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THE HOLOCAUST:  
THE PORTRAYAL OF NON-JEWS  
IN JEWISH HISTORY TEXTBOOKS  
(1930-1950)

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## DIGEST

This thesis concerns the Holocaust period and how the American Jewish community responded to non-Jews during that time. My study is in three parts. The first part describes and summarizes the general world situation of the 1930s and 1940s. Hitler's rise to power and the Nazi's annihilation of six million Jews were not isolated instances of hatred and distrust. My first chapter focuses on perceptions and opinions of the American Jewish community concerning the world situation.

The second part of this study deals with the goals of American Jewish educators during these troubled decades. Although attention seems to have been directed toward modernizing educational programs that would lead the child to assume a more active role in the learning process, educators also strove to guide the child to an understanding of the complex world.

The third section, consisting of two chapters, concentrates on two authors' works. Dorothy Zeligs and Mordecai Soloff during this period wrote Jewish history textbooks for children in Jewish religious schools. Their narration of modern Jewish history made subtle or marked mention of non-Jews and their relationship to the Jewish community. Through these textbooks attitudes were taught.

Soloff is the more objective and realistic of the two authors, presenting not only the animosity which enveloped Europe, but also the ill-effects of this animosity which reached even the United States. Zeligs, on the other hand, confines her presentation of anti-Semitism to Europe, while she portrays America as unendangered. This section investigates Zeligs' and Soloff's attitudes toward non-Jews, which they conveyed through the textbooks they wrote during the Holocaust period.

My research indicates that the portrayal of non-Jews in these textbooks depends upon the role each author perceives each non-Jewish group to have taken in anti-Semitic activities, or in pro-Jewish or pro-humanitarian activities. In dealing with anti-Semitism, the textbook authors never suggest that Jews retaliate by hating anti-Semites. Rather, they optimistically anticipate and emphasize a better future, free of misunderstanding, hatred and threat to Jewish life.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Twentieth century Jewish experience cannot be comprehended without reflecting upon the horrifying decades of the 1930s and 1940s, at which time six million Jews were annihilated. Historical events must not be the only subject from this period to be studied. An atmosphere of hate, distrust and fear enveloped the world at this time.

One man took control of a nation and mystified the world. The writhings of these troubled decades culminated in a World War, the extermination of six million Jews, and desolation to much of the world. For Jews, it meant the loss of irreplaceable lives and the destruction of centuries-old Jewish cultural centers.

While the entire European Jewish community was being annihilated, another Jewish community thrived in the United States. Children in religious schools in America had two very different Jewish experiences to confront at the same time. The contemporary situation was taught so that children would come to understand the world around them. But what these children experienced and what they read about were two different worlds.

This study of the Holocaust period looks at some of the religious school textbooks written for children during the 1930s and 1940s. The focus here is on the contemporary

period, the dreadful Holocaust era, and particularly concerns how the non-Jewish community was portrayed to Jewish children 9 to 13 years of age.

A child's understanding is limited, contingent upon his sophistication and mental maturity. Any author must write on the level of his audience. These books, then, present ideas of the adult community to the next generation on its own level.

The first chapter is a summary of the events and atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s. I have used as my source material historians' accounts and committee reports from the Central Conference of American Rabbis. These resources put the events into perspective on an adult level, and allow for a more objective appraisal of the textbook material. Recognizing the tenor of the times allows the reader to predict and therefore spot any bias which may be present in educational material of these decades.

Because these are textbooks, the authors have specific educational goals they wish to attain. They state these goals at the outset of each of their volumes. Other educators comment as well in these introductions, reiterating or clarifying what each author has set out to do. Many of these goals are influenced by the rabbis' objectives for Jewish educational programs but they are never dominated by these objectives. Chapter II discusses and compares these objectives. The textbook material and the authors' presentations of the difficult contemporary world situation



come into focus.

The actual textbook material is central to this thesis, since I am examining the Holocaust through children's textbook materials. Children's textbooks implicitly teach attitudes. I am interested here with the attitudes toward non-Jews conveyed in these books written during the Holocaust era. Were Jewish children taught to be friends with non-Jews, fear them, disregard them, or perhaps like certain groups of them and dislike other groups of them? Concerning an era of pronounced anti-Semitism, such an investigation can prove to be most enlightening. Authors undoubtedly were influenced by the contemporary world situation. The attitudes children pick up through these textbooks reflect the authors' reactions to these troubled times. The works of two authors then are analyzed in the third and fourth chapters.

This study is not without its limitations. It is not an all-encompassing survey of the Holocaust period. This thesis concerns only the attitudes toward non-Jews which were taught to American Jewish children through their textbooks. I will show how each author's portrayal of the events of the Holocaust transmit his or her view of Jewish survival and convey his or her attitudes toward non-Jews in America and abroad.

## CHAPTER I

WORLD SITUATION DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s:  
BACKGROUND TO BOOKS PUBLISHED DURING THESE DECADES

The decade of the 1930s was characterized by all the gloom and fear that accompany impending war. Anti-Semitism and Nazism hovered over Europe, while reverberations of these negative forces reached the United States and left their marks. Generally the atmosphere was one of little trust between people and governments. For the Jewish populations of the world, this was a most gruesome decade, as they watched European Jews facing extermination. However, gentiles also found themselves victims of, as well as witnesses to, the sinister plots of Nazi leaders.

European anti-Semitism was a well-established institution by the 1930s. Russia's May Laws in 1882 forced Jews out of that country, the alternative being remaining there as a stigmatized minority. World War I renewed anti-Semitic legislation in Russia. The previous oppression not having been bad enough, Jews now were considered "the enemy," "spies," "cowards," and "deserters."<sup>1</sup> Officials declared Yiddish an alien language. During the years between the two World Wars political anti-Semitism lessened in Russia, but so too did Jewish communal life.

European Jewry was greatly disrupted during this decade. Jews trapped in Eastern Europe looked forward to the day they once again would be able to practice their Judaism with the sanction of their respective governments. Some succeeded in seeking refuge in more hospitable countries.

Germany must be singled out as a leader in the horrifying anti-Semitic experience of the '30s. In the early '30s, she was primarily a lower middle class country, still recovering from a shattering defeat suffered in the First World War. Anti-Semitism lent itself nicely to healing broken spirits and uplifting humiliated egos. Adolf Hitler capitalized on this with his vision of a "pure Aryan race." In the early stages he sought to annihilate an entire people through hunger, forced labor, and sterilization.<sup>2</sup> This was the pinnacle of World War II drama. The timing and machinery were right for plans for destruction to become reality.

Once a hole is made in the dam, it only takes seconds for a flood wave to sweep all before it . . . it tears all obstacles to pieces . . . This was the kind of horrifying drama a surprised world witnessed when budding German anti-Semitism suddenly threw off its academic cloak and a spectre of hatred for Jews was revealed in all its hideous nakedness.<sup>3</sup>

And so the '30s became a real-life horror show. The world stood back numb with disbelief while the Nazis took care of the "dark, hook-nosed Jews." The culmination of German anti-Semitism prior to the outbreak of World War II was the Nuremberg Laws, issued in 1935. Subsequently, Jews were denied all rights and privileges of citizenship, including

the right to a livelihood, and eventually the right to a life.

Out of this terrible wave of anti-Semitic feeling emerged the Nazi Party, "which was to overwhelm a puzzled and perplexed people."<sup>4</sup> One historian describes the National Socialist (Nazi) Party as "hardly more . . . than one of a multitude of tiny nationalist political groups that sprang up in Germany immediately following the end of World War I."<sup>5</sup> Hitler, who suffered from severe ego and emotional problems, joined this party. Soon afterwards, the aging Field Marshal von Hindenburg offered Hitler the position of chancellor, and Hitler quickly assumed uncontrollable leadership. After one national election in which the Nazis skillfully gained seats in the government, Hitler and his Nazi Party did away with all other German political parties.

Hitler had two henchmen who also assumed positions in the forefront during the 1930s. Adolf Eichmann was responsible for the destruction of Western European Jews and was regarded as the Nazi authority on Jewry. Rudolf Hoess, an "ex-con . . . dull-witted . . . a thug . . ."<sup>6</sup> ran an efficient operation at Auschwitz, thanks to his very competent help.

Jews who did not have the foresight to flee from Germany in the early '30s found it difficult to do so in the latter half of the decade. Those who could, bought their way out.<sup>7</sup> Those who could not, waited. A fortunate few were rescued by sympathetic representatives from Great

Britain and the League of Nations. One Jewish youth, out of rage and frustration, shot a German embassy official, triggering a nation-wide pogrom against the Jews in November of 1938. Less than a year later, Hitler's armies marched into Czechoslovakia and Poland, and the Second World War began.

Russia, although opposing Nazi Germany during World War II, still did not have a tolerant attitude toward its minority populations. Leon Trotsky sought to make every Russian citizen a member of the proletariat, over which he (Trotsky) would dictate. The squelching of any sort of communal life, e.g. religious affiliation, was the desired end. Jews joined the ranks of the proletariat and assimilated into the Russian working class. Paradoxically, however, Jewish life was temporarily revitalized as a result of this concentration on industrial growth. The government halted political anti-Semitism and even welcomed foreigners seeking political and religious asylum.

Most people who sought refuge, however, looked to America rather than to other countries. Between 1881 and 1930 a total of three million East European Jews entered "Golden America" while another million emmigrated to South America, the British Empire, and Western Europe.<sup>8</sup> This increase in population became a grave problem for the United States. The atmosphere was one of fear of an impending world-wide revolution. In retrospect we know that a world war was not avoided, and that it was the climactic outcome of

the troubled thirties. This should not, however, discount the tedious and sincere efforts of government leaders and representatives of national organizations who worked towards peaceful ends. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) was one such group, formulating statements of its beliefs, speaking out not only for peace for Jews, but for all Americans as well.

