

PART ONE

From the Rise of Nazism
to Postwar Efforts
to Establish the Modern
Jewish State

Chapter 1

THE PERSECUTION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY AND FINDING SAFE HAVENS

Adolf Hitler's "Final Solution"—the chilling code words for his hoped-for destruction of European Jewry—would not be felt in its full horror until the 1940s, following the outbreak of World War II, with the full mechanization of his death camps. The Nazi Holocaust was preordained, however, when on January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler and his murderous minions assumed power in Germany.

The most terrible era in the history of the Jewish people would end only with the unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945, of the remnant of the regime that had for more than twelve years systematically dehumanized, terrorized, ghettoized, and then deported Jews from Nazi-occupied nations, annihilating approximately six million, including more than one million children.

Setting the Stage for the Near-Annihilation of European Jewry

At twelve thirty a.m. on Friday, September 30, 1938, the British prime minister, Arthur Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940), affixed his signature to the Munich Pact, an act of appeasement toward Hitler, in which the Sudetenland was ceded to Germany, effectively dismembering Czechoslovakia. Hours later, Chamberlain returned to Britain, waving a piece of paper and declaring that his efforts had achieved "Peace for our time."

Shmuel “Meuki” Katz, émigré from South Africa to Eretz Israel, 1936; member, High Command, Irgun Zvai Leumi, 1944–1948; member, first Knesset, 1948–1952; founding member, Land of Israel Movement; cabinet member and adviser to Prime Minister Menachem Begin on overseas information, 1977–1979; publisher; author; columnist, *Jerusalem Post*; biographer of Ze’ev Jabotinsky I arrived in London on the day that Chamberlain arrived from Munich and so I was witness to the euphoria that overtook the public—I don’t know *how much* of the public—at Chamberlain’s success in staving off war. I was staying at a hotel near Piccadilly Circus. It had been raining, and when it stopped raining, toward evening, I went out for a walk. I came across a crowd of young people. Apparently, they had all been in pubs, or whatever, and were singing, “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow” and “Good Old Neville.” I was on one sidewalk, and opposite me, on the other sidewalk, was a dark-haired guy who was dishing out leaflets. So I walked across and took one from him. The heading was “Czechoslovakia Betrayed.” The crowd came up around us, and he gave some of them leaflets. They started joking at him; they didn’t hit him or anything but were laughing at him, jeering at him, and one of them apparently patted him on the back or perhaps had given him a push. He fell and, as it had been raining, the papers all got wet. His glasses fell off, and he put them back on again. Then he walked away very dejectedly, and I remember thinking to myself, This is the only sane man in the street.

The Situation in Eastern Europe

The Jewish population of Lodz, located in central Poland and the center of the country’s textile industry, had grown from 11 people in the late eighteenth century to 233,000 at the outbreak of World War II, comprising a third of the city’s population. Following the Nazi Wehrmacht’s entry into the city on September 8, 1939, Lodz was annexed by the Reich, its Jewish Community Council was disbanded, and the organization’s former vice chairman, Chaim Rumkowski, was installed as *Judenältester* (Jewish community “elder”). Within weeks the Nazis had disbanded this new organization, sending its members to a concentration camp. Further acts of terror were carried out against the city’s Jewish community, including cruel and murderous ghettoization, vicious pogroms, and deportations to Chelmno, a notorious death camp. By September 1, 1944, most of the ghetto’s remaining population of 76,701 had been deported to Auschwitz. When Soviet troops liberated the ghetto on January 19, 1945, only 800 Jews were found there.

