 18 percent of the population (less if Trans-Jordan were taken into account) and such a state would not be strong enough to protect itself from likely retaliation by antagonized Arabs in the region.⁶ This new split would fuel the future tension between Bergson, a marshal of Revisionist Zionism, and the preeminent American Jewish leadership, who represented the Zionist wing of worldwide Judaism.⁷

In the historical memory of the founding of the state of Israel, the Irgun are frequently associated with violence and bloodshed. To go further, the issue of whether the Irgun were terrorists is a loaded, complicated and extremely contentious question whose answers vary wildly depending on who is responding. There is no debate that the Irgun ran arms in Palestine and proudly conceived of themselves as freedom fighters in an ideological, religious, and political revolution. Writing in the *Metzuda*, the underground publication of the Irgun, Revisionist Zionist Dr. Y.H. Yevin expressed the ideological link between the Irgun and revolutionary tactics:

There is nothing holier than safeguarding Jewish homes... Our Hebrew youth must prepare, train, and be willing to give up all... Not only life itself but also all the 'humanitarian' ideologies that ask us to treat our enemies as our brothers...each one of us must know that he is contributing with his devotion,

⁶ Lenni Brenner, "Zionist Revisionism: The Years of Fascism and Terror." *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (Autumn, 1983): 67.

⁷ David S. Wyman and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* (New York: New Press, 2002) 16.

with his steadfastness, with his blood—toward that magnificent edifice, Hebrew independent power in the homeland. Without it, it will not be rebuilt...⁸

Whether this *modus operandi* means that the Irgun engaged in terrorist actions depends in large part on who is asking and answering the question. One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter, and both have a great deal vested in their particular categorization. It is not the aim of this thesis to definitively state which category the Irgun may fall under, but it is crucial to highlight the passionate and ongoing “were the Irgun terrorists?” debate within both popular and historical memory.

In 1930 Jabotinsky was expelled from Palestine by the British Colonial Office and exiled to Europe, eventually establishing himself in Poland. It was in Warsaw where Jabotinsky and a twenty-two-year-old Hillel Kook first met in September 1937, when the Irgun sent Kook to consult with their leader-in-absentia. In the following three years, before Kook's departure for America and Jabotinsky's death from a heart attack, the two developed a close professional bond. Since his exile, Jabotinsky had buried himself in creating a so-called “evacuation plan,” a scheme to relocate 1.5 million Eastern European Jews to Palestine. Speaking before the Peel Commission in 1937, Jabotinsky outlined the potential danger for European Jews.⁹ Without specifically mentioning Hitler or Nazi Germany, Jabotinsky warned that “the frozen stampede” (meaning the Jews of Europe)

⁸ Yitshaq Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory: Memoirs from the Irgun* (New York: Robert Speller & Sons Publishers, 1982), 83.

⁹ Formally known as the Palestine Royal Commission of 1936-1937, the Peel Commission was a British Royal Commission of Inquiry established after the outbreak of the 1936-1939 Arab revolt in Palestine. Its final report, published 7 July 1937, was the first formal recommendation for partition in the British Mandate of Palestine.

was living on a volcano, and that “we have got to save millions, many millions.”¹⁰ Under Jabotinsky’s guidance, Kook became a key figure within the Irgun movement to aid illegal immigrants to Palestine while developing Irgun cells in Poland and establishing fundraising contacts across Europe. Though Kook would later claim it was the news of the 1942 massacre in the Katyn Forest that spurred him to focus his work exclusively on rescue of European Jews, he was certainly exposed to some of the earliest-known rescue operations of Jews in Hitler’s Europe.¹¹

Kook also saw in Jabotinsky a role model for channeling powerful personality into effective political leadership, later recounting “Jabotinsky has a lot of what they call charisma, I mean, he had a lot of personal magnetism and... he had blind followers, you see. Not in the military sense, but people were willing to follow him blindly.”¹² The young, eager Kook absorbed the lesson that charismatic leadership was a critical component of successful organizing. It would prove portentous, as Kook’s powerful personality would win him both ardent followers and equally passionate detractors in later years.

Hillel Kook arrived in New York in June 1940 to serve as head of the Irgun mission in America. It was in New York that he took the alias of Peter Bergson to shield his family, who were well-respected rabbis and community leaders in Lithuania, from any embarrassment associated with his political activities.¹³ Described by colleagues as

¹⁰ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), 599ff.

¹¹ For further discussion of Kook’s years in Poland see Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, Chapter 2.

¹² Wyman and Medoff, *A Race Against Death*, 124

¹³ It was common practice for Irgun members to take aliases. Peter Bergson was far from Kook’s first alias; as early as his undergraduate career at the Hebrew University he had

being “handsome,” “arrogant” and “brilliant,” Bergson possessed the natural leadership and charisma to organize the Revisionist Zionists in America, marshalling their activities despite his devastation at the death of his close friend and political mentor Jabotinsky in August 1940.¹⁴

Kook’s association with the Irgun would dog his work in New York and throughout the rest of his life, coloring the ways in which his contributions to rescue efforts were viewed by supporters and foes alike. The FBI monitored Kook during his stay in New York primarily because of his Irgun involvement, not because his efforts to raise awareness about the plight of the European Jews were especially damning. “It [the Irgun] is a highly secretive group that operates on a terroristic [sic] basis,” stated one recently declassified FBI memorandum. “With regard to the alleged murder and assassinations committed by the terrorist groups, the source pointed out that the members are very skilled operators—in fact comparable to the organized gangsters in the 1920’s and early 1930’s in the United States.”¹⁵ Though the American government considered the Irgun to be a terrorist organization, its members certainly did not see themselves as such. Irgun members carried out campaigns against both British colonial administration in Palestine and so-called “Arab terror attacks” on Jewish settlers there, but defended their actions as those of freedom fighters. Members would later Jabotinsky’s orders to avoid civilian deaths through advance warning to target populations as evidence that the Irgun did not support indiscriminate killing. “Cancel operation if they endanger women

been known as “Eitan” in certain circles. See Chapter 2, Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*.

¹⁴ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 45.

¹⁵ Memo to Assistant Attorney General Herbert Wechles (War Division) from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, “PETER H. BERGSON, alias Hilel Kook,” 12 December 1944, no. 100-310922, declassified 06-03-2008.

and children,” noted a 1939 Jabotinsky directive. “Avoid mass retaliation... Distribute, in Arabic, warnings that it does not behoove Arab men, these days, to send their women to the market.”¹⁶

Inspired by his mentor and friend Jabotinsky, Bergson had come to America to raise funds for an international Jewish army. He had already begun to assume leadership of the ramshackle but passionate Irgun movement in the United States, organizing his followers into a group called American Friends of a Jewish Palestine when Jabotinsky died from a heart attack on 4 August 1940.¹⁷

Unfunded and distrusted by the American Jewish leadership, Bergson nevertheless pressed ahead in his work with the AFJP, downplaying his association with the underground Irgun movement and the Revisionist cause. By December 1941 Bergson decided to set aside his earlier work with assisting unauthorized immigrants to Palestine and funding for the underground, dissolving the AFJP and reforming as the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews. A politically savvy man who was sensitive to public opinion, Bergson saw in Pearl Harbor an opportunity to show America that an international Jewish army would benefit the war effort. In addition to soliciting funds for an international Jewish army, Bergson sought to recruit influential allies and to develop a style of public relations that dramatically departed from the behind-the-scenes machinations of American Zionists. Among their highly public activities, the Bergsonites held several fundraising dinners and balls in New York through 1941-42 and created a series of pamphlets on the aid a Jewish army could give to the struggling war effort.¹⁸ It

¹⁶ Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath*, 231.

¹⁷ Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys"*, 47-49.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 101-104

was during this period that Bergson recruited screenwriter Ben Hecht (*Gone With the Wind*, *The Front Page*) to the cause, an invaluable resource for both content and connections.¹⁹ Together they ventured into new territory for Jewish interest groups, using the non-Jewish press to advertise both their desire to fight and the non-Jewish support for their cause.

Prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, several prominent American Jewish leaders expressed concerns that lobbying too vociferously for military engagement in Europe would swing the general public into believing that Jews were trying to coerce America into war.²⁰ Such concerns limited Bergson's effectiveness, but these limitations were eliminated after Pearl Harbor and the campaign for a Jewish army became connected to broader themes of American patriotism and sacrifice. Beginning in January 1942 the Bergsonites published a massive ad campaign on this message, a tactic that Bergson would later employ to great effect in his future lobbying for rescue of the European Jews. "JEWS FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO FIGHT" read a full-page *New York Times* advertisement on 5 January 1942, continuing on to advertise signatures indicating support from members of the Senate and House of Representatives, prominent clergy and various figures from the entertainment world. Though new to America,

¹⁹ Rafael Medoff, "The Bergson Group vs. the Holocaust—and Jewish Leaders vs. Bergson, Part One" *The Jewish Press*, 8 June 2007. Available at <http://www.wymaninstitute.org/articles/2007-6-bergson1.php>

²⁰ Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke For Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 311.

Bergson quickly grasped the machinations of American public relations, marketing his cause “just as you would advertise Chevrolet motor cars or Players cigarettes.”²¹

The American Jewish Establishment

Reform Rabbi and Zionist Stephen Wise, who served as head of several American and multinational Jewish organizations in the prewar years, took the unofficial role of spokesman for the establishment American Judaism during the war and would become a particular nemesis of Bergson’s.

A note about terminology: it is, of course, inherently problematic to speak of American Jews as a uniform bloc acting in concert. There were internal fissions within American Judaism, as there are within any ethnic or religious group, and it is reductionist to assume that Wise acted and spoke for all Jews. Nonetheless, we may consider Wise as a representative leader for a small body of individuals that, for lack of a better term, may be described as “the American Jewish establishment.” These self-appointed leaders are identifiable by their high-ranking positions in American and multinational Jewish organizations such as the World Jewish Congress. They tended to be assimilated second-generation Americans, involved themselves with secular progressive politics, and took pride in their connections with non-Jewish elites. Though they did not speak for all American Jews, Wise and his cohorts certainly considered themselves representatives of American Judaism and emissaries to the unofficial Protestant American ruling class.

²¹ Letter from Eli Jabotinsky to Dayag, 4 September 1943 (Palestine Censorship File), FO371/40129, Public Record Office, London, England. Taken from 23, Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*.