Fascist take-over appears to have been the severest threat to world peace. In the 1938 Yearbook of the CCAR,<sup>9</sup> the Committee on International Peace stated that "Americans have become increasingly incensed against military aggressions." They agreed with President Roosevelt's foreign policy of isolation and neutrality. This entailed halting the exporting of materials to nations which might have used them for war purposes. The Conference made particular mention of Germany as "the most militaristic country in Europe . . . as a violator of treaties . . . and as a country not to be trusted to use (materials) for peaceful purposes."<sup>10</sup> Since the League of Nations, the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the World Court all appeared to be ineffective in promoting world peace, the CCAR saw no alternative but to call for America's neutrality and isolation.

America, despite its attempts at neutrality, felt the repercussions of world unrest. The ubiquitous practice of job discrimination against Jews was a popular form of anti-Semitism during the 1930s, but this time with the added dimension of Jewish employers discriminating against Jews.<sup>11</sup>

This wave of job discrimination grew out of a fear of Communism which industrial monopolists labeled a "Jewish phenomenon."<sup>12</sup> The CCAR expressed its dismay at these practices.<sup>13</sup> Most American Jews remained stigmatized for many years, and during this time they avoided open affiliation with anything resembling Communism. Jews kept their Democratic Party allegiances undercover because this party was accused of "resembling Communism." The creation in the 1940s of the Liberal Party eventually allowed for a person's liberal political affiliation without the threat of ostracism.<sup>14</sup>

It already has been mentioned that three million Jews from Eastern Europe entered the United States by 1930. Non-Jews as well sought entry into the U.S., and this created a phenomenal population boom. America was caught in a double-bind: it desired to help persecuted citizens of Europe, but it also desired no physical, economic or social disruption of American life. Job markets became flooded, distrust of foreigners grew, and Congress began to close the door to immigrants. In 1930, intense compassion for European Jews led rabbis to blame "narrow nationalism" for the closed door immigration policy. America was looked upon by these rabbis as a stronghold for Jewish survival.

It is obvious to the student of present-day tendencies in American life that clericalism and an intolerant narrow nationalism are growing rapidly. This sentiment expresses itself in a dislike for foreign-born citizens, a suspicion of aliens, and a distrust of non-Protestants. This feeling is largely responsible for the agitation that will lead inevitably to the complete closing of the gate to immigrants.<sup>15</sup>

The American Jewish community, in light of the world situation of the 1930s, campaigned valiantly for the right of all of America's minority groups. At the 1931 CCAR Convention, issues concerning minority rights centered around the legal status of all religious groups with regard to the following:

- a) religious liberty
- b) equal rights
- c) the issue of Christian dominance in the United States
- d) legal recognition of religious marriage ceremonies
- e) legal protection of religious convictions

Minority groups considered were:

- a) Jews
- b) Seventh Day Adventists
- c) Quakers
- d) Mohammedans
- e) Hindus

Black Americans were added to the rabbis' list of minority groups before the end of the decade. Undoubtedly the oppression felt because of anti-Semitism caused Jews to identify with black oppression.

To the Negro people of this country we express our deepest sympathy in their fight for equal rights . . . The fight they are carrying on is intimately bound up with the fight for equal rights for all groups and for democracy itself.<sup>16</sup>

Despite efforts of the Jewish community to further the black cause, black-Jewish relations needed repair. Black anti-Semitism, according to the 1938 Commission on Social Justice, was a result of blacks "permitting themselves to be victimized by the propaganda of vicious anti-Semites whose only purpose [was] to deflect the Negro from his real cause by the introduction of racial antagonism."<sup>17</sup> As a



remedial measure to avoid any civil troubles during those "desperate" times, the Commission proposed a conference of one representative each from the Council of Churches, the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the CCAR Commission on Social Justice. This proposal was an appeal to civil authorities to act with "sufficient concern" for human rights and dignity.<sup>18</sup>

Other areas of Christian-Jewish relations needed strengthening. Christian missionaries viewed Jews as potential converts, and understandably, rabbis did not take too kindly to this.<sup>19</sup> Interreligious understanding at this time appears to have been nebulous, but Christian and Jewish clergymen did cooperate in the general peace movement, especially in influencing Congressmen and endorsing political candidates.

The CCAR's Committee on Church and State was quite active during the '30s, studying national practices in public school classrooms. Surveys showed that Bible reading not only was prevalent in many states but also was mandatory in some of them. Granting that times were turbulent and young people probably could benefit from religious guidance, rabbis still argued legitimately for the complete separation of church and state. Even the most liberal Christians were beginning to advocate moral edification of children through the public schools. The chairman of the Committee on Church and State made the following statement at the 1938 CCAR Convention:

Undeniably the movement to establish a closer relationship between church and state, between church and public school is being furthered by organized forces or Protestantism and Catholicism in our country. Even some of the more liberal representatives of organized Protestantism in this country are now earnest advocates of this movement. Recently Dr. Ross W. Sanderson, one of the most liberal executives of the Council of Churches, wrote, "[We must] find some formula by which church and state can cooperate for the breeding of a generation of folks with the sort of character which church and state alike so desperately need . . . It is time we re-examine that old fetish, the separation of church and state, a talisman that has worked no miracle, and sought out some new formula of cooperation between the school and the institution of religion."<sup>20</sup>

In response to this, Rabbi Samuel Schulman said:

. . . The spirit of the separation of church and state means, as I interpret it, that no church shall obtain a predominant influence in formulating the policy and life of our country. This is a secular country in the last analysis. It extends courtesy to all religions and feels that spiritually it needs the help of all religions.<sup>21</sup>

The 1930s saw the creation of both the United Jewish Appeal and the Combined Jewish Appeal. This was revolutionary, as Sachar stated in his book, The Course of Modern Jewish History,<sup>22</sup> "No other ethnic group in the U.S. even approached this level of giving or of organization," he wrote. American Jewish philanthropy gained momentum at this time in order to raise money for Jewish friends and relatives still in Europe.

Dignity, strength and pride were added to Jewish life through the progress of the Zionist movement. Troubled European Jews, looked to Palestine as the eventual Jewish homeland, thanks to the Balfour Declaration of 1917. In 1931 the CCAR recommended American support of Palestinian Jewry; in 1932 it celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration; and in 1937, it proposed Reform

Jewish obligation to the Zionist cause.

The '40s saw the climax of world hate and fear which was cultivated in the previous decade, and then the denouement consisting of reconstruction programs and faith in the future. Concerning the Nazi Holocaust, suffice it to say that, according to one historian, between 4,200,000 and 4,600,000 Jews were exterminated.<sup>23</sup> The Nazis employed the most barbaric methods, among them starvation, torture and direct physical execution. Poor health conditions inside the concentration camps caused diseases and eventually deaths. Polish Jewry was almost totally annihilated once Hitler gained dominion over it. After February, 1944, when the last Polish Jews were sent to the Auschwitz gas chambers, all that remained of that Jewish community was a "haze, light as dust . . . above the chimneys of the crematoria."<sup>24</sup>

As gruesome as all the tactics were during this holocaust, even more grim was the world's response to this display of inhumanity. A few valiant and touching attempts were made by German civilians to halt Nazi activities, but the number of protesters was not large enough to reap much success. The American Joint Distribution Committee helped feed, house and relocate Displaced Persons after the war, but it did not attempt to rescue Jews during the war.<sup>25</sup> For the most part, the world stood back indifferently or impotently. The English government refused entry to shiploads of Jewish refugees seeking haven in Palestine, and the United

States refrained from making any official protest to British action. The Allied Air Forces never bombed the concentration camps. The attitude of the non-Jewish communities in Poland and the Ukraine "was in the worst tradition of man's inhumanity to man."<sup>26</sup> Even the Vatican issued no official statement, though killings ran at maximum capacity.<sup>27</sup> A conference of Jewish leaders convening in Bermuda in 1943 failed to accomplish anything because the people were "not committed to a definite program."<sup>28</sup> How appalling it all seems thirty years later that Jews could not mobilize themselves to save their kindred Jews. The Jewish populations remaining in Europe dwindled to less than 100,000 in most countries. The exceptions to this were the French Jewish Community, remaining somewhat intact thanks to the leadership of Premiere Leon Blum, a Jew, and England's Jewish community, saved because Nazis never occupied that country.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis did its part in submitting resolutions during the war years to government leaders, as well as to Jewish community leaders who possibly could act upon their requests. The conference resolved "not to rest until healing and deliverance have been brought to those members of the House of Israel . . . in the shadow of pain and death . . ."<sup>29</sup> The conference thanked the United Nations for its efforts in behalf of the "Jewish victims of Nazi brutality," but it stated emphatically that "the best messages of sympathy are those put into programs of action."<sup>30</sup> It made the following recommendations

to the United States government concerning post-War treatment of Germans:

- a) an immediate and speedy trial in Allied courts of those Germans responsible for crimes against civilian populations and for violations of international law
- b) the obligation of German supporters of Hitler to help restore cities they destroyed
- c) the return of the loot taken by German soldiers in occupied lands
- d) the responsibility of Germany to resettle the peoples it uprooted.<sup>31</sup>

After the war, in 1948, the CCAR continued its efforts to prevent total annihilation of any religious, national or racial group, when it urged the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to approve the proposed Genocide Convention.<sup>32</sup> Thirty years hence, government and religious leaders have been successful in preventing a repeat performance of the World War II experience.

The conclusion of that war, however, did not bring with it an end to anti-Semitism. An outgrowth of the International Conference of Christians and Jews was the creation, in 1947, of the International Conference to Combat Anti-Semitism, which met in Selisberg, Switzerland. This conference, in its official statement, impressed upon church leaders their responsibility in fostering good feelings among Christians toward Jews.

The Christian Churches have indeed always affirmed the anti-Christian character of anti-Semitism, but it is shocking to discover that 2000 years of the preaching of the Gospel of Love have not sufficed to prevent the manifestation among Christians, in various forms, of hatred and distrust toward Jews.<sup>33</sup>

This conference was an attempt to combat anti-Semitism in the 1940's but it was not the solution. Still, it was an important step because it opened the doors of discussion and understanding between Christians and Jews.