Shmuel Katz We [Mr. Katz and his mentor, the Revisionist visionary Ze'ev "Jabo"—a popular nickname for Jabotinsky] came to Lodz [in 1936], where he [Jabotinsky] was staying with a family named Spektor [the family of Jacob Spektor, a wealthy textile merchant and prominent Revisionist, whose son Eryk would one day live in New York and become the head of Herut, "Freedom," U.S.A., the organization established in July 1948 in Israel by the Irgun]. They had an extra room—I think that Eryk was then studying in Jerusalem—and Jabo was to deliver a talk in a cinema in the town, so we all went together with Jabo. They had a car, an unusual thing in Poland, and when we arrived at the cinema, the whole area was full of people protesting against Jabotinsky because he was telling them to get the hell out of Europe. And their argument was: "We're *Polish*; we've been here a thousand years!" We couldn't get into the front entrance of the cinema; the crowd was too thick. So there were police around. A big policeman—I remember him very well—took us around to the back of the cinema. There was a kind of yard behind the cinema, and there was still a crowd back there. It wasn't very thick, and so the policeman told us to wait. He took Mrs. Spektor and led her into the hall through the back entrance. Then he took Jabotinsky and led him into the hall, through the same entrance. Then he came back and took Mr. Spektor. When he didn't come back again, I was left there with the crowd between me and the hall. They wouldn't let me through, so I started pushing my way toward the cinema. The policeman had stationed himself near the hall, and when he saw that somebody was making some kind of disturbance at the back entrance, he came around and saw me pushing through the crowd. He gave me one punch, just one, and I flew across the empty space, onto the sidewalk, and sat there. Then I saw that Jabo, who had already been inside the hall, had come out and was looking for me. Finally, he saw me, and I could see that he wanted to laugh, but he restrained himself. He called the policeman, and the policeman came up to me and led me into the hall like a little boy. And that's the occasion when I heard Jabotinsky speak to a partly unsympathetic audience. They didn't like what he was telling them—some did, some didn't—but it was not the enthusiasm that I had seen at other meetings with Jabotinsky.

Matityahu "Mati" Drobles (with Batia Leshem, interpreter), Polish-born Holocaust survivor; immigrated to Israel, 1950; chairman, Rural Settlements Division, World Zionist Organization; chairman, Central Zionist Archive It was a very, very bad time. When the war began, I was [nearly] seven years old. I came from a good family, of average income. I

was in the middle; my sister was two and a half years older, and my brother was two years younger. In 1941, the Germans took us to the ghetto. The whole family—there were 250 people—was killed, but we three children survived.

In the winter of '42, we escaped the ghetto through the garbage, and for three years we wandered through villages and forests—no housing, no place to live. I was nine years old; my sister was nearly twelve years old. We wanted to stay in our Jewish life, but we didn't meet any Jews, and we were convinced that there were no Jews anymore in the world. I was talking with my sister: "What will happen? There are no Jews anywhere in the world." She said, "You know what? I know one place in the world, called *Palestine*. There, I heard that Jews are living. When the war is finished, we are going to Palestine."

The Situation in Germany

Simcha Waisman, born in Palestine to immigrants from Europe in 1945; joined the Israeli navy at the age of fifteen; served in the 1967 Six-Day War; emigrated to the United States two years later; owner of a print shop in New York City for thirty-five years until retiring in mid-2006; currently, community activist, volunteer with the Richmond Hill Block Association, Queens, New York My mother was a registered nurse in Germany. She was one of twelve brothers and sisters, a large family. I met some of my mother's side, her brothers and sisters—they came to Israel later on—and we used to live like a big family. But some of them I never met because they didn't make it; my mother's parents never made it out from the Holocaust.

Shabtai Shavit, Arabic speaker; former head of Mossad Both my mother's and my father's families perished in the Holocaust. My mother was one of eight children, and only one of them survived. In the fifties, he immigrated to Israel. And he succeeded in saving his wife, his daughter, and his wife's sister, and all of them came to Israel.

Malcolm Hoenlein, founding executive director, Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry; founding executive director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New York; at present, executive vice chairman, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations My grandparents were all killed. My father came [to the

United States] in June 1940 from Holland. He lost his sister, as well, and a nephew and a brother-in-law. Only one sister survived. My mother was an only child, and her mother and many other relatives were killed. [My family had lived] there for many hundreds of years, much longer than the people who killed them.

Ernest Stock, Ph.D., German-born immigrant to the United States and then to Israel; journalist, *Jerusalem Post*; assistant to the director (United States), Hillel Foundations; official, Jewish Agency for Israel; prolific author; husband of Bracha Stock

We got out quite late, after the Crystal Night in Germany in 1938. My father was very hesitant to leave. He was already in his midforties—he was born in 1892—when the Nazis came to power. Now a man in his forties is still considered young, but back then a man at that age would find it quite a difficult move. In fact, I came across something that my father had written, in which he said, “If I had known earlier that it was that easy to become adjusted in America, I would have left Germany earlier.” He must have had a mind-set that said, It’s going to be terrifically difficult. And another thing, he was a perpetual optimist who felt, This whole business with the Nazis is bound to blow over; the Germans, after all, are not that crazy that they would fall for this guy and let him take over completely. I left Germany at age fourteen with my sister, for France, while my father was in a concentration camp, and my mother was left behind. She let us go to France with the idea that we would somehow all get together and go to America afterward.