Going by their own conceptions of themselves, it is therefore fair to use the term “American Jewish establishment” as a descriptor for Wise and his immediate circle.

From the earliest days of Nazi persecution of the European Jews, the American Jewish community had split over how to respond. The general mainstream response to bad news from Europe was to condemn through public statements issued by leadership, typically couched in prayerful and/or mournful language and, occasionally, the vaguest appeal to an undefined “other” to do an unspecified act to help the Jews. Such a family of responses had its roots in the American Jewish response to Kristallnacht, when the General Jewish Council (an umbrella group for the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, B’nai B’rith and the Jewish Labor Committee) by purposeful and common consent through voting agreed on a public response of a day of prayer and a public statement that would come to serve as a template for future responses to atrocities against the European Jews:

The world is aghast at the latest news which has come from Germany. In the hour of their oppression we offer our fellows Jews in Germany the assurance of our deepest sympathy and understanding. In the midst of our grief we derive a measure of solace from the fact that the world has come to realize this barbarism directed against Jews is violence against the whole of humanity...²²

In the pre-war years Wise was one of the few American Jews who used a national platform to speak out against the dangers of Nazi fascism. As a leader of the new World Jewish Congress in 1932, he called for a boycott of German goods and services and rejected the notion of co-existence, alleging that “World Jewry, not German Jewry, is

²² This statement was carried widely in the Jewish press, including the *Jewish Advocate*, *Jewish Exponent* and *Jewish Spectator*. Quoted here from Haskel H. Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers?: The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938-1944*, (New York, NY: Hartmore House, 1985) 59.

under attack.”²³ Pre-Holocaust, however, Wise took offense to the idea of evacuating Jews from Europe. To him and other liberal Jews, it constituted acquiescence in their expulsion.²⁴

Bergson’s activist approach to lobbying for a Jewish army, his publicity-friendly public stunts, and his willingness to accept financial and organizational assistance from unlikely allies were all met with considerable resistance from the contemporary American Jewish leadership. Wise, along with his close colleagues in the Zionist movement such as Nahum Goldmann (like Wise a former chairman of the World Jewish Congress), advocated lobbying through official channels and following the timetables and priorities of Roosevelt’s White House and State Department. He was certainly aware of Bergson’s efforts but never had much use for Bergson’s charisma, work ethic or passion, finding him distasteful and potentially dangerous. Bergson’s history with the Irgun was an open secret, and even though he publicly dissociated himself from Irgun activities during his time in America, American Zionists still made the connection. In their view, not only was the Irgun responsible for reprehensible violence in Palestine that could damage the moral stature of the Zionist cause, they were associated with Jabotinsky, who had senselessly sought to divide Jews around the world.²⁵

This is not to say that Wise, especially in his capacity as head of American Jewish Congress, stood idly by while the Bergsonites did the noisy and dirty work of raising public awareness of the Holocaust. The Zionist AJC organized a domestic boycott of German goods and in 1941 staged protest rallies at Madison Square Garden that drew

²³ *Unity in Dispersion: A History of the World Jewish Congress*. American Jewish Archives, Manuscript Collection 361 (New York: 1948), 38.

²⁴ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 32.

²⁵ Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 85.

upwards of 20,000 people.²⁶ They were undoubtedly more activist than their counterparts in the American Jewish Committee, which was composed primarily of assimilated elite Jews and advocated diplomatic dealings with the German government as the best way to save European Jewry from destruction.²⁷ Nonetheless, there remained a wide gulf between the Wise and Bergson camps in tactics, strategy and philosophy.

Wise and the AJC were concerned that publicly pressuring Roosevelt and the State Department for action to rescue the European Jews would result in a domestic anti-Semitic backlash. Wise was aware that his acquaintance with the President was tempered by Roosevelt's then-typical casual anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, Wise considered Roosevelt a personal friend and was reluctant to press him too hard. On the only official meeting between the President and American Jewish leadership, in December 1942, Wise offered only a lament for the European Jews instead of supplying specific policy suggestions such as evacuating Jewish refugees in empty supply ships making a return Atlantic crossing or bringing Jews to America along with POWs. Roosevelt replied to Wise's anemic pleas in equally vague terms, pledging to "save those who may yet be saved," and quoting Longfellow that "the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small."²⁸

Perhaps the most damning instance of inaction by Wise was his handling of the notorious Riegner cable in the summer and fall of 1942. In August of that year Gerhart Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative to Switzerland, notified the US Consulate in Switzerland that a source in German industry had informed him of the Nazi

²⁶ 369, Peck

²⁷ Ibid., 369.

²⁸ Ehyo Matzozsky, "An Episode: Roosevelt and the Mass Killing," *Midstream*, Aug/Sept 1980, 17-19.

plot of exterminate all European Jews by gassing. While the State Department refused to pass along the news to Wise or other American Jewish leaders, Wise received the cable from British intelligence at the end of August and passed it to the State Department on September 2nd. Wise was aware of the general anti-Semitism in the State Department but underestimated its stranglehold, and so agreed to keep quiet about this development until it had been verified by the American government. When he finally received permission to go public with the intelligence, he did so in a low-key press conference held the day before Thanksgiving that did not attract major news coverage, despite Wise's close friendships with the assimilated Jewish American editors of major newspapers (to be fair, it was also eclipsed by the Page 1 news that the Nazi grip on Stalingrad had been broken, the major turning point on the Eastern front of the War).²⁹

From Jewish Army to Jewish Rescue

Ironically, it would be Wise's November 1942 press conference that would help galvanize Bergson to action. In early 1943 the Bergsonites received intelligence that over two million European Jews had been massacred thus far and that the rest were marked for death. Galvanized by this tragic new information, Hecht proposed creating a dramatic performance to showcase Jewish history, their current contributions to the war effort and the likely annihilation of the Jews of Europe. Entitled *We Will Never Die*, the pageant featured music by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Moss Hart and book by Hecht, with a cast including Stella Adler, Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando, Dean Martin, fifty Orthodox rabbis and a line of chorus girls dressed in white sheets to represent the murdered Jews.

²⁹ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 66.

Surrounded by a cast of grim-faced men dressed in prisoner's jumpsuits, narrator Paul Muni exhorted the audience, "There are four million Jews surviving in Europe. The Germans have promised to deliver to the world by the end of the year, a Christmas package of four million dead Jews. And this is not a Jewish problem. It is a problem that belongs to humanity and it is a challenge to the soul of man."³⁰

Fearing a positive public response to what they considered an ill-advised and tacky stunt, Wise and the AJC strongly opposed *We Will Never Die* and mobilized to shut it down. Wise went so far as to ask the governor of New York to declare opening night, 9 March 1943, a day of mourning for the two million murdered European Jews.³¹ Their efforts were to no avail. Over 40,000 people attended opening night at Madison Square Garden, with notable audience members such as Eleanor Roosevelt reciting the *Kaddish* prayer with the cast. The production toured America and was ultimately seen by over 200,000 people, including over one hundred lawmakers at an April 1943 performance in Washington.³² The pageant was indisputably successful at raising public awareness of the horrors of the Holocaust.

In 1943 and 1944 the Bergsonites placed over two hundred advertisements in Jewish and mainstream newspapers to further raise awareness of the rescue issue. The headlines, frequently penned by Hecht, were designed to provoke, shame and galvanize the reader. One notable ad appeared following breaking news that 70,000 Romanian Jews were being housed in camps north of Odessa, waiting for a foreign country to pay their travel and relocation expenses to Palestine. Designed to look like a department

³⁰ *We Will Never Die*, performed 9 March 1943, Madison Square Garden, New York NY.

³¹ Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys"*, 116.

³² Robert Skloot, "We Will Never Die: Success and Failure of a Holocaust Pageant." *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (May 1985), 177.

store sale announcement, the corresponding Bergson Group ad blares the headline “FOR SALE to Humanity 70,000 Jews. Guaranteed Human Being at \$50 a Piece!” It continues to address common objections to moving Jewish refugees to Palestine, brushing off concerns that spies might be in their ranks and proclaiming, “Palestine’s Arabs will not be annoyed by the arrival of 70,000 Jews. The only Arabs who will be annoyed are the Arab leaders who are in Berlin and their SPIES in Palestine.” The ad also included a slip to attach to donations to the Emergency Committee, accomplishing the trick of conflating rescue of the Jews with funding the Bergson Group’s activities.³³

By 1943 Bergson and his allies had grown frustrated with the lack of organization in the American Jewish community and the weak outcomes of April 1943’s disastrous Bermuda Conference. That meeting of British and American government officials, which coincided with the first day of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, failed to come to a conclusion on rescue plans for European Jews despite twelve days of discussions. In large part as a response to that infuriating event, Bergson and his allies convened the Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe in New York City on 25 July 1943. It was there that Bergson made a seminal decision to draw a clear distinction between the Palestinian question and the rescue effort, a move that was hotly debated among both his immediate associates and within the broader Jewish community. In this decision, Bergson was following the advice of non-Jewish associates and Congressional supporters and with this split would gain the public backing of instrumental figures running the gamut from pro-Arab oil magnates to assimilationist liberals.³⁴ Though he would forever be associated with the Revisionists and the Irgun in the eyes of Wise and the American

³³ *The New York Times*, 16 February 1943, p. 11

³⁴ Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys,"* 143.

Jewish establishment, this break turned Bergson's rescue proposals into humanitarian issues that could be appreciated and safely backed by non-Jews. The Bergsonites would emerge from this conference with the new name of The Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe.³⁵

Prior to establishing the Emergency Committee, as Bergson believed "fundamentally, they [Wise and the Zionists] thought we were a nuisance. They just thought what is the best way to get rid of us...they called us irresponsible... 'Responsible' means do nothing."³⁶ Indeed, Wise presented an outward appearance of being annoyed by the Bergsonites, as opposed to threatened by them. While appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December 1943 he testified against the Gillette-Rogers Resolution to establish a rescue commission that being promoted by the Emergency Committee, claiming that the Bergsonites represented "no one but a handful, a very small number of Jews and a number of Christians."³⁷

Away from the public record, however, the American Jewish establishment feared Bergson and his influence. Ever mindful of keeping a positive public image, not wanting to rock the boat or be perceived as exerting undue influence on the Roosevelt administration, the WJC and AJC advocated lobbying through official channels and acquiescing to government timetables and priorities. Any more intense lobbying, they believed, could alienate otherwise amenable allies and stoke anti-Semitic reactions.