Countries around the world faced the awesome task of mending themselves after the war. Economic and social rehabilitation programs had to resolve problems concerning mandated lands, conquered peoples and colonial possessions. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill stated their war aims at the start of the decade, but no democracies had the foresight to issue jointly a "clear-cut plan for solving the problems of the war and post-war eras."<sup>34</sup> Reform rabbis, in 1943, called upon leaders of democracies to do this, and throughout the decade they stressed the need for an effective world government to maintain peace.

The Anti-Defamation League won disfavor in the eyes of the CCAR when, in 1940, it publicized what it thought to be a "true and correct attitude of the Jew" regarding America's foreign relations policy.<sup>35</sup> The CCAR had its own attitude, which may or may not have been shared by the entire Jewish community. It offered friendship to Russia for allowing political and economic equality to its Jews<sup>36</sup> and condemned Germany for its abominable inhumanity.

During wartime, when Jewish populations continued to be in jeopardy, the hope for their survival was Zion--Palestine--as a Jewish homeland. The United States had already taken in an abundance of immigrants; it therefore

felt forced to close the door on the very people it wished to help. Palestine, under the jurisdiction of the British government, not only had room for people to settle within its borders, but it also contained the spiritual and physical reminders of the Jewish heritage. The CCAR in 1943 urged the British government to reverse its 1939 decision of tightening its immigration policy to Palestine.<sup>37</sup> This action was pursued purely out of compassion for the plight of other Jews, and was not an attempt to further the Zionist cause.

Zionism, the idea of a Jewish homeland in Israel, was originally incompatible with American Reform Jewry, which sought to make America its homeland. To those Reform Jews whose allegiance to the Zionist cause was growing, the CCAR adopted a resolution declaring that it saw

no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism, no reason why those of its members who give allegiance to Zionism should not have the right to regard themselves as fully within the spirit and purpose of Reform Judaism.<sup>38</sup>

But organizations arose to "combat Zionism" as an apparent threat to Reform Jewry. Arguments pro and con emerged concerning the existence of such organizations, with one powerful point in favor of their existence being that for Zionism or not for Zionism, the groups were all working for Judaism nonetheless.<sup>39</sup>

The biggest boost to Jewish morale during the '40s was the establishment of the State of Israel. Here was the Zionist dream come true. In 1947, the British government

turned the whole "Palestine problem" over to the United Nations, which voted in favor of the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. When, fifteen months later, Israel's statehood was proclaimed by the U.N., world Jewry rejoiced. The CCAR saluted the United States for being the first government officially to recognize the new state.<sup>40</sup>

Arab-Israeli unrest began almost immediately after statehood was established. While Israel agreed to them, the Arab states refused the U.N.'s proposed negotiations between the two parties. American sympathies began to bend toward Israel. The CCAR urged the United States government to withhold financial assistance to England until that country curtailed its support of "the Arab Legion."<sup>41</sup>

While world Jewry and American Jewry joined forces in the support of Israel, here in America, internal conflicts among the Jewish communities raged. Jews focusing their attention on American Judaism were not unified by singleness of purpose or belief. Hostile feelings emerged with the commencement of the American Jewish Assembly, which sought to unify efforts of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews.<sup>42</sup> Although Orthodox congregations outnumbered Reform in immigrant communities, on a national level, the Orthodox rabbinate could not organize itself to the extent the Reform rabbinate did. Instead of strengthening the Jewish community, the American Jewish Assembly seemed to do just the opposite.

Black Americans and Americans of Oriental descent



suffered injustices of tyranny, discrimination and oppression due to the public's ignorance and repercussions from the war. Blacks had long been trying to emancipate themselves from the stereotyped image of slave and lower class citizen. White Americans made this very difficult, with lynchings, segregation and poll taxes still common phenomena.<sup>43</sup> Americans of Oriental descent became victims of American hatred toward the Japanese, and they were denied the right to own land in certain states of the Union. Reform rabbis spoke out in behalf of both of these minority groups, emphasizing America's democratic tradition of the rights of citizenship, voting, freedom of speech, and safety and security of person for all of its citizens.<sup>44</sup> They therefore commended and supported national and local groups whose purpose was to fight for the protection of these rights. Such groups as The Fair Employment Practice Committee, the New York Committee on Discrimination in War Industry, and Nisei--loyal American citizens of Japanese Descent--had their beginnings during the '40s.<sup>45</sup>

Christians and Jews continued their debate on religious education in the public schools. Bible reading was still common in classrooms of public education, but during this decade, state legislators introduced bills making religious education mandatory. The CCAR continually challenged the legality of this, basing their opposition on the First Amendment, which called for the complete separation of Church and State.<sup>46</sup> Non-Christians had reason

to be incensed, as there were reports of public school teachers instructing while donning "the garb of certain religious orders," crucifixes hanging on classroom walls, and children pledging allegiance to the so-called Christian flag.<sup>47</sup> If in the 1930s lawmakers and school officials justified religious education in public schools as a means of instilling moral values in children, now (in the 1940s) it was seen by them to be a means of eliminating juvenile delinquency, a problem which had increased during wartime.

Churches found a solution to this conflict in the "release time" plan, whereby children left school early in order to receive religious instruction. By the late 1940s, the Supreme Court ruled that any such instruction in public schools was in violation of the Constitution. "Release time," then, continued to function as the logical compromise. The 1948 Committee on Church and State expressed its hope that the Supreme Court's decision would compel religious institutions "to cooperate, not compete, with public schools."<sup>48</sup>

### Conclusion

The 1930s was a decade of gloom, pessimism, fear and distrust. World tensions culminated in the outbreak of the most destructive war in history. Nations watched with horror as Adolf Hitler rose to power and distinguished himself as the greatest demagogue and corruptive force in modern history. Jewish populations in the hegemonic center of Judaism were threatened at this time by Hitler's murderous

intent and by world-wide anti-Semitism. American Jews contacted government officials and formed philanthropic organizations. Furthermore, the American Jewish community expressed its compassion for minority groups in the United States which were suffering from oppression and injustice as well.

The second half of the 1940s saw the release of world tensions. The first half of the decade was spent in wartime activities, but the second half was devoted to the pursuit of international peace and reconstruction. Holocaust survivors found new beginnings in those lands that accepted the refugees.

The American Jewish community had a goal and this was to strengthen itself after having concentrated enormous effort on the besieged foreign Jewish communities during the war. One of American Jewry's projects at home was eliminating religious (especially Christian) education and observance from public schools. By the end of the decade, interreligious discussion and debate began to pave the way toward this goal.

Because the tenor of the 1930s was one of hatred and fear, one might assume that textbooks written for Jewish elementary children during this decade would reflect these emotions in their portrayal of non-Jews. Similarly, one might expect the textbooks written in the next decade to reflect a more positive attitude toward gentiles because of the decade's prevailing hope for the future. These are logical

assumptions, but the next three chapters will show this not to have been the case. The horrors of the Nazi atrocities are not lessened by the fact that the war is over, and authors hardly could be expected to write benevolently about those responsible for the extermination of five or six million Jews. On the contrary, the authors use their literary channels as a means of getting revenge on those they wish to punish. A distinction is made in these textbooks, however, between the Nazis and other European non-Jews, some of whom had good relations with the Jews. This distinction includes the American non-Jewish community, and will be delineated more clearly in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER II

THE INTENT OF JEWISH HISTORY TEXTBOOKS  
PUBLISHED DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s

This is the first of three chapters dealing with religious school textbooks written for Jewish children in the intermediate grades (5, 6 and 7) during the 1930s and 1940s. The Jewish history series, one by Dorothy F. Zeligs and the other by Mordecai I. Soloff, will be evaluated in this paper. Their own remarks concerning the goals of their books will be discussed and compared with comments made in the introductory sections of their books by leading Jewish educators, and with the aims of educational material expressed by the educational committees of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).

According to Emanuel Gamoran, whose long career in Reform Jewish education began in the 1930s, two main purposes for teaching Jewish history are:

- a) To transmit a knowledge of the growth and development of the Jewish people, and
- b) To develop positive attitudes toward Judaism and the Jewish people, to develop a Jewish consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

These sound educational goals imply transmitting knowledge along with a view of the course of historical events. It is important to note how the goal is stated. Developing " . . .

positive attitudes toward Judaism and the Jewish people . . . " may have the potential for producing negative feelings toward non-Jewish groups, an end certainly contrary to the Jewish principle of "Love thy neighbor as thyself." The challenge is directed toward the Jewish teacher and/or the Jewish author who will influence children with his own attitudes and prejudices.

The intermediate grades can have tremendous impact upon a child's value system. Emanuel Gamoran states that

. . . The history taught in the intermediate grades is probably the basis on which the student will build his conception of Judaism, which will color his reaction to the Jewish people all his life.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore it is incumbent upon teachers, authors, and all others connected with the education of the 10-to-13-year-old to be aware of their own attitudes and desired objectives in teaching history.

The CCAR in the 1930s expressed its interest in keeping abreast with educational developments. It encouraged members to use the CCAR conventions as a forum for presenting their research and experiments in education. The hope was that new textbooks would be published as a result of this open exchange. In 1945, Solomon Freehoff, chairman of the Committee on Jewish Education, indicated the need for instilling ". . . loyalty to Israel, to Torah, and to God"<sup>3</sup> through textbooks and through all aspects of education. Significantly, the CCAR desired the continuance of Jewish educational programs at a time when depression and war made

funds for such endeavors scarce.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish value of educating one's child made this a priority.

Dorothy F. Zeligs writes in the introduction to her Activity Book<sup>5</sup> which accompanies her textbook, A History of Jewish Life in Modern Times, that her purpose in writing is fourfold. She hopes to: "adapt the principles of progressive education to the particular needs of the Jewish religious schools"; make the most effective use of the limited time usually available to religious education; motivate children to learn through their own active participation; and create and direct authentic learning situations" that correspond to the cognitive development of the children within this age group.<sup>6</sup> These educational objectives take into account the abilities of the teacher and the student within the limited time ordinarily devoted to religious educational programs. The objectives for the children are behavioral: the children become active participants in their own education.