Bobby Brown, immigrant to Israel from the United States, 1978; mayor, settlement of Tekoah; aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; currently, adviser to the treasurer, Jewish Agency for Israel

My parents came very late, separately. My mother was twelve years old when she came with her mother to the United States. They had the highest numbers on the last legal boat to leave Germany, and they left in April 1940. And there were stories. My grandfather had actually been a leader in a small town called Battenberg, and he had been called in by the Nazis for interrogation. They kept him for a day, and he came home feeling very badly and went to sleep. When he woke up, he died. No one ever knew exactly what happened or found out from the Gestapo. The only doctor in town was a leader in the Nazi Party, so he refused even to come to examine my grandfather’s body. And after not seeing my grandfather, the doctor wrote: “Cause of death: heart attack.” There was one cemetery for three towns, and on the way, the funeral procession was

stoned, and the kids were screaming: “That’s the father. When’s the *mother* coming?”

When my grandfather died, the request to leave had been submitted in his name. His name was Ludwig, so he was Ludwig I. Neuberger—the “I” was for “Israel,” which was the name all Jewish men had to write; Jewish women had to write “Sarah”—so my grandmother all of a sudden realized that she’d have to start the whole process over because *he* had requested it, and now he was dead. She bribed someone to change the “I” to “Inger,” which was my mother’s name, so that it said, “Ludwig Inger,” and then she convinced them that since there was an application from “Inger,” she was now the custodian for Inger, so they let her continue in that queue, waiting for numbers to get out. Obviously, had she not done that, and if they hadn’t gotten out in April 1940, they wouldn’t have gotten out.

After a lot of problems, my grandmother and my mother took a boat from Hamburg to Genoa. There they had to wait three days until another boat took them to the United States. They knew no one in New York; they lived in a public park and ate from garbage cans.

My grandmother’s brother lived in Germany with only one desire, and that desire was to get his son out. After working really very hard at it, he got his son on a Kindertransport to England. But that Kindertransport was torpedoed, and all the kids were killed. When my grandmother’s brother heard that, he hanged himself. My grandmother knew that her brother had died, but she never knew the reason why—no one ever told her.

My father’s mother was a nurse in World War I, and one of her patients was the young prince Haile Selassie [1892–1975, the emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1936 and again from 1941 to 1974. Known as the Lion of Judah, he had close ties with Israel until succumbing at the time of the Yom Kippur War to an Arab inducement to support him in his difficulties with insurgent elements. In 1974, he was deposed by a Marxist council, imprisoned and, reportedly, murdered.]. So when the time came to leave—she was just trying to go *anywhere*—she actually wrote to Haile Selassie and asked whether he would take in the family on my father’s side as refugees. He wrote back, “I remember you with great fondness, but it is not a good time to come to Ethiopia.” And, of course, a few months later, Ethiopia was invaded by the Italians. He probably knew that that would happen. Otherwise, I might have been the only albino Ethiopian.

My grandparents lived in a small town near Fulda. My grandfather was a big, strapping man—he was a cattleman. When the Nazis came in the early days to his house, he took a chair and broke it and started beating them up. Maybe a couple of years later, that would have been enough to

end him, but in the very beginning, the Nazis didn't really know what to do, and they ran away.

They let my grandmother and three children leave the country, but not my father, because he was of military age. And she said, "What do you mean 'military age' for a Jewish boy?" So the Nazis said that "military age" meant that he would have to go into a labor battalion. And those who went into labor battalions usually didn't come out. My grandmother told my grandfather, "You're not leaving; you're staying with Lothar until he gets out." The way the Nazis stopped him from getting out was that they wouldn't give him a passport. So every few weeks, my grandfather would go to the Passport Office, and they would always refuse him, and he'd go back. My grandfather sold cattle, and once, when he was leaving the Passport Office, the head of the Cattlemen's Association saw him and said, "Bernard, what are you doing here?" My grandfather explained the situation, and the head of the Cattlemen's Association said, "I'm also the president of the Passport Office, and if you come tomorrow, I'll give a passport to your son." On Shabbat, the next day, my grandfather asked, "What shall I do?" And my grandmother said, "You get on your bicycle and pedal over to that Passport Office!" Sure enough, there was a passport waiting for him, and my father got out. Who lived and who died was a matter of luck.