³⁵ There is some discrepancy regarding this committee name in the historiography; the most common alternative names being the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish Peoples of Europe and the Emergency Committee to Save the European Jews. They all refer to the same group, the Bergsonites.

³⁶ Wyman and Medoff, *A Race Against Death*, 64.

³⁷ Monty N. Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 138.

According to Goldmann, Wise “regarded Bergson as equally as great an enemy of the Jews as Hitler, for the reason that his activities could only lead to increased anti-Semitism.”³⁸ Better to publicly endorse the White House course of action, which asserted that the best way to rescue the European Jews from slaughter was to win the war as quickly as possible. To propose other plans might be perceived as distractions from the war effort, and therefore un-American.

The combative nature of Bergson’s activities had already irritated Roosevelt, particularly Bergson’s accusations in his advertisements that Roosevelt was condoning genocide. When Eleanor Roosevelt mentioned to Bergson that one of his ads was “hitting below the belt,” Bergson replied that he was “very happy to hear that he is reading it and that it affects him.”³⁹ Given the continued provocation and what Roosevelt perceived as a glib, careless attitude from Bergson, Roosevelt did not need much prodding when, beginning in 1943, Wise’s friend Congressman Sol Bloom (D-NY) encouraged both the FBI and the IRS to mount a two-front attack against the Bergsonites, looking for evidence that they were assisting the Irgun and that they were Communists.⁴⁰

Despite Roosevelt’s personal animosity towards Bergson and his followers, he could not deny their influence in the push for a rescue movement. Rankled by their advertisements and the success of *We Will Never Die*, Roosevelt literally fled the Emergency Committee in October 1943 when they led a march of over 400 rabbis on the

³⁸ Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, 19 May 1944, p.1
867N.01/2347/PS/LC, National Archives

³⁹ Rafael Medoff, “The Bergson Group vs. the Holocaust—and Jewish Leaders vs. Bergson, Part One.” Originally published 8 June 2007 in *The Jewish Press*, reprinted at <http://www.wymaninstitute.org/articles/2007-6-bergson1.php>

⁴⁰ Rafael Medoff, “When the US Government Spied on American Jews.” *Midstream*, Nov/Dec 2006. Reprinted at The Wyman Institute, <http://www.wymaninstitute.org/articles/2006-11-gov-spied.php>

White House. In what would ultimately be the only Washington rally for rescue during the Holocaust, the rabbis gathered at the Lincoln Memorial on October 6th (three days before Yom Kippur) and marched on the White House, praying outside the gates and presenting a petition for a rescue commission to Roosevelt's secretary. Per Wise's counsel, Roosevelt left the White House through a rear door when he was informed that the rabbis were approaching. Though he had never agreed to meet with them, citing his busy schedule as an impediment, the perceived snub backfired in the media. The next day's *Washington Times-Herald* headline read "Rabbis Report 'Cold Welcome' at the White House." Though the media attention was far less than Bergson had hoped for, the stunt resonated with Roosevelt and helped Bergson pick up further congressional support for a rescue resolution.

The Bergsonites' efforts finally paid off when twelve senators introduced the Gillette-Rogers Resolution to establish a rescue commission in November 1943. Bolstered by support from William Randolph Hearst's newspapers, the Emergency Committee engaged in furious lobbying for support beginning with five days of testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Bergson's congressional nemesis Bloom led the charge against Gillette-Rogers, interrogating Bergson under oath about his personal affairs and charging that mass rescue was logistically and financially impossible. In secret testimony before the Committee, Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long testified that the State Department was already doing everything possible to help the Jews. However, in his testimony Long inflated the number of refugees that had already been admitted to the United States. When word of his gaffe leaked out it severely undermined his credibility, and ultimately contributed towards a

growing public support of the Resolution. By the holiday recess, Roosevelt could see the writing on the wall. With passage virtually guaranteed and not wanting to appear to be forced to prevent genocide, Roosevelt issued the executive order establishing the War Refugee Board on 22 January 1944.⁴¹

It has therefore been established that the Bergsonites had a tangible impact on Roosevelt's decision to establish the War Refugee Board. Concurrently, there is significant scholarship that establishes that Wise and the establishment American Jewish community did not directly influence this decision, and in fact did on occasion seek to impede it by fighting the Bergsonites.

The facts of Bergson's work towards rescue efforts established, I will now proceed to the primary focus of this thesis: the historical memory of that work within a larger narrative of Holocaust history and the four main factors that have impacted that memory, beginning with the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

⁴¹ Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 201-204.

The Memory: Factors in Historical Narratives of Bergson and Holocaust History

The Wyman Institute

Very little scholarship on the wartime activities of Peter Bergson and the Bergsonites existed until the end of the 1970s. Such a gap in the literature may be attributed to a number of factors, some of them the result of conscious organization by those who opposed the Bergson group, some related to the restrictions of the historical profession and some purely by chance. Certainly a general lack of scholarship on the Holocaust until the 1970s played a role. “There’s not one single explanation of the phenomenon,” says Dr. Rafael Medoff, director of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies. “You can look in broad terms as to what the political environment was here and there, but you can’t be too definitive.”⁴²

The Wyman Institute has played a critical role in inserting the memory of Peter Bergson into academic and popular historical memory. David Wyman, along with Institute Director Rafael Medoff, has written several books on Bergson and American responses to the Holocaust that will be further discussed in this paper’s historiographical review. The Institute itself, however, has been a unique actor within broader memory and history scholarship for the wide variety of ways in which it has sought to alter historical narratives of the Holocaust.

Since its creation in 2003 the Institute has employed a variety of both traditional and unusual methods to change the ways Holocaust history is remembered and taught.

⁴² Medoff, Rafael. Interview by author. Washington, D.C., 2 April 2008.

One of the more traditional tactics is the series of free educational materials posted on the Institute's website that covers Bergson and several other "forgotten heroes" of the Holocaust. The Institute holds regular academic conferences that frequently showcase papers revisiting Holocaust history, most recently holding a session on then-Treasury Department attorney Joseph DuBois and his role in exposing the wartime State Department blockage of efforts to rescue European Jews. Its staff produces regular op-ed pieces and working papers on issues within Holocaust history as well as on contemporary issues of human rights and anti-Semitism. However, of the 186 working papers posted on the Institute's website, 54 (or nearly 30 percent) mention Peter Bergson or the Bergson group. When considering the breadth of topics that the Wyman Institute researches, resulting in articles like "China-Syria Link Raises New Olympic Questions" and "Mel Gibson's Holocaust Problem," this is a startlingly high rate of inclusion for one relatively minor historical figure.

Working papers, conferences and educational materials are all standard operations for a nonprofit academic organization. The Wyman Institute frequently goes beyond such a purview to more actively change the narrative of Holocaust history and, in particular, to place Peter Bergson and his followers firmly within it. In fact, consciously or unconsciously, the Wyman Institute's methods of disseminating its messages frequently mirror the Bergsonites' tactics. Given to splashy PR-friendly stunts when quieter lobbying methods fail to produce the desired results, eager to engage both niche and mainstream media, and enthusiastic about the influence of popular culture on historical memory, the Wyman Institute has on occasion been a gadfly even to those who

support its goals. Inarguably, however, it has been generally successful at restoring Bergson's place in Holocaust history.

The Wyman Institute's most controversial actions have been their public lobbying of museums to include the work of Bergson and his followers. The most notorious example is the Institute's push to have the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum alter its permanent exhibition and name Bergson as an actor in rescue efforts. Though the Institute was ultimately successful and the exhibition was updated, the Institute's public criticism of the USHMM embarrassed the Museum and caused a stir in academic circles.

Wyman Institute director Rafael Medoff's first meeting with curators of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum occurred in August 2002, nearly 10 years after the museum's opening. Despite an initial willingness to introduce materials and background information on the work of the Emergency Committee, the USHMM for unexplained reasons stalled in incorporating these items. On 2 March 2005 Medoff and several descendants of Bergson group members met with USHMM curator Steven Luckert, who Medoff recalls as being open but noncommittal:

We met for an hour and a half and the response was basically "Yes, you're right." They asked me to write something about *We Will Never Die* for their website, but that's still not a substitute for something in a permanent exhibition... [Luckert] said it was expensive to change a permanent exhibition but that they were in the midst of a yearlong review to make corrections and additions, and they would take our request into consideration. In future communications in the two years that followed, we either didn't get answers or they would be noncommittal. Their lack of response led to Elie Weisel picking up a vocal interest in the issue. Because of Weisel's stance, we decided to prepare a petition by historians and Jewish leaders.⁴³

⁴³ Medoff, Rafael. Interview by author. Washington, D.C., 2 April 2008. Giving the keynote address at the Fifth National Conference of the Wyman Institute on 17 June 2007, Wiesel stated he was "disappointed that the Bergson Group is not included in the museum's exhibits, and I will do whatever I can to change that." Wiesel had served as

Attempts by this author to reach Luckert or other representatives of the USHMM for comment were unsuccessful.

The petition Medoff referred to turned out to be two petitions to the USHMM, the latter of which contained “signatures from over 100 scholars and Jewish leaders” and was delivered to the museum in the summer of 2007.⁴⁴ In an August 2007 *Washington Post* article on the exhibition change, Luckert’s sole comment was that “The Bergson Group was important in calling American attention to what was happening during the Holocaust and demanding action.”⁴⁵ The USHMM eventually updated the exhibition in July 2008, creating the display described in the introduction. Given the years of delay before the *Washington Post* article, it seems strongly likely that this new dissemination of the back-and-forth between the Museum and the Wyman Institute helped hasten the timetable for revisions.