Mordecai I. Soloff states his aims for teaching Jewish history in the Teacher's Book, which accompanies his series, How the Jewish People Lives Today.<sup>7</sup> He says that a knowledge of history should "imbue children with the will to live as Jews"; enable children to interpret Jewish life intelligently; inspire them to come to grips with Jewish problems; help them to understand Judaism's development and to contemplate its future; "make children sympathetic toward religion and democracy"; and broaden their cultural base.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Soloff says that a religious education, whatever teaching aids are used, should produce children who will become happy, well-adjusted American Jews possessing a strong spirit of Judaism.<sup>9</sup> In his own series, How the Jewish People Lives Today, he proposes to achieve this by presenting "the currents and cross-currents, the parties and opponents, the organizations and activities, the institutes and constituencies of contemporary Jewish life."<sup>10</sup> Unlike Zeligs, he does not take into account any time limitations which might be placed on religious education. Perhaps his Pupil's Workbook<sup>11</sup> is meant to function in this capacity, because he tells teachers that among other things, the Pupil's Workbook is designed to direct the student's attention to important items.<sup>12</sup> Soloff adds another dimension to his history series which Zeligs seems not to have considered: differences in reading ability. Enrichment activities, usually reading suggestions, are provided to stimulate more capable students.

Soloff and Zeligs agree when it comes to the child's active role in his own education, and both authors say they provide avenues for this participation in their books. Zeligs refers to this role as "active participation," whereas Soloff suggests the withdrawal of indoctrination by the teacher.<sup>13</sup> Soloff's Pupil's Workbook requires more participation by the student than does Zeligs' because it contains sections which must be read and answered by the children before the corresponding sections are read in the textbook. The success or failure of the program, therefore, does not rest exclusively



on the contents of the textbook.<sup>14</sup>

"Jewish problems" which concern Soloff in the 1930s and 1940s are anti-Semitism and the need for toleration of differences by all peoples. He shares these concerns with the reader in the form of examples of problems and then he provides questions which the student might consider for their solutions. The first thing Soloff would have children understand is that Jews have been a persecuted minority throughout their history. Full cognizance and appreciation of past solutions to this Jewish problem, Soloff says, will lead people to act wisely in solving similar problems today.<sup>15</sup> For instance, Soloff proposes three possible solutions to the problems of anti-Semitism and Jewish survival:

- a) Jews converting to another religion
- b) Jews teaching tolerance to everyone else
- c) Jews building up Palestine as a Jewish homeland<sup>16</sup>

Soloff asks the reader which solution he would choose, and at the end of the textbook and workbook, he asks the child to reconsider whether he would make the same or a different choice.

Soloff says that there is room in the world for a variety of peoples, and that groups should be allowed to contribute their own ideals to society.<sup>17</sup> However, his apparent intention is to focus primarily on toleration of Jews by others, and not vice versa. Soloff wants the children to understand why the world lacks tolerance.

Leaders in the field of Jewish education give their

own appraisals of the Zeligs and Soloff series. Speaking in behalf of Dorothy Zeligs are Leo Honor, Executive Director of the Board of Jewish Education in Chicago and later a faculty member at Dropsie College in Philadelphia; and Jacob Golub, Educational Director of the Zionist Organization of America. Comments on Soloff's work are made in the forewording section by Emanuel Gamoran, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Gamoran is the editor of all the books in Soloff's series and is Educational Director of the Commission on Jewish Education.

According to Honor and Gamoran, both authors strive to impart to their readers attitudes, along with historical developments. Honor says that Zeligs relates "the past to the present by focusing attention . . . upon the historic process which accounts for the development of specific attitudes and conditions."<sup>18</sup> Gamoran says that Soloff's approach to teaching Jewish history incorporates habits and attitudes with knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Neither critic specifies which or what kind of attitude is transmitted in these books but both suggest that their respective series generate a positive Jewish identity.

Zeligs makes history "concrete and vivid,"<sup>20</sup> Honor says, by "portraying, with proper historic background, child experience at a particular time and place."<sup>21</sup> As will be made more explicit in the next chapter, this refers to Zeligs' means of illustrating historical background with fictional stories depicting one family's experience. Soloff uses a

different technique to stimulate the children as they learn, that, according to Gamoran, is the Supervised Study Method. The teacher initiates the lesson, and then the children, using both textbook and workbook, proceed at their own speed. Soloff's method is actually the more progressive of the two, but both can be equally boring for the children if the teacher does not present the material well. Gamoran warns teachers of this hazard.<sup>22</sup>

Golub considers Zeligs' sections on Poland and Germany exceptional. His approval of these sections, which deal with the Holocaust era, may be intended to motivate the teacher to look them over immediately.

The common opinion of all these educators is summarized by Leo Honor, who observed that studying Jewish history should:

. . . help make the present more intelligible through indicating the process of development, and through tracing the antecedents of present-day conditions . . .<sup>23</sup>

Zeligs, he says, has achieved this, and Gamoran agrees that Soloff has done the same.

### Conclusion

The authors' motivations for writing their textbooks are as different as their presentations of the material. Zeligs is interested in preparing a complete Jewish history for elementary school children, whereas Soloff is primarily inspired to teach tolerance, and finds writing a Jewish history textbook for elementary school children a means for

doing so. Soloff is interested in transmitting an understanding of the crucial world situation by emphasizing the theme of tolerance. Zeligs' fictional story technique presents the same idea more subtly.

The CCAR's Committee on Religious Education, beyond verbalizing the need to emphasize the Jewish value of loyalty to Israel, Torah and God, only encourages educational programs to continue, without offering suggestions for their improvement. Both series meet the standards and aims set by the CCAR. They update Jewish educational programs, making them worthy contributions to the field. Without delving into an educational analysis of these books, let it be said that they effectively meet a child's cognitive abilities and interest levels. Concerning their actual success, this could be analyzed only by the children's responses to the book's approaches and contents. But that is not the subject here. The purpose of this paper is to study the textbooks' material objectively, on an adult level, and then to analyze it as previously mentioned.

It is understandable that the goals of both A History of Jewish Life in Modern Times and How the Jewish People Lives Today and their accompanying activity books are to impart Jewish knowledge and values. Zeligs and Soloff are Jewish authors writing for Jewish children. What must be considered now, however, are three questions:

1. Why might these books project an almost chauvenistic Jewishness?
2. What attitudes, if any, do these books convey about

non-Jews?

3. Why do the goals of these books remain constant during the two decades, rather than project a negative attitude during the 1930s and a more positive outlook during the 1940s?

The answers to the first two questions may in fact reflect the world situation, which seems to have been under played in the stated goals of Zeligs' books. Jewish educators took the opportunity, as will be shown in the subsequent chapters, to expound on the Jewish experience in the threatening world situation of Nazi Germany, anti-Semitism and Christian influence in the public schools.

For centuries Jews have been proud of their history and their accomplishments. Survival in recurring ominous times is no small feat. Pride in the past and hope for the future should not be misinterpreted as haughtiness. Attitudes toward non-Jews, though not blatantly stated at the outset, are subtly conveyed within the textual material.

As for the third question, the next two chapters will examine more closely the material in the textbooks. The goals expressed by educators remain the same in both decades; only the course of historical events has changed. The textbooks' authors will attempt to explain that course of history in keeping with the books' outlined purposes.

## CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF BOOKS WRITTEN BY DOROTHY ZELIGS  
DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s:  
PORTRAYAL OF NON-JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD

The format of Zeligs' books consists of a country-by-country account of the Jewish experience in Europe, the United States and Palestine. The description of each Jewish experience is narrated chronologically, beginning with enough background information to bring the reader comfortably into the modern setting of Jewish life. The sections from A History of Jewish Life in Modern Times which pertain to this paper are those dealing with Poland, Germany, and briefly, the Netherlands, Palestine and "a glimpse of world Jewry."

Zeligs subtly develops five themes throughout her Holocaust account, affirming non-Jewish responsibility for their spread. These themes are anti-Semitism, the Jew as a scapegoat, Nazism, oppression of Jews and other minority groups and Aryan supremacy.

The predominant theme in Zeligs' Holocaust section is anti-Semitism. Zeligs tries to show through her narrative that German anti-Semitism was a result of jealousy of Jewish intellectualism, intelligence and success in all fields--medicine, literature, politics and business. She says that

anti-Semitism was viewed by German non-Jewish leaders as an alleviation of Germany's problems. German Jews were given equal rights in 1871, Zeligs explains, but when power-hungry leaders saw the usefulness of using the Jew as a scapegoat, anti-Semitic propaganda intensified. Zeligs reviews this idea with students in her Activity Book when she asks the following true-false questions:

When Jews in Germany were given equal rights in 1871, they became successful in many fields. True/False

Jealousy of the growing number of outstanding Jews was one of the chief<sup>1</sup> causes of anti-Semitism in Germany. True/False<sup>1</sup>

Germany's defeat in World War I gave rise to a new wave of anti-Semitic activity.

Stories were deliberately spread among the Germans that Jews were responsible for the country's failure in the First World War. They declared that the Jews had betrayed Germany. . . . The leaders . . . continued by every means to make the people believe that the Jews were the cause of all of German troubles. They declared that the Jews possessed all the riches in the land, that they caused unemployment, that they were plotting the ruin of Germany. Now the people could turn their hatred upon the Jews instead of the big businessmen who really governed the land.<sup>2</sup>

This understanding of anti-Semitism is reinforced in the Activity Book with the question:

After the First World War German leaders deliberately stirred up anti-Semitism among their people to turn<sup>3</sup> their minds away from the real troubles. True/False<sup>3</sup>

Although this may be unintentional, Zeligs has associated "German" with "non-Jew" or "Gentile." The Jew is distinguished from the nationality of the land in which he lives. It is almost as though Zeligs has defined "Jewish" as a nationality.

The Jewish experience in Germany is described as a period of persecution, with the Jews not responsible for their predicament. Zeligs compares the Germany of the 1930s with that of the Middle Ages and the Eighteenth Century, and she asks the student to do the same:

Under what restrictions did Jews live in Germany during the Eighteenth Century?