Zalman Shoval, immigrant to Israel from the then Free City of Danzig, East Prussia; leader at the age of sixteen, Boy Scouts; close associate of Moshe Dayan in newly formed Rafi Party (the Worker's List of Israel), 1960s; member, Knesset, 1970–1981 and 1988–1990; diplomat, ambassador of Israel to the United States, 1990–1993 and 1998–2000; currently, international businessman; president, Israel Chamber of Commerce

I didn't experience the Nazi terror because until 1939 Danzig was under the auspices of the League of Nations, although the population was probably 90 percent German, with Nazi uniforms and everything. But the Jews of Danzig knew what was coming, and most of them got out in time, many of them to Palestine and many of them to America. Some even managed to get their belongings out of Germany. This was after we left. My father was a Zionist and came here first, in 1934, to prepare for our aliyah. But I understand that when the war broke out, it [the Nazi terror] broke out in Danzig. The Nazi *gauleiter* and the Jewish community came to a deal where the Nazis got such and such, and the Jews were able to take many of their own personal belongings and also artifacts from the synagogue.

My parents originally came from Eastern Europe, and all of my mother's

family perished in the Holocaust. But some of my father's brothers were in London, and some were here. It's an interesting psychological phenomenon: people didn't want to talk about it. My mother didn't want to talk about her mother and her sister and her brother; it was as if people removed their relatives, at least *outwardly*, from their memories.

Shabtai Shavit I remember, as a kid, there was not a lot of talk on the topic [of the murder of much of European Jewry during the Holocaust] at all. We carry this burden now because of the silence.

The Situation in Austria

Shlomo Ariav, Viennese-born member of Betar there from the age of ten; immigrated to Palestine in 1939 and joined the Irgun; member, Jewish Brigade; joined the Israel Defense Forces, 1948; sent to South America as first emissary of Betar, 1950; appointed co-chair, Keren Kayemeth Le Israel (Jewish National Fund), 1979; husband of Tzipora Ariav My life in Vienna was completely Jewish. In our apartment house there were forty Jewish families and two who were non-Jewish, so we were completely surrounded by friends. I used to come together on evenings and weekends with my Betar friends. We were very close; we went to the Jewish theater. I had four sisters—I was in the middle, the “sandwich” of the family—so I was spoiled. I lost my father when I was very young—I was close to thirteen when he died. He was a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army and was wounded by a sword. Cossacks came down the hill on their horses, he was hit with the sword, and that was it! We grew up not poor—we had enough to eat—but still it was a problem for my mother to raise five children without a man, so my sisters started to work early.

Then, when Hitler came to power, in '38, it was completely different. We were completely shut out—out of school, out of everything—and my family decided to go to Belgium. My mother stayed with me because I was already registered for the Youth Aliyah, to go to Palestine. My mother was there when I left by boat for Italy. Then she left for Belgium to join my four sisters. My four sisters were hidden by Christian families, and not only were they hidden, but the whole community knew that Jews were there.

One of my sisters was hidden by an engineer who worked for the Germans. He had two sisters who were blond, and my sister was blond, too. She heard the German officers who came to the engineer's home say, “One day we will suffer because of what we did to the Jews.” She understood

German, but she couldn't say a word. When I came to Belgium, I went to see the family. He was a very, very fine man, and he wanted to teach me about prefabricated buildings, but my head at that time was for girls.

I was a soldier in the Jewish Brigade. After I came back, I went to see them. My mother was taken to Auschwitz a few weeks before the liberation of Belgium, three or four weeks before Belgium was occupied by the British. My four sisters were alive. I asked the people, "Why did you sacrifice yourselves? You could have been killed immediately." They told me, "The Christian Father [the pope] told us to hide the Jewish people."

Zalman Shoval The closer one came to the end of the war, news of what had happened in Europe became more and more known. But that also was the time of the struggle against the British Mandate to bring the remnants of Jewry in Europe to [what would soon be the State of] Israel, and the complete refusal of the British to let these refugees into the country, which eventually led, of course, to American and U.N. involvement.

One chapter that still has to be written is how, with the fact that Winston Churchill was a Zionist, he, too, averted his eyes from what happened to the Jews in Europe during the war. It wasn't just Roosevelt; it was Churchill, too. From that point of view, there are certainly some black marks against Churchill.

The Jewish Community of Palestine's Sense of Imperilment

During World War II, there were numerous Allied campaigns against the Wehrmacht in North Africa—notably, in El Alamein, a village on the Mediterranean Sea in northwestern Egypt; and in Tobruk, a port city in the northeastern part of Libya. Both were crucial to the Allies' war against Nazi forces in North Africa. Given that the British had suffered setbacks in their North African campaigns, it was not beyond the realm of possibility that Nazi forces could overrun Palestine, with the resultant peril to the Jews of the Yishuv.