Despite the USHMM’s agreement that the Bergson group merited inclusion, several historians took umbrage with the Wyman Institute’s methods. University of Toronto historian Michael Marrus, who declined to sign the Wyman Institute petitions, stated “museum professionals should be allowed to do their work professionally, without

Chairman of the Presidential Committee on the Holocaust (later re-named the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council) from 1978 to 1986 and had been instrumental in the establishment of the USHMM. Though Wiesel had resigned his chairmanship following contentious discussions over finances and priorities of the permanent exhibition, he stayed on the Council and remained one of the best-known public ambassadors for Holocaust memory. His public support for including Bergson in the USHMM permanent exhibition certainly galvanized museum officials to action. For more on Wiesel and the USHMM see Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

⁴⁴ Ben Harris, “Museum opens doors to Bergson,” JTA 8/2/07

⁴⁵ Jacqueline Trescott, “A Voice Crying in the Wilderness: Museum to Revise Exhibit on U.S. Response to Holocaust,” *The Washington Post*, 1 August 2007, p. C01

the kind of pressure that activists are sometimes brilliant at exerting.” Historian Deborah Lipstadt, an expert on Holocaust denial, also refused to sign the petitions and subsequently wrote on her blog “Good museums do not decide on the basis of petitions, otherwise known as public pressure, what should and should not be included in their exhibits.”⁴⁶

As for other museums and memorials, Yad Vashem currently contains no materials or descriptions of the Bergsonites’ contributions in its permanent collection or published materials. When asked in the spring of 2008 about the likelihood of Yad Vashem curators updating their collections, Medoff responded “I won’t comment about that on the record. Changes may happen in the near future.”⁴⁷ In August 2008 David Wyman and Rebecca Kook, the daughter of Hillel Kook (Bergson), presented Yad Vashem with a petition signed by over 100 Israeli political and cultural leaders asking the museum to add material about the Bergson group. Though Wyman and Kook met with Yad Vashem chief historian Dan Michman while delivering the petition, their efforts were ultimately rebuffed by the museum. “Yad Vashem...” stated a spokeswoman in a written response to the Wyman Institute visit, “did not plan and does not plan its exhibits based on public pressure or petitions, but by balanced decisions.”⁴⁸

Meanwhile, since 2006 the Rhode Island Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Holocaust Museum Houston and the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, among others, have updated their permanent collections to include materials

⁴⁶ Deborah Lipstadt’s Blog, <http://lipstadt.blogspot.com/2007/07/museum-exhibitions-by-petition-silly.html>

⁴⁷ Medoff, Rafael. Interview by author. Washington, D.C., 2 April 2008.

⁴⁸ Etgar Lefkovits, “Petition urges Yad Vashem to add Bergson Group,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 June 2008, 7.

on the Bergson group. The Wyman Institute will not confirm that it is directly responsible for these revisions and museum staff members at these institutions have not responded to interview requests. However, Medoff stated in an interview with this author that the Wyman Institute was aware that “many of the museums still relied on the old narrative... and that the Wyman Institute took note of this problem upon founding in 2003, privately contacting various museums. Our first contact was fall 2002 when *A Race Against Death* [Wyman’s book of edited interviews with Kook] was published.”⁴⁹ It seems safe to assume that Bergson’s inclusion in these other museums, therefore, was the result of Wyman Institute lobbying.

The Wyman Institute scored a significant publicity coup when its researchers pieced together that Congressman Thomas D’Alesandro Jr. of Maryland, the father of House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, had been a Congressional ally of Bergson’s during his efforts to lobby for rescue operations in Europe. Pelosi subsequently wrote about her father’s support in her 2008 book *Know Your Power: A Message to America's Daughters*:

Although [my father] was a New Deal Democrat and followed Franklin D. Roosevelt's lead, there was one area in which he disagreed with the administration... Daddy supported an organization called the Bergson Group, which held rallies, pageants, and parades focusing attention on the plight of European Jews during World War II and calling for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, which was not yet the administration's policy.⁵⁰

Pelosi’s involvement with the Wyman Institute represents another tactic it has embraced since its inception: outreach to non-Jewish media and political figures and institutions. It shares this approach with the Bergsonites, who preferred to advertise in

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Nancy Pelosi, *Know Your Power: A Message to America’s Daughters* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

the pages of the *New York Times* instead of those within Jewish publications. This is not to say that the Wyman Institute neglects Jewish and Israeli media; far from it. But it clearly recognizes that changing the historical narrative requires using popularly read platforms. It is no coincidence that when frustrated with USHMM delays in updating its permanent exhibition, the Wyman Institute went to the *Washington Post* to air its grievances. Over 50 percent of the clippings in its 2008 conference press packet came from non-Jewish media outlets. Though the Wyman Institute regularly publishes op-ed pieces in Jewish and Israeli media and provides quotes and research for articles in such publications, it is also clearly focused on maintaining a healthy presence in mainstream news.

Finally, the Wyman Institute and the Bergsonites both share fruitful relationships with figures in the entertainment world and have both used theater to advance their messages. The Emergency Committee was the driving force behind the massive 1943 pageant *We Will Never Die*, which played a significant role in bringing the horrors of the Holocaust to public attention. Frank Sinatra, Dorothy Parker, Groucho Marx, Stella Adler, and screenwriter Ben Hecht were all Bergson supporters. Today the Wyman Institute has continued working with the Adler family to preserve their work with Bergsonites in historical memory. Stella's daughter Ellen Adler spoke at the 2008 Wyman Institute conference on the Bergson group's use of theater, focusing on the 1946 play *A Flag Is Born* (Adler co-presented with actor Steven Hill, an *A Flag Is Born* original cast member best known for his tenure as District Attorney Adam Schiff on the NBC television series *Law and Order*). This melodrama about Jews in search of a homeland in Palestine faded into obscurity after its initial mounting and a small tour, but

the Wyman Institute has helped revive contemporary interest in it. In 2004 the American Century Theater in Virginia mounted the first professional staging of *A Flag Is Born* in over 50 years. The Wyman Institute consulted with the production staff. Institute Director Medoff also advised the company of a 2007 off-Broadway play about Bergson, his opponents and the WRB called *The Accomplice*, later stating “they are likely one of the best-informed casts of any historical drama in recent memory.”⁵¹ Written by former *New York Times* reporter Bernard Weinraub, the production was reviewed poorly (the *Times* called it “a soporific lecture of a play” and dryly noted “If humorlessness were the measure of good art, it could rank among the best productions of the year”).⁵² Nonetheless, given the effort to keep the Bergsonites out of the historical record, the very fact that such a play was written and produced for a popular audience is remarkable. In part, it took the theatrical spectacle of *We Will Never Die* to alert America to the horrors of the Holocaust. Whether or not *The Accomplices* was a hit, the parallel is certainly worth noting.

In addition to the efforts described above, scholars affiliated with the Wyman Institute have published several well-known popular and scholarly histories that were milestones both for having inserted Bergson into historical memory and changing broader trends within Holocaust scholarship. Prior to David Wyman’s groundbreaking in the field in the 1980’s, historians of the Holocaust and World War II largely neglected citing Bergson’s work in America as having saved Jewish lives or having contributed to a general public awareness about the Holocaust.

⁵¹ Rafael Medoff “FDR and the Holocaust, On Stage,” *The Jewish Press* 21 March 2007.

⁵² David Ng, “A Zionist Firebrand’s War Against Bystanders’ Silence,” *New York Times*, 10 April 2007.

Published in 1980, American Monty Penkower's article "Jewish Organizations and the Creation of the U.S. War Refugee Board" was the first peer-reviewed article by a historian to cite the work of the Bergsonites as a factor in persuading Roosevelt to establish the WRB. Penkower's primary thesis, that is was "the persistence of Treasury Secretary Morgenthau and his staff in bypassing State and ultimately confronting Roosevelt in January, 1944, along with increasing calls from Congress and the public for a rescue commission" that led to the WRB was certainly in line with the general scholarly consensus of the time.⁵³ Penkower's focus in the article is the machinations of the Departments of State and Treasury, the British Foreign Office and the White House. In a footnote, however, he does note that "The effort of Jewish pressure groups, especially the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, regarding the War Refugee Board's creation lies beyond the scope of this article."⁵⁴ This innocuous citation was the first indication that the Bergsonites were due a place in the historiography of American Jewish lobbying to rescue the European Jews.

Almost immediately following Penkower's article, such efforts were showcased in the April 1980 article "The Campaign for an American Response to the Nazi Holocaust 1943-1945." Author Sarah Peck was the first to connect the perceived outlandishness of the Bergsonites' tactics and the subsequent condemnation of them by the American Jewish establishment with the failure by American Jews to force American intervention in the Holocaust. Noting that "the obvious disunity in Jewish ranks relieved

⁵³ Monty N. Penkower, "Jewish Organizations and the Creation of the U.S. War Refugee Board," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 450, *Reflections on the Holocaust: Historical, Philosophical, and Educational Dimensions* (Jul., 1980), 122.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

pressure on government officials to take action,” Peck’s article rests on a thorough bibliography filled with an impressive record of private letters and memoranda between Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, Breckenridge Long, Cordell Hull, Nahum Goldmann and Stephen Wise, among many others.⁵⁵ However, the impact of her groundbreaking research and article was tempered when she left academia shortly after its publication date. While historians continue to rely on her scholarship, the groundbreaking Peck is now the president of a homebuilding firm in suburban Pennsylvania.⁵⁶

Penkower and Peck set the stage for academic inquiry into the complicity of American Jews in the failure to save the Jews of Europe, yet overall they still bought into the general historical narrative that American Jews exerted what little influence they could but were ultimately constricted by anti-Semitism and their perpetual outsider status. However, this topic reached unprecedented levels of public interest with the creation of the “Goldberg Commission” in the early 1980s.

Headed by Chief Justice Arthur Goldberg, the Commission queried scholars on Jewish responses to the Holocaust. Tainted by early media leaks of controversial findings and accusations of predetermined, ideologically-based conclusions by researchers, many scholars dissociated themselves from the Commission, which dragged in producing reports.⁵⁷ Though little scholarship of note was ultimately produced, the Goldberg Commission played an important public relations role in Holocaust and Jewish studies by highlighting the very question of Jewish silence and complicity. As one letter

⁵⁵ Sarah E. Peck, “The Campaign for an American Response to the Nazi Holocaust, 1943-1945,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), 393.

⁵⁶ SEC File 0-51395, Accession Number 1299933-7-2551, Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, 24 April 2007, EX-99.1

⁵⁷ “AROUND THE NATION; Holocaust Commission Sees Report 2 Years Off,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1983.

to Seymour Maxwell Finger of CUNY, the Commission's research team director, noted, "The main goal was to break the taboo surrounding any examination of the policy, responsibility and behavior of American Jewish leadership during the Holocaust... and no individual interests, self-justification, ethnic subjectivity or fear about what the 'goyim' will say can stop the wave."⁵⁸

The Goldberg Commission fundamentally changed American Holocaust scholarship and set the stage for the kind of revisionist history the Wyman Institute would soon produce. The Goldberg Commission represented a last dying gasp of Jewish community leaders clinging to the old narrative and the beginning of a younger generation of scholars looking at the legacy of American Jews in the Holocaust more objectively.

David Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews*, originally published in 1984, was the first book that highlighted the work of the Bergsonites as a major factor contributing to the creation of the WRB to penetrate the public consciousness. It stayed on the *New York Times Book Review's* bestseller list for five weeks and was named to that same publication's eleven "Best Books of the Year," in addition to receiving many popular and academic prizes and positive reviews. Perhaps most importantly, it spawned a subgenre of historical revisionist literature and film that examined the Roosevelt administration's complacent approach to rescue efforts.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Samuel Merlin to Seymour Maxwell Finger, 27 May 1982, Rafaeli Collection. From Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys,"* 195.

⁵⁹ Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 343-344. Wyman edited a thirteen-volume set of documents used in writing *The Abandonment of the Jews* that was published as a keyed index titled *America and the Holocaust. Abandonment...* was also a major influence on the 1994 PBS documentary *America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference*, on which Wyman was a consulting producer.

In *The Abandonment of the Jews*, Wyman sets out to answer the question of why America did not act to carry out the kind of rescue effort it was capable of. Though primarily an exploration of the factors within the State Department that blocked the creation and implementation of rescue missions and a chronicle of the lack of awareness of the full extent of the Holocaust, Wyman showcases the efforts of the Bergsonites in a level of detail that no scholar had previously. While earlier scholars such as Monty Penkower had explored the tactics of the Bergsonites, none had so explicitly traced a direct path between events like the March of the Rabbis the creation of the WRB. The new link between the two events that Wyman highlighted was his exploration of Emergency Committee lobbying for the Rescue Resolution, their success in securing twelve senators to co-introduce the bill and how the resulting pressures from testimony on it before the House and Senate pressured Roosevelt to sign the executive order establishing the WRB.⁶⁰

In this same chapter Wyman notes the significant efforts Wise, Bloom and other opponents of the Emergency Committee made to block the Resolution from debate and disseminate false information about refugee admission and the intentions of the Bergsonites. However, he holds back from condemning their interference, instead concentrating on the success of the Emergency Committee and their congressional allies. In his summarizing conclusion, Wyman notes the work of the Emergency Committee and the work of the AJC as two separate entities, highlighting the limited successes of the former and forgiving the latter for inaction for a variety of factors, including but not limited to Wise's medical problems, an inability of Jewish leaders to sacrifice their

⁶⁰ Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 193-205.

regular schedules and vacations, a leadership vacuum and a general tendency for organizations to “go their separate ways.”⁶¹ Wyman is clearly not afraid to use damning rhetoric in this work—he asserts that “Roosevelt’s indifference to so momentous a historical event as the systematic annihilation of European Jewry emerges as the worst failure of his presidency”—but holds back when summarizing his arguments in the introduction and conclusion. Though he presents ample evidence that Wise and the AJC sought to disrupt and block the Bergsonites, in *The Abandonment of the Jews* he does not explicitly say that their efforts impeded a genuine rescue effort.⁶²

Despite its reluctance to explicitly condemn Wise’s inaction in the final reading, the conclusions drawn in *The Abandonment of the Jews* have exerted a redefining influence onto Holocaust scholarship. Wyman’s thesis is essentially an expansion of Peck’s 1980 argument that conflict within the American Jewish community impeded rescue efforts. But given the beneficial timing of coinciding with a new national interest in the issue of rescue of the European Jews, and bolstered by Wyman’s credentials as a historian, Wyman’s version of this conclusion proved far more influential than anything that came prior to it.

The years immediately following *The Abandonment of the Jews* saw somewhat of a gap in the literature the Bergson Group’s relation to American Jews and the rescue effort, but did see notable studies on other aspects of the rescue question. Sharon Lowenstein explored the WRB-sponsored camp for Jewish refugees in Fort Ontario, New York in *Token Refuge: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944-1946*,

⁶¹ Ibid., 328-330.

⁶² Ibid., xv.

concluding that the success of the camp represented “a glimpse of what might have been” had a more concerted effort at rescue been enacted.⁶³

In the 1990s and 2000s scholarship on the Bergsonites surged again, largely due to several authors’ interviews with Kook. As if hurrying to make up for lost time before it was too late, Kook agreed to extensive interviews with Wyman for his 2002 book *A Race Against Death*, the majority of which is edited interviews with Kook and his contemporaries. It was this book that Wyman first approaches the notion that Wise and the AJC sought not only to interfere with the Bergsonites work, but that they recruited their allies in national government to disrupt the Bergsonites and dig up dirt on Bergson himself. Kook also sat for extensive interviews with Louis Rapoport for *Shake Heaven and Earth*, a polemical biography of Kook that, while biased in favor of its subject’s version of Holocaust and Israeli foundational history, is generally accurate in its assessment of the Bergsonites’ influence and legacy.

The Wyman Institute was undoubtedly the impetus for reinserting Peter Bergson and his followers into both formal sites of memory and a general narrative of Holocaust history. Examining the issue of Bergson and historical memory from another angle— “why was he kept out?” instead of “why did he reappear?” — illuminates several critical factors that influenced this particular narrative of history. Accepting the truism that no one single explanation, or even set of explanations, can explain the long-term absence the Bergsonites in Holocaust memory, it is possible to identify several other major factors that helped to create the void.

⁶³ Sharon R. Lowenstein, *Token Refuge: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944-1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

Revisionists Versus Zionists and the Creation of the State of Israel

The first of these, the lasting schism between Revisionists and Zionists, manifested itself in several different ways. “The political effect definitely had some effect [on the dearth of Bergson scholarship],” Medoff asserts. The political effect he refers to encompasses several politically sensitive paradigms that have impacted research on the Bergsonites, most notably represented by the schism between Zionism and Revisionist Zionism. “As time passed,” Medoff continues “these old divisions had no resonance, and scholars could look at the topic more objectively—and I’m speaking in generalizations here—as opposed to when they might have tended to see things as Right versus Left.”⁶⁴

Certainly Hillel Kook’s postwar political activities in both Israel and America did not lend themselves to a marketable image within Judaism of a rescuer or hero. Without waiting for World War II to end, the Irgun declared open revolt against British rule in Palestine.⁶⁵ Following the triumph of helping to establish the War Refugee Board, the Bergsonites concentrated their efforts on securing passage to Palestine for approximately 100,000 “displaced persons” in liberated European camps. On 15 May 1945 Representative Somers, one of Bergson’s strongest congressional allies, introduced a congressional resolution for recognition of a “Hebrew nation” and national rights for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. The resolution was extraordinarily unpopular with the

⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁶⁵ Robert N. Rosen, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006), 333.

British, who successfully pressured American Zionists to lobby for its blockage in the Senate.⁶⁶

Once the war ended Kook returned his attention to the creation of the State of Israel but continued to be stymied by intra-Jewish conflicts and various enemies he had picked up in the State Department, the British Foreign Office and Immigration and Naturalization Service. Many of Bergson's opponents, including Congressman Bloom, Wise and the staff of the British Embassy had fought behind closed doors for his deportation from 1942 on, and after the creation of the War Refugee Board and the end of the war they stepped up their efforts considerably.⁶⁷

Bergson left America in May of 1947. He took with him a legacy of activism that would prove pivotal in the creation of the state of Israel and a controversy that would limit his efficacy as a political figure once the revolution settled into governance. Bergson and his fellows Revisionists subscribed to a notion of a Hebrew state, meaning that they foresaw a Palestinian state comprising approximately three million people: the 600,000 Palestinian Jews already present, the European DPs and Jews of the Middle East. In their conception, the other ten million Jews of the world already belonged to a state. This contrasted with the Zionist definition of a nation of all Jews of all nations. Ironically, it was Bergson and many of his Revisionist companions who returned to Palestine, while most American Zionists like Wise had no intention of relocating.⁶⁸

Bergson's approach ultimately proved futile up against the mobilizing influence of Zionism. Upon returning to Palestine just as Independence was achieved on 15 May

⁶⁶ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 187.

⁶⁷ Wyman and Medoff, *A Race Against Death*, 179.

⁶⁸ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 205.

1948, Bergson shed his alias and reclaimed the name of Kook. Detained briefly at a kibbutz by David Ben-Gurion over a squabble for weapons, Kook was eventually released with prejudice and lingering feelings of antagonism. Diving into Israeli politics, Kook was elected to the Constituent Assembly as a representative of the new Herut Party. When Ben-Gurion transformed the Assembly to the First Knesset, Kook cried out that a “putsch” had taken place, accusing Israeli leadership of not dealing with the necessary creation of structure of the republic, its relationship to religion and with global Jewry.

Disillusioned and politically marginalized, Kook stayed in Israel until 1950, when he decided to go into exile and wait for a new generation of political leadership. After traveling Cuba and America for several years Kook settled in New York with his wife and daughter, eventually establishing himself on Wall Street and making a small fortune in oil and commodity trading. He would continue to shun public life and politics even after returning to Israel in 1964, where he lived a quiet life that his biographer compared to “Trotsky in Mexico” before his death on 18 August 2001.⁶⁹

Trails of Evidence

The relatively anonymous life Bergson led in retirement and his followers’ inability to preserve their legacy while their nemeses in the America Jewish Congress left archives, memoirs and allies is the third reason for the initial dearth of scholarship on their work. Kook would later admit that he and his followers failed to do their part to ensure that their legacy would be recorded for history. Though they celebrated the creation of the War Refugee Board, Kook was never satisfied that America was doing all

⁶⁹ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 210.

it could to rescue Jewish refugees. As time wore on, he grew increasingly upset and self-critical that he not accomplished more with the Emergency Committee, and felt that he had failed in his efforts. In a 1973 interview Kook would relate:

First of all, I never raised a fuss, so I'm in a sense as guilty as I'm accusing the Jewish leaders of. But I didn't realize it—I realized it, but I don't know, I was worn out. There must have been the sin of it— putting it in theological terms—the sin, not of pride, but of the desperate desire to feel that you've succeeded and you did something. That clouded judgment. For a while, for long, for a couple of months maybe, there was this feeling of achievement that continued. Now we have the War Refugee Board that's doing the job... When people talk to me—not now, but twenty years ago—and say “Oh, Peter Bergson, he's responsible practically single-handed for creating the War Refugee Board.” I say “Who the hell is the War Refugee Board?” This is my reaction, you see. The reason it's so painful is because I have a frustrating sense of failure there.⁷⁰

Kook's lack of pride in his accomplishments and his attention to the fight for Israel statehood led him to neglect the preservation of his historical memory on the issue of fighting to save Jews during World War II. However, even if he had the energy and desire to preserve his record of his work for posterity, he would have come up against the considerable institutional resources of American Zionists, who had their own version of history to perpetuate.