What restrictions did the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 impose upon the Jews of Germany? Which do you think was a more difficult period, 1750 or 1935?<sup>4</sup>

If the children have read Zeligs' material carefully, they most likely will choose the 1930s as the period of greater persecution.

A new type of anti-Semitism . . . began in Germany during the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. At the present time, under the Hitler rule, this anti-Semitism has reached such a high point that the future of Jews in Germany seems very gloomy. . . .<sup>5</sup>

According to Zeligs the Polish Jewish community also suffered anti-Semitic activity, primarily as a result of the Russian take-over and attempt to suppress all ethnic activity. In her 1947 text, Zeligs describes Polish anti-Semitism of the 1930s as anti-Semitism ". . . in its most barbarous form . . . a political tool . . . carefully planned in . . . the government."<sup>6</sup> She says that contrary to German anti-Semitism, Polish Gentiles had no understandable prejudices against Jews, such as jealousy of Jewish accomplishment or shame at Poland's defeat in a major war. One question from her Activity Book is:

Although Jews have lived in Poland for centuries and



have fought and died in her defense, they were regarded and treated as foreigners by many Poles. True/False<sup>7</sup>

The material concerning this question is to be found in both the 1938 and 1947 textbooks.

"The boycott is pretty bad, isn't it?" the American said sympathetically.

"Terrible," the other replied. "Anti-Semitic leaders often stand outside Jewish stores and prevent the peasants from entering to make purchases. They appeal to the patriotism of the peasants, telling them that Jews are foreigners. And we have been living in this land for thousands of years. . . ."8

Other questions asked of students in the Activity Book reflect Zeligs' understanding of Polish anti-Semitism:

Anti-Semitism has been strong in Poland ever since the First World War. True/False

The boycott of Jewish stores helped to relieve the conditions of the Jews. True/False

The Republic of Poland had no special anti-Semitic laws. True/False

The Jews had more opportunity to secure work after the Polish government took over many of the industries of the country. True/False<sup>9</sup>

The laws of Poland were carefully planned to treat Jews and non-Jews on an equal basis. True/False

In the revised 1947 textbook, Zeligs explains the nature of Polish anti-Semitism and shows that some Jews attempted to escape it.

During the early postwar [World War II] years, Polish anti-Semitism found expression in a series of outbreaks against the Jewish survivors. Many Polish Jews fled to territories in Germany which were controlled by American and British military occupation forces. . . .11

Russians during the Holocaust period are depicted as imposing a more subtle kind of anti-Semitism upon their

Jewish citizens. Zeligs says that on the surface anti-Semitism was "punishable by law,"<sup>12</sup> but that in actuality the government restricted the amount and types of business in which a Jew could engage and suppressed his Jewish (synagogal) affiliation. In the 1947 revision, Zeligs labelled these Russian Jews "declassified citizens."

Zeligs asks some thought-provoking questions about anti-Semitism:

What do you think are the reasons for anti-Semitism in the world today?

What organized efforts, if any, are Jews making to fight anti-Semitism?

Do you think anti-Semitism is based on an emotional or reasonable kind of thinking?<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, she is trying to have the children focus in on their own understanding of anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, her own analysis would appear to influence the student to equate "Gentile" with "German" or "Russian" or "Polish" and would seem to foster anti-Gentile responses, such as "Christians hate Jews."

Italian Jews survived the war, says Zeligs, primarily by seeking refuge in Switzerland until 1945. Unclear in her explanation, however, is why Italian Jews had to seek refuge anywhere. She says that Jews had been a "closely-knit part of the Italian population," that anti-Semitism had not been very strong, but that during the war, the Jews "suffered considerable persecution."<sup>14</sup>

The reader is left wondering whether the Italian

non-Jews turned on the Jews suddenly, whether only a segment of the Italian non-Jewish population did so, or whether the German Nazis were responsible for this persecution. Zeligs should have expounded upon this further.

Zeligs defines scapegoat as ". . . a group on which blame for any misfortunes could conveniently be placed,"<sup>15</sup> and ". . . someone who is made to bear the blame and take the punishment for wrongs done by others."<sup>16</sup> She explains in her 1947 revision of A History of Jewish Life in Modern Times that the Nazi scheme in the 1930s was to use the Polish Jews as a scapegoat, to destroy that Jewish community, a "defenseless minority,"<sup>17</sup> while making themselves look powerful in the eyes of German citizens. Later in her text she shows why this program was successful: the Jews had been the scapegoat for German military leaders and large industrialists since the early 1920s. This aspect of anti-Semitism, therefore, was not new to European Jews in the 1930s.

Within Germany, the "Jew as scapegoat" campaign was very successful. The German people in Zeligs' Holocaust section are portrayed as hateful characters. She writes that although a small group of "wise and sincere men" attempted to establish and maintain a democratic government in Germany after World War I,

. . . other forces were at work against them. The militarists of Germany were smarting from the wounds of their defeat in the war. They were not ready to give up their ambitions of power and wealth. They

did not wish a democratic and peaceful way of life. They were already planning the next world war.<sup>18</sup>

Zeligs holds this militant, ambitious majority of non-Jewish Germans responsible for the magnitude of anti-Semitic expression. In her Activity Book, she provides the reader with questions designed to lead him to a realization of the scapegoat plot:

During World War I, many thousands of Jewish soldiers were decorated for bravery. True/False

After the First World War, German leaders deliberately stirred up anti-Semitism among the people to turn their minds away from their real troubles. True?False<sup>19</sup>

What factors within Germany prevented the development of true democracy after World War I?

Show how the militarists of Germany made a scapegoat of the Jews.<sup>20</sup>

The rise of the Nazi party in Germany augmented and intensified the existing anti-Semitism. In the 1938 edition, Zeligs writes that Adolf Hitler was responsible for rekindling German anti-Semitism to such an extent that German Jews in the mid-1930s were living through persecutions reminiscent of the Middle Ages. A decade later, a more objective understanding allowed her to say

Hitler was the all-powerful dictator to whom they /Germans/ owed complete obedience. To keep the Germans from rebelling . . . Hitler made every German a person of importance by making him feel superior to other peoples, especially the Jews.<sup>21</sup>

Hitler's party, Zeligs writes, followed his carefully outlined plan in Mein Kampf, "for conquest, anti-Semitism, and brutal aggression."<sup>22</sup> Hitler is portrayed as no accident in history. He is shown to have campaigned his

way to the top, through his book, speeches and propaganda efforts. And he had fine help; without the eager military assistance he had, none of his sinister plans would have succeeded.

Zeligs writes that the Nazis clearly and publicly declared their intentions to destroy the Jewish people.<sup>23</sup> A description of this intent appeared in her 1947 revision of A History of Jewish Life in Modern Times, but not in the 1938 edition.

Hermann Goering, chief of police, openly declared, "I am not here to dispense justice, but to crush and destroy." Any groups or individuals who seemed to be a threat to Nazi power were dealt with pitilessly. The German secret police, the dreaded Gestapo, might be lurking in any corner, in the restaurant, or market place, or in the street, to hear any word which might be considered disloyal to their leader and the Nazi party.<sup>24</sup>

Apparently, Zeligs did not have the same perspective or the same information in her original text as she did in the revision a decade later. The plight of the Jews, depressingly told in the 1938 edition, is illustrated with actual accounts of Nazi behavior in the 1947 edition.

. . . The dramatic episode of the "burning of the books" took place on May 10, 1933. It showed the length to which Nazi fanaticism could go. Wagonloads of books that had contributed to the civilization of mankind through the ages were publicly burned on the open squares of the market places throughout the cities and towns of Germany. Even the Bible was included. These books were considered "unGerman." Of course, they included the greatest works of Jewish writers.<sup>25</sup>

. . . A seventeen-year-old German Jewish boy, who had escaped to Paris, learned that his parents had been among those deported to Poland. The youth, Herschel Grynzpan, was crazed with grief. He went

to the German embassy in Paris and shot one of their minor officials, Ernst von Rath. This act gave the Nazis a very convenient excuse. They organized a nation-wide pogrom. Their storm-troopers attacked every Jewish community throughout Germany and Austria and Czechoslovakia. Acts of unbelievable savagery took place. Almost every synagogue was burned down. Many Jewish lives were lost. Fifty thousand men were thrown into concentration camps.<sup>26</sup>

Other accounts of German militarism included Germany's occupation of Russia, beginning in June of 1941,<sup>27</sup> her occupation of Poland,<sup>28</sup> and the massacre inside the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>29</sup> All three accounts tell of the mass murder of Jews as a result of German ruthlessness.

Zeligs laments the number of Jewish lives lost during the war, and primarily the concentration camp deaths. In this regard, she refers to the Nazis as "beasts."<sup>30</sup> The effects of the six million killed would be felt, Zeligs says, twenty years after the war. "A generation of children has been destroyed, and with it, the possibility of building up a young generation of the immediate future," she says.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps children of sixth and seventh grade age are too young to realize the magnitude of fewer marriages and fewer births as a result of the Nazi Holocaust. This message is contained within her text, however, and she asks the children to reflect on the problem when she asks:

How do you think Jewish life will be affected by the decrease of East European Jewry?<sup>32</sup>

Zeligs poses another question to the students at the conclusion of her chapter on contemporary Germany

which reflects her own attitude toward German non-Jews:

Germans considered themselves a civilized people, yet their leaders and thousands of followers committed mass murder on a scale unparalleled in history. What factors in the development of the German people made it possible for them to commit this crime against humanity?<sup>33</sup>

Particularly within the textual material of 1947, there is a powerful commentary on the hatefulness of the Germans during the Holocaust years. Zeligs was outraged at Nazi behavior and diabolical scheming. When Polish Jews living in Germany were deported back to Poland, they were "packed into cattle cars and sent back [there]."<sup>34</sup> During her occupation of Poland,

Germany was a ruthless foe. . . . she killed hundreds of thousands of Polish people, both soldiers and civilians. Many were sent to Germany to work as slaves. The most horrible treatment was inflicted upon the conquered people. During the course of the war, two million Poles, one-twelfth of the Polish people, lost their lives.<sup>35</sup>

Zeligs discusses the fact that most Germans stood idly by or encouraged the German leaders to continue their demonic activities. She does indicate, however, that the few who did protest promptly ended up in concentration camps with the Jews. Success is attributed to the uneven proportion of protestors to Nazis. Had the protesters been greater in number, or had the Nazis been fewer in number, she says, Germany might not have gone the way it did, and six million Jews might not have been annihilated. She points out that "the power of any government lies in the strength and number of its followers."<sup>36</sup> Enough hate-

filled Germans banded together to hold all Germans ultimately responsible.