Zalman Shoval It wouldn't have taken very long for [Field Marshal Erwin Johannes Eugen] Rommel [1891–1944] to get here, and I'm sure that my parents and the older generation were very worried about that. But as kids, we didn't think so much about that. Yes, there was talk about the Haganah organizing a resistance group to fight on the Carmel if the Ger-

mans should come, God forbid. But, on the other hand, there were very few real hardships; there was always plenty of food in this country; life went on, the cafés went on. You didn't have the feeling of imminent danger, although Haifa was bombed quite often because of the refineries, and Tel Aviv was bombed several times—never by the Germans; once by the Italians, which created a lot of damage and many people were killed; and the second time by the Vichy French. There was a real war, and we had air raid alarms every night, which was fun for the kids, of course, but there were bombings in Tel Aviv only twice. And Tel Aviv was once shelled by an Italian submarine. But that was it.

Tzipora Ariav, member during World War II, Jewish Brigade; member, Irgun; agriculturist, wife of Shlomo Ariav I was stationed in Egypt, first in Mena and then between Ismailia and Cairo. I was a driver, and I drove all kinds of cars. In Tel Aviv there was a German settlement so we pushed them out. Sure, we were worried!

Joshua Matza, member, Stern Group until 1948; member, Knesset, 1984–2002; appointed minister of health, 1996; currently, president and chief executive officer, Israel Bonds There was big tension. There are names that I remember today from the fight in Africa—one is Tobruk. The Germans came to Tobruk. Of course, we were all scared about that, and we knew that if they were coming here, we would have to fight for our lives. And I remember all the names: General Rommel and [Bernard Law] Montgomery [First Viscount Montgomery of El Alamein, 1887–1976]. All of us were tense in those days.

Dan Pattir, journalist; correspondent; chief of the Prime Minister's Bureau, first administration of Yitzhak Rabin; spokesman in the administration of Menachem Begin; official, Abraham Fund; husband since 1956 of Professor Yael Pattir There was never a question about it. Every day we started to look at the papers—there were three or four Hebrew-language papers a day—and I was taught to look at the maps of the war: Where are the Germans? How far away are they? Where is the British military? Thousands of Jews were volunteers with the British army—in 1939 and 1940, we were about 300,000 or 400,000, and in 1948, we were 600,000—so almost all of us were affected. And our friends would come for holidays in British uniforms. My father was in charge of the security of our area, with the uniform of the voluntary police. We knew that we were involved in a war.

In 1942, we were attacked by the Italian air force, here in Tel Aviv. There was a reality that we were at war. The Jewish contingent in this country was also threatened by the Arabs. In 1939, the riots stopped because the war broke out, but the Arab threat was still there, and they didn't become friends overnight.

*At War's End, Finding One's Way Out of the
Graveyard of War-Ravaged Europe*

Matityahu "Mati" Drobles If we had a choice where to live, it would be only in Palestine. In 1945, we emigrated from Warsaw. There were refugees from other camps. We went to Italy. There was an official bureau of missing relatives, and there were two uncles—the brothers of my father—who were looking for my father's three children. They found us in Italy, and they took care of us. They wanted to bring us to Argentina.

So I went to Argentina with my brothers and my sister. We thought Argentina was Palestine! I stayed in Argentina for four years. My two uncles supported two private teachers for us to learn. In three and a half years, I matriculated and then had one year in the university. Then I realized that I had come to Argentina and not to *Palestine*! And when I finished my studies, I went to Palestine. At this point, I finished with the Holocaust, and I began to live.

Natan Sharansky, refusenik and prisoner of conscience, 1978–1986; freed, brought to Israel, February 11, 1986; founder, Yisrael Be'aliyah Party, 1995; member of Knesset, 1996–2003, 2006; minister of: industry and trade, 1996–1999, internal affairs, 1999–2000, housing and construction, 2001–2003; deputy prime minister, 2001–2003; minister without portfolio, 2003–2005; head, Shalem Center's Institute for International and Middle Eastern Studies We had a unique period in our history, after the Holocaust, in which for the first time, after thousands of years of our history, the enlightened part of the world had strong guilt feelings and felt a lot of sympathy for our national group. There was no period in history like this before, and I hope we will never have any period like this in the future because the price of this "love"—six million people—was too high. I don't want to be *loved* again; it's very expensive.