Back in the United States, members of the American Jewish establishment were busy collecting and organizing materials for their own archives. The American Jewish Committee established extensive archives in New York City. Wise organized his papers for submission to the American Jewish Historical Society before his death in 1949 and Congressman Bloom did the same for the New York Public Library. They had staffs to collect and organize their work, translators to provide English and Hebrew versions, preservation experts to protect selected primary resources for historians to peruse. The

⁷⁰ Wyman and Medoff, *A Race Against Death*, 174.

best Bergson did for some time was add his recollections to a series of papers submitted to Yale under the title of the Palestinian Statehood Committee Papers, which to this day have not been completely sorted and catalogued. He also contributed recollections of his work with the Emergency Committee for the never-written memoirs of Maurice Rosenblatt, who served as the Bergsonites' chief Washington lobbyist. Rosenblatt's estate donated the relevant papers to the Library of Congress in 2006.⁷¹

Prickly, blunt and reluctant to rehash what he saw as dead arguments from the past, Kook remained selective about whom he would let interview him and remained controversial in retirement. Though he gave up his Hebraic concept of the state of Israel in 1948 as a political concession, Kook still personally believed in it until his death. Such a philosophy is blasphemous for any Jew who believed in an Exile continuing after World War II, and it hardly endeared him to his contemporaries in Israeli academic circles.

Israeli scholarship on Bergson remains remarkably thin, with the notable exception of Judith Tylor Baumel's 2005 book *The "Bergson Boys" and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy*. Baumel, an American-born Israeli émigré, wrote the first and only major Israeli historical work focusing on Bergson's wartime activities in America. Prior to her work there had been some theses in the late 1960s by students at Israeli universities that briefly discussed the Bergson Group, but no other substantial historiography. While a certain thinness in Israeli scholarship is understandable, given that the Bergsonites operated exclusively in America during the War, such a large gap parallels larger trends in the Israeli historical cannon. It may be that the Bergsonites were

⁷¹ Maurice Rosenblatt Papers, Library of Congress. Part 1: Miscellany, 1932-2000, n.d. Box 1:76 Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 1988, n.d. (2 folders)

shunned by certain generations of historians, classified as being a part of an Irgun/Jabotinsky narrative that did not warrant further historical examination. Baumel notes that most historians who study the Irgun do so in the context of the group's impact on Zionism, generally claiming that they had no long-term effect on either American Zionist groups or the creation of a Jewish state.⁷² Such an interpretation is accurate in some respects, but is ultimately overly simplistic. It ignores the fact that the Bergson Group was explicitly non-Irgun for half of its existence and that Bergson himself ultimately abandoned the Irgun cause when it no longer became politically useful in the new Israeli state.

Kook's colleagues from the Emergency Committee days also did a generally poor job at writing memoirs, establishing collections of their papers and otherwise preserving their legacy for historians. One notable exception to this rule was Ben Hecht, whose 1970 memoir *A Child of the Century* contains extensive recollections of his work with the Bergsonites. Historians would later rely on Hecht's recollections, but he had essentially been blacklisted by 1950 because of his political activism and his memoirs failed to penetrate the public consciousness.

American Jewish Identity and Holocaust Memory

"Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew!" It is coming out of my ears already, the saga of the suffering Jews! Do me a favor, my people, and stick your suffering heritage up your suffering ass—I happen also to be a human being!"

– Portnoy's Complaint

⁷² Baumel, *The "Bergson Boys,"* 261.

The fourth factor to influence scholarship on the Bergsonites, though more nebulous than the preceding factors, is a critical one to note. A new generation of American Jews who did not harbor defensiveness of and visceral attachment to the past were changing both appropriate topics and appropriate conclusions for historians. “Once there was a younger generation of scholars who came of age in the 70s through the 90s,” muses Medoff, “you had a whole segment of American Jewry that didn’t feel the political rivalries’ division as their parents did [Zionist versus Revisionist Zionist]. Not all of them had gotten over it, but the battles were a thing of the past.”⁷³

Since the Holocaust the question of why American Jews had not done more to rescue their brethren in Europe was met with the same line of reasoning: that they had done everything in their limited power, but being perpetual outsiders, stateless, subjected to anti-Semitism if they pressed too hard, what more could have been done? When historians who were themselves more assimilated, who did not have the baggage of needing to defend their community against a hostile dominant paradigm, came onto the scene they changed the nature of Holocaust scholarship as a whole.

It is impossible, of course, to sum up the myriad developments in postwar American Jewish identity within this limited space. Collective pronouns like “they” are inherently problematic and should not be taken as indication that the developments described below represent a uniform American Jewish experience or worldview. However, for this thesis’ purpose of examining the role of Peter Bergson within a broader context of the narrative of Holocaust history, some general trends and overarching themes may be extracted from this enormously complex issue.

⁷³ Medoff, Rafael. Interview by author. Washington, D.C., 2 April 2008.

Following the war and the Holocaust, Jews the world over began to confront their role in the creation of their own historical narrative. “[Pre-Holocaust] Jews of the Diaspora,” stated memory historian Pierre Nora, “bound in daily devotion to the rituals of tradition, [as] ‘peoples of memory,’ found little use for historians until their forced exposure to the modern world.”⁷⁴ The shock of the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel marked a new era of Jews consciously and unconsciously constructing deliberate historical narratives meant for non-Jewish audiences.

Postwar American Jews used the creation of the state of Israel as a way to assert their American identity, fermenting tension between American and Israeli Jewish leaders while simultaneously benefiting Jews on both sides of the Atlantic. Of the relatively few American Jews who emigrated to Israel, even fewer stayed—one study showed that only 5,400 American Jews of 35,000 American and Canadian migrants during the first decade of the Israeli state stuck it out.⁷⁵ However, the very existence of Israel allowed American Jews to affirm their “Americanness,” defining themselves as Americans who supported the Jewish state of Israel as opposed to Jews who lived in America. In creating a Jewish homeland, Zionists were easing the eager assimilation of the American descendants of Eastern European and Russian Jews transitioning “from shetl to suburb.”⁷⁶ These were the children of Jews who had chosen America over a then-swampy Palestine where, as Rabbi Stuart E. Rosenberg noted, “*they would have to remember!*”⁷⁷ Historically

⁷⁴ Pierre Nora “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire” *Representations*, No. 26, *Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory* (Spring, 1989), 8.

⁷⁵ Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 29.

⁷⁶ Seymour Leventman, “From Shetl to Suburb,” in *The Ghetto and Beyond*, ed. Peter I. Rose (New York: Random House 1969): pp. 33-56

⁷⁷ Rosenberg, *The New Jewish Identity in America*, 75.

speaking, Jewish nationalism and Jewish religion had been inextricably linked. By taking advantage of this intrinsic relationship, postwar American Jews used Zionism to conceal a general distancing from dogmatic adherence to Jewish religious practices. In this way, mid-century American Jews mirrored their Protestant counterparts in their quest for the comforts of the middle class and the American Dream. Both used their respective religions as mechanisms for social organization and as a salve or cover for the problematic aspects of placing material consumption as one's highest priority. Supporting the Israeli state without actually physically relocating there permitted these American Jews to pursue the immigrant's dream of middle-class assimilation while negotiating a common Jewish identity that transcended one's ancestral homeland and level of religious orthodoxy.

Zionism did not just address the more nebulous questions of identity and nationalism—for many American Jews it also provided concrete direction on how the world should address the issue of postwar refugees. “Although many American Jews were not Zionists,” noted Loy W. Henderson, Truman’s Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs at the State Department “most of them looked to the Zionists for leadership in solving the problems of the Jewish refugees.”⁷⁸ Though noted by some contemporaries as holding anti-Zionist views, Henderson did accurately describe an American Jewish search for guidance in the postwar years.⁷⁹ Zionism provided a policy

⁷⁸ Henderson Interview, p. 104, Truman Library

⁷⁹ Foreign Service officer-in-charge of Palestine-Israel-Jordan Affairs 1948-50 Stuart W. Rockwell addressed questions of anti-Semitism in the State Department and specifically whether Henderson was an anti-Semite in an oral history interview taken for the Truman Library, stating: “There's no doubt that Loy Henderson felt very strongly that the situation in the Middle East was going to become very, very complicated from the point of view of U.S. relations because of the creation of the State of Israel; that he opposed the

prescription that could be tolerated both by American Jews and Jews the world over, providing a link to a common identity that also served up a practical, tangible solution to a tricky policy issue. In serving this dual purpose it is hardly surprising that Zionism became a rallying point for postwar American Jews who were seeking to assimilate into the American middle class while maintaining identification with Jewish culture and history.

This is not to say that by seeking assimilation American Jews were seeking to abandon or deny their Jewish heritage and culture. On the contrary, the “rich organizational structure” of American Jewry that had begun as a strategy for survival at the turn of the century remained strong in the postwar years. Several studies in the 1960s indicated that suburban American Jews maintained most of their primary associations with other Jews, even though their religious ties were weaker than those of Protestants and Catholics.⁸⁰ This was partly in reaction to a postwar Protestant American establishment that frowned on total integration and assimilation.

This press for postwar limited assimilation is key to understanding the immediate dropping of Peter Bergson from the historical narrative of Holocaust memory. A cosmopolitan figure who was literally a citizen of the world, no one would ever mistake

instant recognition of Israel at the time; and that he felt that our interests in the Arab world were larger than they were likely to be in the State of Israel. Whether Loy Henderson was anti-Semitic in that feeling, it's hard to be certain of, because one never knows what goes on in the inner-most circles of a man's mind. But I have never heard him speak in a way that I judged to be anti-Semitic... But those, of course, who are strongly in favor of Israel and its purposes tend to confuse the two. I think it would probably be fair to say Loy Henderson was anti-Zionist.” Rockwell Interview, p. 18-19, Truman Library

⁸⁰ Henry Feingold, “Jewish Life in the United States: Perspectives From History” in *Jewish Life in the United States: Perspectives from the Social Sciences* ed. Joseph B. Gittler (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 283.