Hitler won a number of supporters through his promotion of Aryan supremacy. In her first textbook (1938), Zeligs explains this belief in Aryan supremacy as one of Hitler's anti-Semitic tactics. This belief boosted German pride, which greatly needed boosting during the 1930s. Pure-blood Germans--Aryans--were designated superior to other races, particularly the Jews.<sup>37</sup> Jews were considered a race by the Nazis. Zeligs' explanations in both editions of her books remain almost identical. The Hitler mentality promoted the Aryan supremacy theory in the 1930s. Review questions in the Activity Book enabled the student to realize that Aryans, or northwest Europeans, were not superior to Jews. Rather, this irrational theory was promulgated to bolster German egos.

What purpose did the idea of "Aryan superiority" serve?<sup>38</sup>

It is true that the Aryan race does have certain qualities which make it superior to other races.  
True/False

The Nordic or Aryan race is a pure race. True/False<sup>39</sup>

Zeligs tries to show that anti-Jewish oppression was as responsible as Nazi mass killings for the dissolution of Jewish cultural life during the Holocaust era. Nazi oppression of Jews is summarized in an illustration in the Activity Book. The author instructs the children to match a series of drawings with their correct title. The drawing



entitled "Creative Jewish life being crushed in Nazi Germany"<sup>40</sup> shows a hand with claws instead of finger nails descending on three presumably Jewish men at work. A swastika is visible on the "hand's" cuff. Of the men at work, one is writing at a desk, another is in a science lab, and the third is painting at an artist's easel. Zeligs shows quite clearly that Jewish contributions to German society in the 1930s were squelched by oppressive German laws as well as by direct killings of Jewish populations.

In 1938, Zeligs writes about a "modern day" German Jewish family which is living through these oppressive years. In the 1947 text, Zeligs assigns the year 1935 to this story, although the Nuremberg Laws apparently have not yet been decreed.<sup>41</sup> The Oppenheim family is splitting up: the 12-year-old daughter is emigrating to the United States, the older son to Palestine, and the parents and youngest child are remaining behind. The student understands this to be a typical outcome of the harsh oppression in Germany.

Hilda's family had lived in Berlin since the Eighteenth Century. They had lived in Germany for hundreds of years before that time. And now she was going away, never to return. Never, never, would she return, Hilda told herself determinedly. The rest of her family must escape, too, from this land which had once been a beloved home to them. How she wished that they were leaving with her! How she dreaded parting from them!<sup>42</sup>

". . . look what they have done to us," wept the girl. "They have taken away father's chances of earning a living. His department store had to be closed and sold because Nazis in brown shirts stood outside the door and wouldn't let any non-Jews enter. You tried

to keep some of these things from me, but I understand. Why did Gretchen, our servant-maid have to leave us? She liked it here and she didn't want to go away. It was because young Aryan maids are not allowed to work for Jews. Why do we seldom go to restaurants or theaters or movies? Because most of them do not want Jews. I cannot even walk along the streets without the children mocking me and calling me names."<sup>43</sup>

In her Activity Book, Zeligs aids the student in realizing the significance of action such as the Oppenheim family took in the mid-1930s. She asks: "Do you think the Oppenheim family in 1935 understood clearly how dark the future of the Jews would be in that land? Discuss."<sup>44</sup> The student, by the time the Activity Book was published in 1947, had the Nuremberg Laws and the outbreak of World War II upon which to reflect.

What were the Nuremberg Laws and what was their purpose?<sup>45</sup>

What restrictions did the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 impose upon Jews of Germany?<sup>46</sup>

Other countries guilty of oppressing their minority groups, particularly Jews, were Poland and Russia. However, the author shows that these two countries were not solely responsible for the persecutions of these people. Once Germany infiltrated Poland and Russia, the Nazi mentality added to the existing oppression.

Zeligs, in her first edition, describes another fictional Jewish family living in Vilna, Poland, during the early 1930s. She depicts the poor, shabby and very undesirable living conditions of these people. Due to the world economic depression of these years, these

conditions were not unique to Polish Jews, as Zeligs explains:

". . . Please understand, Mr. Steinberg, the Jews are not the only people who are suffering in Poland. The fate of the peasants is very sad. Most of them are living in great poverty. There is also some unemployment among the non-Jews in the cities. But the government pays unemployment insurance to a large number of the non-Jews, while only a few Jewish workers get this."<sup>47</sup>

What was unique to the Jewish experience, however, was the added harassment which government officials inflicted with apparent pleasure.

"Do you know what happened the other day?" Mr. Jacobs continued. "A Jewish merchant was coming out of the Benevolent Loan Office where he had borrowed a small sum of money for his business. A revenue officer who had been waiting for him stopped the merchant, searched him, and took the money away in payment of taxes. That is what Poland is doing to the Jews."

"And yet," Mr. Steinberg, the American, put in, "the Polish government denies that it is mistreating the Jews and claims that there are no special laws against them."<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, Zeligs writes:

Poland seemed to forget all about the promises she had made at the Peace Conference which came at the end of the First World War. She had signed a treaty promising to protect the rights of all groups living under her rule. It seems strange that Poland, who had suffered so much herself from the tyranny of more powerful nations, should become the oppressor.<sup>49</sup>

Zeligs points out that due to the abundance of Nazi propaganda which flowed into Poland, the Jews were doomed. Polish anti-Semitism coupled with Nazi intent to obliterate the Jewish people determined dismal existence for Poland's Jews. Zeligs emphasizes unfair treatment of Polish Jews and the oppressive nature of the Polish

government in her review questions:

After World War I, Poland, in accordance with a treaty regarding minorities which she had signed, treated all Jews fairly. True/False

Anti-Semitism has been strong in Poland ever since the First World War. True/False

The laws of Poland were carefully planned to treat Jews and non-Jews on an equal basis. True/False<sup>50</sup>

Zeligs suggests that the students be attuned to current events in Poland by keeping a scrapbook of newspaper articles and by consulting sources of information such as the American Jewish Yearbook.<sup>51</sup>

Russia's oppression of Jews, on the other hand, consisted of assimilation. The more a Jew assimilated into the Russian proletariat, the less physical hardship he endured. To force the various ethnic groups out of work, the government took over private businesses and outlawed private commerce and industry. Zeligs implies that out of desperation, many Jews turned to farming.

To further aid in the unification of all Russian classes, Russia discouraged religious activity, Christian as well as Jewish. During the 1920s, Zeligs points out, many synagogues and churches were converted to club rooms for workers and into schools and hospitals.

In the revised textbook the dismal picture becomes a bit more optimistic. As Zeligs points out, after the war experience, a friendlier relationship developed between the government and religious institutions.

The churches and synagogues of Russia had rallied to

the support of the Red Army. Their unquestioned loyalty and efforts in behalf of the state led to an open appreciation of their services. . . .<sup>52</sup>

Since this is a commentary on post-war Russia, it does not negate the fact that Russian leaders aimed to dissolve completely all religion in that country. In the Activity Book, the reader is encouraged to reflect on the plight of the oppressed Russian Jews:

Who were the "declassified" Jews after the Russian Revolution?

In what ways did the "declassified" Jews try to solve their problem?

What was the fate of Russian Jews during World War II?<sup>53</sup>

Russia still maintained its anti-religion position after World War II, so Zeligs could say only that "future developments" would decide the destiny of Soviet Jewry.

Bulgarian non-Jews are not regarded very highly by Zeligs because during the war they, even though opposed to Nazism and German militarism, deported Bulgarian Jews to remote villages and forced them into slave labor. Somehow this Jewish community managed to survive almost entirely.<sup>54</sup> Yugoslavia was left in economic ruin after the war, and the author points out that Jewish-Gentile relations would depend upon that country's economic recovery.<sup>55</sup>

Two other small European countries comprise Zeligs' summary, reflecting her attitude toward the non-Jews. The Slovaks, Zeligs says, adopted much of the Nazi mentality during the war years, and treated the Jews brutally. On the other hand, Czechoslovakia, of which Slovakia was a

section, made a "truly democratic" effort to rebuild the Czech Jewish community.<sup>56</sup>

Zeligs expresses compassion for other oppressed minority groups when she asks:

Discuss the problems of other minority groups in the world today who are suffering from a lack of rights and from persecution. Perhaps certain members of the class should prepare special reports on this subject, each taking a certain group for study.<sup>57</sup>

This teaching method allows the student to update the Jewish Holocaust experience no matter when the textbook is used.

At the end of the 1938 text, Zeligs makes the following statement:

It is well to remember that the Jews are not the only people who have suffered and who continue to suffer from persecution. Wherever Jews live, they are a minority group. This means that they are fewer in number than the rest of the people in the land. A minority group is often at the power of the majority. Other people who form minority groups also suffer great hardships in certain lands.<sup>58</sup>

Zeligs, however, does not support her statement with examples of other minorities. Instead she uses it to explain further the plight of the Jews. This appears in the 1938 text, but not in the revision a decade later:

. . . This fact does not excuse the oppression of Jews or any other people, but it does help to explain why the Jews have suffered so much throughout their history. In many cases Jews have been oppressed, not because they were Jews, but because they were a minority group living among a majority which was different in religion and nationality.<sup>59</sup>

Again, Zeligs treats Jews as a nationality. This Zionist view of Judaism would not allow Jews to belong anywhere

except in a Jewish state, of which there was none in the 1930s.

Dorothy Zeligs does not only expound upon the anti-Semitic tactics which some non-Jews used in order to ward off the evils plaguing their countries, but she also explains the fallacies of many of their deceptive ploys. The reader is led to develop better understanding of them and the people who used them. Anti-Semitism, Zeligs shows, led into the use of the Jew as a scapegoat and the creation of the theory of Aryan superiority, neither of which has any validity. Zeligs points out that a scapegoat is something on which to project the blame for one's own failures. Concerning the Aryan race, she says that science could find no proof of that theory.

. . . truth had little to do with this Nazi propaganda. Scientists do not believe in the superiority of the so-called Aryan race. In fact, scholars have not yet been able to agree on what is meant by a race or how one race differs from another. There is no "pure" or unmixed race in the world, except, perhaps, the Eskimos.<sup>60</sup>

She goes on to explain why the Germans were dishonest in using this as an argument against Jews at all:

Moreover, it is a well-known fact that the Jews, branded as an inferior race by the Nazis, have from earliest times contributed more than their share to the civilization of the world. In modern times too, they have produced more than their share of great men. There is a larger proportion of Nobel prize-winners among the Jews than among any other group. . . . The German Jews, in particular, have received a large percentage of these awards.<sup>61</sup>

To support her argument, she includes in 1938 as well as in 1947, a list of noteworthy German Jewish contributions.

Furthermore, Zeligs points out to the reader, German Jews fought heroically during the First World War, and did not deserve to be repaid with hatred and degradation.

Zeligs' exposure of these fallacies gives more weight to her negative portrayal of these gentiles. But were there any positive comments to be made regarding Gentiles during the Holocaust? Aside from the few Germans who made feeble attempts to protest the Nazis' treatment of Jews, Zeligs makes special mention in her 1947 revision of 'sympathetic European Gentiles. Those from the Netherlands and Belguim hid Jews "although such an act was punishable by death,"<sup>62</sup> and wore the Yellow Badge along with the Jews of those countries. "They suffered together with their fellow-citizens under a common enemy. They are building together for a common future," Zeligs writes.<sup>63</sup>

Contributions of the Danes, Swedes, Swiss, and French are mentioned at the end of Zeligs' 1947 text. The Danish resistance movement saved many Jews from Nazi persecution, but Zeligs does not say how.<sup>64</sup> She says many Jews fled from Denmark into Sweden, where they found refuge during the war.<sup>65</sup> After the war, she says, "a number of Jews remained in Sweden permanently, while others returned to Denmark to resume their former status as citizens. This sympathetic picture Zeligs paints does not make clear the exact role of the Scandinavian countries during (or after) the war. More should have been said about the Danish resistance movement and the stand taken by the



Danish and Swedish governments.

Switzerland, "that small island of neutrality during the war," according to the author, "became an important land of refuge for many people, including Jews."<sup>66</sup> Switzerland, in fact, is referred to as a "haven" for the thousands of Jews who continued to live there through 1947.<sup>67</sup> Swiss Gentiles are not singled out as being responsible for the hospitality that was extended toward Jews during and after the war, but it is understood that Zeligs means Gentiles. She does credit French Christians specifically, however, for opposing the Nazi program of deporting Jews, and for doing "much to protect their fellow citizens from this fate."<sup>68</sup> France, like Denmark, according to Zeligs, restored property and full citizenship to its Jews at the conclusion of the war.

Zeligs' over-all comment in 1947 is that the most favorable conditions for restoring Jewish life in Europe existed in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Denmark. Her opinion is based on the fact that these countries returned full citizenship rights to their Jews after Nazi occupation ended. The reader might think there is a contradiction in her favorable appraisal of these countries when she states:

. . . In most cases, governments of the various lands, particularly in Western Europe, passed laws about the restoration of Jewish property to their rightful owners. But efforts to carry out these laws were often lacking . . . many difficulties [were] in the way. Non-Jews who came into possession of Jewish property were generally reluctant to part with it. In some

countries, efforts to restore Jewish property increased anti-Semitism.<sup>69</sup>

England's Jewish community remained intact after the war, not having suffered a "severe breakdown." One gets the impression from Zeligs' writing that Jewish-Gentile relations were good in England, as she did not make any negative comments in this regard. England's Jewish community had a hopeful future.<sup>70</sup>

Another theme which runs through Dorothy Zeligs' work is the continuation of Jewish life in spite of the pessimistic world situation of the 1930s and early 1940s. In her 1938 history textbook, she writes concerning German Jewry: ". . . The future of Jews in Germany seems very gloomy. But the Jews have gone through difficult periods before. They will not lose hope now."<sup>71</sup> In the same edition, she expresses hope for the future of Polish Jewry:

. . . Perhaps this land which was once the center of a prosperous Jewish community, to which Jews in other countries looked for guidance and inspiration, might again take a leading part in world Jewry.<sup>72</sup>

Even after World War II, when the Jewish community in Poland had all but disappeared, Zeligs still speaks in terms of a future there:

Perhaps under a new world order, Jews may again rebuild Jewish life in Poland. No matter how terrible the past has been, the future always brings new life and hope and the power to build again . . . But whether in Poland or in other lands, the Jews as a people continue their existence with courage and faith.<sup>73</sup>

In 1947, after the war, Zeligs is able to say that Nazism will be remembered with horror, while Judaism

remains alive and viable, though certainly affected by the extermination of six million Jews. She suggests that the children experience this feeling of hope in her Activity Book when she invites them to dramatize a Polish family on the eve of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto.

. . . Mr. Jacobs talks in a low, excited voice about the plans for resistance. He knows that their doom is inevitable, but he is determined that they will fight to the last moment. There is little time left. The mother talks about Isaac in Palestine and finds some consolation in the thought that one member of the family escaped and that Jewish life will go on in Palestine. As the rumble of a marching army is heard, they sing "Hatikvah."<sup>74</sup>

American Gentiles are underplayed in Zeligs' account of World War II. American Jews are shown to "take care of their own" in sections entitled, "Jewish Population in the United States," "Jewish Charity in the United States," "How American Jews Have Helped Their People Abroad," "Guardians of Jewish Rights," "The Jews and the Second World War," "The Jewish Labor Unions," and "Outstanding American Jews of the Present Era." The author concentrates solely on Jews--their troubles, their triumphs and how they help themselves. If Gentile participation in these Jewish groups, or opposition to them, occurred, Zeligs does not give mention. She does, however, hint that American democracy allowed American Jews to become self-sufficient and to become leaders of world Jewry.

She describes how American Jews came to the aid of Jews in Europe before and after World War II. The Joint Distribution Committee, the American Jewish Committee,

the Anti-Defamation League and the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) are shown to be totally Jewish organizations which neither sought nor received any help from the American non-Jewish community. The American Jewish Committee was founded by Jews for Jews to aid the oppressed European Jewish community and to inform Americans of the true situation of Jews in Eastern Europe.<sup>75</sup> Zeligs' account makes evident that non-Jews were not a part of this group's work.

During the 1930s HIAS became less active, the author explains, due to the strict immigration laws which drastically reduced Jewish immigration to America. At the end of World War II, HIAS resumed its services, particularly in setting up Displaced Persons Camps in Europe. The Organization of Rehabilitation through Training<sup>®</sup> (ORT) also played an important role in rehabilitating Displaced Persons. At no time does Zeligs mention non-Jews in conjunction with these endeavors.<sup>76</sup>

From Zeligs' narratives, the reader has the impression that Jews alone were responsible for the American victory of World War II. Only one of the five descriptions of heroism in the section entitled "The Jews and the Second World War" involves non-Jewish valor. That one incident describes four chaplains, one Jewish, one Catholic, and two Protestant

. . . who went down with their ship after giving away their life-preservers. The Jewish chaplain was the young rabbi, Alexander Goode.<sup>77</sup>

The review questions which Dorothy Zeligs asks reinforce the contributions made by Jews:

What share did they [Jews] have in the global war of 1939-1945?

Relate heroic exploits of Jewish men and women in the last war.<sup>78</sup>

Zeligs takes great pride in American Judaism, which by 1947, assumed leadership of world Jewry. However, her discomfort with the non-Jewish community is apparent when she makes statements such as the following:

. . . As among all groups who make up the large American population, Jews are found among the poor, the middle-class, and the wealthy. There are no Jews in the group that controls the greatest fortunes in the United States, which includes families like the Rockefellers, Fords, or Morgans.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps her uneasiness stems from knowing, as she emphasizes in her 1938 text, that American Jews, alone, helped settle Jewish farmers in sections of Russia, established trade schools in Poland, searched for employment for Russian Jews, and helped rebuild Palestine.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps if non-Jews had joined forces with the Jews at that time, Dorothy Zeligs would have been able to recognize and accept the assistance that was provided by the non-Jewish American community.

### Conclusion

Although Zeligs' accounts of the Holocaust years are not lengthy, the reader feels the depth of her outrage and hatred toward the people who were responsible for the

persecution and extermination of millions of Jews. Her hatred is first-hand, as she lived during those decades, although not in a concentration camp or in an oppressed European country.

The portrayal of European Gentiles during the Holocaust era, in these textbooks of the 1930s and 1940s, is a grim one at best. The conclusion of World War II did not bring a "now-we're-friends" attitude. The Germans still had to pay the price for their crime.

Zeligs does not condemn American non-Jews, nor does she praise them, for their participation (or lack of it) in solving the problems of the Holocaust period. Her ambivalence to this group of Americans is camouflaged by her praises for democracy and the American system, which she maintains has allowed the Jews of the U.S. to assume world Jewish leadership. Because her discussion leans so heavily toward Jews, the reader will not easily acquire either positive or negative attitudes toward other Americans.

## CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF BOOKS WRITTEN BY MORDECAI SOLOFF  
DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s:  
PORTRAYAL OF NON-JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD

Mordecai Soloff presents his study of modern Jewish history in chapter one of his textbook with these words:

. . . our people grew steadily in numbers, strength, and wisdom, even though it suffered severely at the hands of Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans, Christians and Mohammedans. Non-Jews who saw the disasters that befell our people, expected it to be destroyed. Often we ourselves wondered what has kept us Jews a people, even though we have been scattered all over the world. And we are not yet all agreed on the answer.<sup>1</sup>

Jewish survival intrigues Soloff, understandably so during the troubled 1930s and 1940s. The format of his book is a chronological analysis of historical events that threatened Jewish survival and movements within Judaism which strengthened it. His book begins with the aftermath of the Spanish Inquisition, that is, where the Jewish exiles settled, and ends with an examination of the contemporary world situation. •He continually links the past to the present, making evident to the reader that present problems confronting Jews are not new.