Bergson for a middle-class striver content to keep his head down and willingly subvert to a dominant paradigm. Bergson was a showman and rabble-rouser who played at stoking strong emotions in order to rouse righteous indignation. Stunts like *We Will Never Die* and the March of the Rabbis were hardly the work of a man wanting to blend in and play the game. Such behavior, many postwar Jews felt, was unnecessarily showy and even antisocial. “Too many Jews,” wrote one activist looking back on the immediate postwar years, “believe[d] that if all Jews behaved ‘properly’ anti-Semitism would disappear; they are nervous wrecks if there’s a Jewish *goniff* on the front page.”⁸¹

More troubling than Bergson’s individual methods, however, was the message behind them. These same outlandish tactics not only grabbed attention, they set Jews apart from the audience whom they were seeking to influence by defining Jews explicitly as an “other” who needed to be saved by action carried out by a strong, dominant Protestant America. The beards and traditional garb of the Orthodox rabbis seen marching on the White House in the pages of the *Washington Post* stuck out in sharp contrast to the suits Rabbi Wise wore to his Washington meetings. In seeking to cast the Jews as a people who are worth saving, *We Will Never Die* highlighted both Jewish historical exceptionalism and contemporary Jewish victimhood, both placing Jews on the outside of the “mainstream” middle class. Ben Hecht’s opening prayer, read by a rabbi, went in part:

Almighty God, Father of the poor and the weak, Hope of all who dream of goodness and justice; Almighty God who favored the children of Israel with His light... Before our eyes has appeared the strange and awesome picture of a folk being put to death, of a great and ancient people in whose veins have lingered for

⁸¹ Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, 1970. “The Oppression of America’s Jews,” in *Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology*, ed. Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier (New York, Grove Press, 1973), 32.

so long the earliest works and image of God... For in our Testament are written the words of Habakkuk, Prophet of Israel, "They shall never die."⁸²

These words, powerful though they may be, cast Jews in a victim/outsider status that was at odds with a mounting desire to use cultural (not religious) Jewishness as a means to middle-class assimilation. In praising their unique religious and historical status as a chief reason for their rescue, *We Will Never Die* predicated Jewish physical safety on the basis of Jewish exceptionalism. This contrasted with the postwar trend towards a collective American Jewish identity that was based not on historical exceptionalism, but on contemporary material and social gains using the same rubric of success as other immigrant groups—assimilation and progress towards the American Dream.

The emphasis on historical exceptionalism also contradicted the ideal "New Jew" that was being born in conjunction with Israel. "To be a Jew, in these new terms," noted Rabbi Rosenberg,

no longer seemed to project the image of a cringing, withdrawing, medieval ghetto dweller, who was essentially irrelevant to modern life. The heroic and epic qualities of the Hebrew Biblical world seemed now to be leaping into life, and the wish to be identified with this new expression of Jewishness became the dominant desire of virtually all the Jews of America.⁸³

Ironically, Hillel Kook himself filled this ideal role of the "New Jew" rather perfectly. With his past work as a quasi-military leader in the Irgun, his defiance of traditional deferential role-playing in his relationship to a Protestant power structure and his personal charisma, Hillel Kook embodied many of the ideal traits of the New Jew—brave, rugged, iconoclastic and thoroughly Jewish while not embodying the stereotype of a bookish or nebbish Jew. "He [Kook] had unlimited chutzpah..." remembered Irgun

⁸² Ben Hecht, *A Child of the Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954), 554-555.

⁸³ 128-129, Rosenberg

activist Yitshaq Ben-Ami in his memoirs, "...[and] an ability to accept defeats with little emotion. He would retreat and lick his wounds, and the next day he would be ready for the next round."⁸⁴ Unfortunately, the man's traits, however well they fit the mold of the "New Jew," were inseparable from his tactics and their underlying, now unfashionable, approach.

In transcending national origin and adherence to orthodoxy, American Zionism helped Jews to form a common bond that organized around and grew strength from the fledgling state of Israel. "I was deeply impressed by the efficiency of the Zionist lobby [at the United Nations in April 1947]," stated Director Henderson. "Drawing on their enormous sources of information, they seemed to have studied the countries over which for one reason or another they might have the most influence, and they had apparently their own slate. They flooded the lobbies and the halls, buttonholing delegates and engaging in persuasive and sometimes almost menacing conversation."⁸⁵ Donations to Israel poured in as Jewish community organizations' fundraising soared in the immediate postwar years, quadrupling from 1945 to 1948 to about \$200 million annually.⁸⁶ Individual Jewish lobbying groups began to coalesce in 1954 as Nahum Goldmann began to realize the logic that presenting a united front would prove more helpful in dealing with the State Department on Israel issues.⁸⁷ Such organizational tactics, as we have seen, had their roots in prewar community organizing, designed to help Jews individually and collectively overcome domestic anti-Semitic sentiment. But as American Jewish cultural identification coalesced around the state of Israel and grew in both organizational

⁸⁴ 295 Ben-Ami

⁸⁵ Henderson Interview, p. 119, Truman Library

⁸⁶ 129 Lipset and Raab

⁸⁷ 40-41 Tivnan

sophistication and political influence, there was increasingly less room for a political renegade like Hillel Kook in historical memory of the recent past.

Kook's bitter break with the Knesset, described earlier in this thesis, and his subsequent outlying positions on the relationship between Israel and Judaism put him at odds with the prevailing contemporary mentality on the ideal relationship between American Jews and Israel. Once again, both his methods and the philosophy behind them were rendering him out of sync with a narrative of the Holocaust and Jewish identity that was coming to dominate contemporary historical memory. Even though few American Jews were moving to Israel, their daily lives and communities typically embodied what Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab call a "cultural Zionism," which recognizes Israel as a site of inspiration, if not assemblage, for all Jews.⁸⁸ Even if Kook had not consciously retreated into relative obscurity after leaving Israel, it is highly unlikely that his criticisms of Israel would have found a willing audience among postwar American Jews. As an outlaw to the Americans, British and Zionists it would have been extraordinarily difficult to separate his work in the war years from his tenure in Palestine and Israel.

American Jews proved remarkably successful at their efforts for postwar integration and pursuit of the American Dream, allowing them a security that permitted a swell of Jewish activism in domestic social justice causes in the 1960s and 70s. The combination of a surging domestic economy and rising levels of education nationwide contributed to a dramatic decrease of American anti-Semitism.⁸⁹ A long-term

⁸⁸ Seymour Martin Lipset and David Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press), 131.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 98.

commitment to liberal causes (Nathan Glazer once dryly noted, “Judaism in American had been for a long time not much more than ethnic loyalty on one hand and ‘liberalism’ on the other”) manifested itself in a growing Jewish left that allied itself with the Civil Rights Movement, feminism and other progressive causes in the 1960s.⁹⁰ This era also saw a strong resurgence in self-examination of ethnic Jewishness. This rise in ethnic consciousness paralleled similar contemporary trends such as Black Power and Latino identity movements. However, the Six-Day War of Israel in August 1967 caused a new reappraisal of the Holocaust, stirring memories that reminded American Jews of their potential “aloneness.”⁹¹ The resulting anxiety often manifested itself in contradictory terms, with many Jews showing an immigrant’s patriotic zeal towards the United States while simultaneously aligning themselves with progressive issues causing schisms in middle-class America. It was, to say the least, a confusing time of constantly renegotiating American Jewish identity. Younger Jews were beginning to question their elders about the Holocaust, but answers were not forthcoming nor was the questioning especially widespread yet. Too much was unstable and uncertain to go poking around in a settled past.

As the dust settled on the ideological battles of the 1960s and 70s, the surge in Holocaust scholarship in the 1980s paralleled the growth in influence of the institutionalized American Jewish political lobby. Though founded in 1953, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) expanded dramatically during the Reagan administration. Though undoubtedly such expansion was in part due to a friendly

⁹⁰ Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Second Edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 181-182.

⁹¹ Stuart E. Rosenberg, *The New Jewish Identity in America* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985), 37.

political environment in Washington, there was no denying that a fundamental shift had taken place. Gone were the days of religious figures like Wise using personal relationships to influence policy. In was a sense of pride in showing strength through mass organization and political mobilization. AIPAC and other Jewish interest groups publicly courted politicians, aware of their influence and drawing strength from it. The USHMM was initiated by Jewish aides to Jimmy Carter who hoped to counter perceptions that Carter's Middle Eastern policies were "excessively even-handed."⁹²

This is not to say that AIPAC and other American Jewish interest groups wielded only unabashed strength. Throughout AIPAC's existence it has remained demonstrably attuned to its public image, particularly regarding any question of its supporters harboring dual national loyalties. President George H.W. Bush complained in 1992 that "thousands" of pro-Israel lobbyists had flocked to Washington after being mobilized by American Jewish organizations opposing his position on certain loan guarantees to Israel. He was subsequently forced to apologize when Jews interpreted this as a dig about dual loyalties.⁹³ Lobbying on behalf of American Jewry had become secular, institutionalized and attuned to public relations.

Finally, it would be wrong to dismiss the role of pop culture and the increasingly large role of the Holocaust in American life. Whether changes in American Jewish conceptions of their identity begat these products or vice versa is akin to asking which came first, the chicken or egg. Though we cannot definitively establish causation, mass

⁹² Peter Novick "The American National Narrative of the Holocaust: There Isn't Any." *New German Critique*, No. 90 (Autumn 2003): 32. Novick does not go into detail, but the most pressing relevant factor was Carter's belief he needed to mollify American Jews in response to their opposition to his 1978 proposed sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia.

⁹³ Lipset and Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene*, 128.

circulation of cultural products relating to the Holocaust coincided with and undoubtedly fed into developing modes of Jewish identity politics in mid and late-20th century America.

The publication of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* in 1952 and its stage and film adaptations, first presented in 1955 and 1959, respectively, gave American audiences a highly sympathetic, innocent representative face for Holocaust victims even as critics noted the heroine's Jewish identity remained in the background.⁹⁴ Elie Weisel's *Night*, published in 1959, is credited by many scholars with popularizing "Holocaust" as a proper noun. The 1978 television miniseries "The Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss," often colloquially referred to as "the Jewish Roots," helped to start a national popular dialogue on the Holocaust.⁹⁵ Though the nine-and-a-half hour NBC miniseries starring Meryl Streep and James Woods would later be criticized as melodramatic, it had an enormous audience of an estimated 120 million Americans and 400 million additional viewers worldwide.⁹⁶ The publication of Art Spiegelman's comic book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* in 1986 dealt directly with the issue of memory and second-generation

⁹⁴ Samantha Power, "To Suffer by Comparison?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 128, No. 2 The Next Generation: Work in Progress (Spring, 1999): 39.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁶ For a discussion of how "The Holocaust" miniseries provoked an emotional national dialogue on memory, responsibility and denial in West Germany see Siegfried Zielinski, "History as Entertainment and Provocation: The TV Series 'Holocaust' in West Germany," *New German Critique* 19 (Winter 1980): 81-96 and Andreas Hussyen, "The Politics of Identification: 'Holocaust' and West German Drama," *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington UP, 1986): 113.

ownership of the Holocaust narrative while blasting a presumed high/low dichotomy of representation that left its memory bracketed within a particular mode of presentation.⁹⁷

It was this combination of security, self-awareness and distance that led to the rise in Holocaust scholarship in the 1980s and paved the way for a re-emergence of the Bergsonites in the historical narrative of the Holocaust. The “new generation of scholars” that Medoff referenced earlier in this section had counterparts in broader Jewish American culture who, secure in their status and feeling comparatively freer from concerns of anti-Semitism than their parents and grandparents, would feel comfortable institutionalizing the memory of a renegade like Bergson. As Jews shifted from victim/outsider status to activist/insider status, their sureness of their place in American society allowed for a more critical self-examination that made a beginning exploration of internal divisions easier to study dispassionately.

Though starting from a place of relative strength and prosperity encouraged the beginnings of revisionist Holocaust scholarship, including new studies of the Bergsonites, it is a recent re-evaluation of the Jewish political lobby that has perhaps most encouraged the types of scholarship being conducted today. In part to forestall the inevitable backlash that can occur when any one movement becomes disproportionately influential, even longtime members of the American Zionist Jewish establishment like Goldmann cautioned against overexerting or abusing Jewish power. “The support of America under the pressure of American Jewry, has been precious for Israel” he noted in 1980, “but it is now slowly becoming something of a negative factor... the time may not be far off when

⁹⁷ Alison Landsberg, “America, the Holocaust and the Mass Culture of Memory: Toward a Radical Politics of Empathy.” *New German Critique*, No. 71, Memories of Germany (Spring-Summer, 1997): 68.

American public opinion will be sick and tired of the demand of Israel and the aggressiveness of American Jewry.”⁹⁸ The very success of the Jewish lobby, many felt, could put American Jews in danger—the old concerns about “keeping your heard down,” but recast in a new light to fit with contemporary political realities. Jewish dissent from AIPAC has become more formal and organized in the last fifteen years, with Goldman disciple and self-proclaimed Zionist Arthur Hertzberg calling for its dissolution and increasing debate in the Jewish press about what the American Jewish relationship to Israel should be. Is it an ancestral homeland, a spiritual center, a tool for fundraising, a symbol of strength, a clog in the political machinations for a Middle East peace process? The very fact that these questions are now being asked in the public forum allowed for a symbolic opening for potentially critical academic scholarship. More recently, a summer 2008 public opinion poll of American Jews showed a startling finding that Jews today overwhelmingly favor the United States advocating compromise in Arab-Israeli negotiations, including 76 percent who favor “negotiating with Israel’s worst enemies” withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for full peace (58 percent) and withdrawal from the West Bank (59 percent).⁹⁹ This poll suggests that there has been a dramatic shift from conventional wisdom that American Jews unilaterally support Israel in all actions, and suggests a strong inclination for dispassionate examination of historical and contemporary factual circumstances—the same tendency that has marked the recent surge in revisionist Holocaust scholarship and study of Hillel Kook.

⁹⁸ Nahum Goldmann, “The Present Chance for Mideast Peace,” *Worldview*, March 1980.

⁹⁹ Press Release, “American Jews Defy Conventional Wisdom on Israel and the Middle East” J Street Opinion Poll 16 July 2008

It is worth noting that later in his life Kook rejected some of the conclusions reached in this analysis. “Most American Jews,” he stated in a 1982 interview, “are unorganized; the vast majority of them are pro-Israel, just as most American non-Jews are pro-Israel. I think a great deal of the Jewish support for Israel is because of the non-Jewish support.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, to speak of one monolithic “American Jewish voice” is inherently problematic. There will always be rogues and outliers (like Kook) who do not conform to a heterogeneous interest regarding Israel or any issue of interest to Jews. But it seems clear that even between Kook’s words of 1982 and today’s scholarship and his life’s work, there has been a significant shift in American Jews’ willingness to examine historical fissions within their community. In large part, such courage and dispassionate analysis are made possible by their present-day strength and security within American culture and politics. “American Jews” noted one journalist in 2002, “...have learned the Bergsonian lesson: to wield power unashamedly, in accordance with their needs and rights.”¹⁰¹ The present-day adoption of that lesson is what allows a safe place in the canon for studying the man and work behind it.

¹⁰⁰ Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth*, 215

¹⁰¹ Michael B. Oren, “The Rescuer” *The New Republic*, 21 October 2002.

Conclusion

Thanks in large part to the Wyman Institute's efforts to redefine the historical memory of Jewish responses to the Holocaust, it certainly seems as though public awareness of Peter Bergson and his followers is on the upswing. As memory studies continue to grip contemporary historians, it seems likely that Bergson will become a representative symbol of "forgotten heroes" whom history has for, whatever reasons, excluded. The relative success of including Bergson within traditional American sites of Holocaust memory, particularly within museum exhibitions, and the rise in historical research on Bergson suggests that historical memory of his work on rescue efforts has now become safely ensconced within the historical canon. The next frontier of Bergson-related history is most likely further study of his immediate postwar life and role in the creation of the Israel. This is an area that has yet to be seriously explored by either American or Israeli historians, and both revisionist historians of a new generation within Israel and a growing disciplinary focus on transnational studies make this a likely path for future scholarship.

The memory of Bergson, his followers and their work is a fascinating example not just of a historical figure, but also of how trends in historical scholarship are shaped by politics, access and simple coincidence. However, it is critical to remember how atypical the reinsertion of Peter Bergson into the historical narrative has been. There are extraordinarily few organizations that have the niche focus, resources, credibility and drive as the Wyman Institute. Without their many varied efforts to encourage new narratives of Holocaust history, it seems highly unlikely that Bergson would have been

able to so quickly and in so many varied ways make a re-appearance on the historical scene at this particular moment in time. His work was exceptional, but so are the ways in which it is now being remembered. It took the confluence of an energetic external agency meeting a receptive political and cultural climate for his story to become part of history.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

American Jewish Congress Archives

Author interview with Dr. Rafael Medoff, Director, David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies. Washington, D.C., 2 April 2008.

FBI Archives

Hecht, K.W.a.B., *We Will Never Die*. 1943, European American Music Corporation: United States.

Maurice Rosenblatt Papers, Library of Congress

United States. War Relocation Authority and E.B. Marks, *Token Shipment: The Story of America's War Refugee Shelter*. 1975, New York: AMS Press

The Jerusalem Post

JTA- Jewish & Israel News

The New Republic

New York Times

Washington Post

Washington Times-Herald

Secondary Sources

Baumel, Judith Tylor, *The "Bergson Boys" and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press. 1st ed. Modern Jewish History, 2005.

Ben-Ami, Yitshaq, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory: Memoirs from the Irgun*. New York: Robert Speller & Sons Publishers, 1982.

Brenner, Lenni "Zionist Revisionism: The Years of Fascism and Terror." *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (Autumn, 1983): 66-92.

Feingold, Henry, "Jewish Life in the United States: Perspectives From History." In *Jewish Life in the United States: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, edited by Joseph B. Gittler. New York: New York University Press, 1981.

Friedman, Saul S., *No Haven For The Oppressed; United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973.

- Glazer, Nathan, *American Judaism* (Second Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Hecht, Ben, *A Child of the Century*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954.
- Hertzberg, Arthur, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*. New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960.
- Karp, A.J., *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America*. New York: Schocken Books, 1985.
- Landsberg, Alison "America, the Holocaust and the Mass Culture of Memory: Toward a Radical Politics of Empathy." *New German Critique*, No. 71, *Memories of Germany* (Spring-Summer, 1997): 63-86.
- Leventman, Seymour. "From Shetl to Suburb." In *The Ghetto and Beyond*, edited by Peter I. Rose 33-56. New York: Random House, 1969.
- Linenthal, Edward T., *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin and David Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene*. Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Lipstadt, Deborah E., "America and the Holocaust." *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (October 1990): 283-296.
- Lookstein, Haskel, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers?: The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938-1944*. New York, NY: Hartmore House, 1985.
- Lowenstein, S.R., *Token Refuge: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944-1946*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Matzozsky, Ehyo "An Episode: Roosevelt and the Mass Killing," *Midstream*, August/September 1980
- Novick, Peter "The American National Narrative of the Holocaust: There Isn't Any." *New German Critique*, No. 90 (Autumn 2003): 27-35.
- Peck, Sarah E., "The Campaign for an American Response to the Nazi Holocaust, 1943-1945." *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (April 1980): 367-400.
- Pelosi, Nancy, *Know Your Power: A Message to America's Daughters*. New York: Doubleday, 2008.

- Penkower, Monty N., *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- Penkower, Monty N. "Jewish Organizations and the Creation of the U.S. War Refugee Board." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 450, *Reflections on the Holocaust: Historical, Philosophical, and Educational Dimensions* (Jul., 1980), 122-139.
- Power, Samantha. "To Suffer by Comparison?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 128, No. 2 The Next Generation: Work in Progress (Spring, 1999): 31-66.
- Rapoport, Louis. *Shake Heaven & Earth: Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Rescue the Jews of Europe*. Jerusalem & New York: Gefen Pub. House, 1999.
- Rosen, Robert N., *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006.
- Rosenberg, Stuart E. *The New Jewish Identity in America*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1985.
- Skloot, Robert. "'We Will Never Die': The Success and Failure of a Holocaust Pageant." *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (May 1985): 167-180.
- Taylor, Alan R. "Zionism and Jewish History." *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1972): 35-51
- Tivnan, Edward, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987.
- Urofsky, Melvin I., *A Voice That Spoke For Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982.
- Wyman, David S., *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1st ed. 1984.
- Wyman, David S. and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust*. New York: New Press, 2002.
- Zuckoff, Aviva Cantor. "The Oppression of America's Jews." In *Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology*, edited by Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier, 29-51. New York, Grove Press, 1973.