The experimental textbook and accompanying workbook of 1935 are deficient in presenting pertinent contemporary

issues. The first published textbook in 1940, therefore, was expanded by six chapters dealing with important twentieth century developments. Soloff's analysis of contemporary history is featured in the chapters entitled "What Happened to the Jewish Center in Russia?" "How Do Jews Live in Other Lands?", "Do we Recognize Our Responsibility?", and "How Do We Meet Our Problems?" As will become clear in this chapter, Soloff places a great deal of emphasis on the American Jewish community because of its position of leadership in world Jewry.

Non-Jews are not disregarded by Soloff, nor are they given minimal attention. On the contrary, they are shown to be important positive and negative forces in Jewish life.

The over-all theme of Soloff's books is that anti-Semitism exists everywhere; it is not limited to Europe and it does not terminate with the end of World War II. In this regard, his portrayal of Gentiles is a negative one.

Soloff does attempt, however, to look objectively at the world situation, and if a positive word can be said, he says it. Therefore, those non-Jews who helped Jews during the Holocaust, and those who assisted refugees and Displaced Persons afterward are commended by the author.

This paper first will deal with the negative portrayal of Gentiles in Soloff's books. This includes mention of non-Jews in Germany, Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia and surrounding European countries, and the United States.



The analysis then will proceed to Soloff's positive portrayal of Gentiles in Europe and the United States.

In his depiction of the Nazis, Soloff presents tactics they used during the 1930s and 1940s to facilitate the extermination of the entire Jewish community. In his 1935 textbook, he attributes much of the blame to Adolf Hitler, who

. . . blamed the Jews for all the troubles that had ever come upon Germany, and suggested that Jews be made to suffer for these troubles. Quickly, Jews were discharged from their positions, their stores were boycotted . . . many were even attacked.<sup>2</sup>

Soloff writes in the past tense when actually he is referring to the present. The student using this textbook might easily be misled into thinking Soloff is referring to past events. In the 1940 edition Soloff again uses the scapegoat theme in the past tense,<sup>3</sup> and asks the children to reflect on it as past history:

What led many Germans to believe that the few hundred thousand Jews living in Germany brought about the defeat of Germany in 1918?<sup>4</sup>

Soloff includes the Nazi theory of Aryan supremacy, referring to it as the "Nordic theory." He defines this for teachers in the supplementary Teacher's Book as a figment of the Nazi imagination. Nordics were "supposed to be" white men who came from northern Europe, and "supposed to be" tall, blond, and blue-eyed. Jews, he says, were regarded by Nazis as inferior to Nordics.<sup>5</sup> He shows that it was bad enough that a few Germans invented such a theory, but even more incredible that the masses believed it, since

there was no factual basis for the theory. Soloff writes:

. . . reasonable arguments made no difference to people blinded by hate, and so the Jew-haters . . . continued teaching that Germans were superior to Jews.<sup>6</sup>

Soloff does point out, however, that the Nordic theory had its roots in the nineteenth century and not with the conclusion of World War I.<sup>7</sup> His review questions in both the 1940 and 1949 Pupil's Workbooks expresses the fallacies of this German ploy:

The scientists are convinced that Gentiles are superior to Jews. True/False

Hitler's idea of the Jews was false, according to the scientists. True/False

Before Hitler, there were no Germans who believed that Jews were inferior to Gentiles. True/False

The scientists agree that Jews are not pure Nordics. True/False

The scientists agree that Germans are not pure Nordics. True/False<sup>8</sup>

From Soloff's books, the reader should begin to understand that this anti-Semitism differed significantly from that of previous waves of Jewish persecution. Before, hatred of Jews had been based on religion; now it was based on a racial classification. Soloff says that by 1940, all of Germany had become anti-Semitic.<sup>9</sup> Anti-Semitism was merely a "nuisance" before 1933, when Hitler assumed power of Germany, Soloff writes. After that, it became "a danger to life, freedom and property."<sup>10</sup>

Soloff shows how Hitler used the Nordic theory and intensified German anti-Semitism. He says Hitler had a

"gift of being an effective speaker which helped him acquire many followers."<sup>11</sup>

"Hitler was an Austrian by birth," writes Soloff, "and a Catholic by religion, but he had no love for Austria, and no use for his religion."<sup>12</sup>

In the 1940 books, Soloff describes with utmost contempt Hitler's rise to power, and stresses the fact that he was appointed in a so-called democracy. Upon Hitler's assuming government leadership in 1933, Soloff points out, he wasted no time in abolishing the law-making body, punishing anyone opposed to him, and requiring all newspaper articles and theatrical performances to be cleared by him before being viewed by the public.<sup>13</sup> Soloff wonders why most Germans believed "everything Hitler says, while most people who live elsewhere know that he is lying."<sup>14</sup>

One of the Nazis' original tactics for destroying the Jews, Soloff writes, was the "cold pogrom" whereby Jews were deprived of their livelihoods. Nazis stationed themselves outside Jewish businesses, forcing the public to boycott stores and Jewish professionals.<sup>15</sup> Soloff considers this type of attack on Jews more harmful than the "old-fashioned Russian pogrom."<sup>16</sup> In his 1935 text, Soloff writes that because of these pogroms and the general anti-Semitic treatment in that country, many Jews were "forced to commit suicide."<sup>17</sup>

Soloff writes that the effect of Hitler's charismatic personality spread to other countries which began to imitate

his "beastlike example" and make "life unbearable for the Jews."<sup>18</sup> These countries did not include England, Russia, and some of the smaller countries, he says. The point he makes is that Hitler and the Nazis were the villains of the Second World War. The "poisonous message" had spread even as far as the Arabs in Palestine.<sup>19</sup>

Soloff reports that Arabs began attacking Jewish cities in Palestine in 1936, with little interference from British soldiers and police. Germany and Italy seized the opportunity to send soldiers to help the Arabs bring about an end to the Jews.<sup>20</sup>

A once satisfactory existence between Arabs and Jews is shown to be stirred to unrest by the Nazis.

Why did the Nazis stir up the Arabs to fight against the Jews?

Why did Jews continue rebuilding Palestine despite Arab attack?<sup>21</sup>

In describing the war years, Soloff cites examples of German anti-Semitic practices besides the propaganda of Aryan Supremacy. Cold pogroms, institution of ghettos, concentration camps, and anti-Semitic influence over other nations all paint a very anti-German picture. Soloff develops strongly the thesis that America staunchly opposed anti-Semitism and therefore considered engaging in it undesirable behavior.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not the United States was actively doing anything to stop the Nazis during the years 1939-1945, Soloff maintains that "most American newspapers think that the Nazis are unfair to the Jewish

people."<sup>23</sup> In the 1940 textbook, published before the United States entered the war, Soloff expressed a hope that "England will destroy Germany and the Nazi government" so that Jews would be able to live peacefully with Gentiles there.<sup>24</sup> He tells the reader that Jews of Germany "hope that they will see freedom in another country."<sup>25</sup> Then he asks the following questions regarding German anti-Semites:

What reasons do anti-Semites give for persecuting the Jews? Are these the real reasons?

How did the German anti-Semites show that they themselves were wicked?<sup>26</sup>

German anti-Semites considered Jews inferior to the rest of the German population. They made life miserable for Jews, and then would not allow them to leave the country. Soloff writes in his 1935 textbook, that Jews could not leave Germany with their possessions.<sup>27</sup> In 1940, he adds that by that time passports usually were denied Jews.<sup>28</sup> Those Jews who were able to leave Germany were not allowed to enter Palestine, because of the British White Paper of 1939. This closed the door to Palestine, the last hope for the refugees. Speaking hypothetically, Soloff in 1940 asks the children for a solution:

Over a million Jews of Germany and former Poland would like to find new homes. What countries can we recommend to them?<sup>29</sup>

Soloff means for the child to understand that the solution to this problem is not as easy as merely recommending new places of residence.

The foregoing descriptions of Nazi/German behavior

are mild compared to the information added to the 1949 textbook revision. This concerns the actual extermination of the Jews. Soloff terms the Holocaust an "unbelievable horror story," which Americans could not believe until they saw actual films from inside the camps.<sup>30</sup> The Jews who were exterminated, Soloff says, also did not realize that they were being carried to their deaths.

The Germans told them that the trains would take them to less crowded places where they would be able to live and work comfortably. When those who were left behind finally learned the truth, they started revolts in several of the ghettos.<sup>31</sup>

Soloff's descriptions of the concentration camps present the despicable character of Nazis quite graphically to the child:

They [the Nazis] built huge camps, with poison gas chambers and huge furnaces. Jews were brought to these terrible camps in sealed trains that were cold, had no seats, no water, and no food. . . . Many died on the trains. Those who arrived after days of suffering were driven into the poison gas chambers and killed. Their bodies were then burned in the furnaces.<sup>32</sup>

He notes the positive outlook of many of these Jews, who provided cultural events and activities to divert everyone as long as possible. "Considering the brutality and power of the Nazis," Soloff writes, "it appears miraculous that more than a million Jews survived."<sup>33</sup>

Soloff's portrayal of post-war Germans is no more favorable than his earlier analyses. Three years after Germany's defeat, Soloff says, she was "still being watched like a prisoner, and despised by decent people of the world."<sup>34</sup> Six million Jews had been annihilated, and those who were

fortunate enough to survive, according to Soloff, faced "the continued bitter hatred of their non-Jewish neighbors."<sup>35</sup>

After World War II, the Jews who remained in the countries of Central Europe [Germany included] were granted the same rights as the non-Jews and received equal protection. They were mostly poor, felt their neighbors were unfriendly and regarded their governments as undemocratic.<sup>36</sup>

The Nazis did not honor their promise of returning Jewish property, Soloff says in 1949, so American Jews provided German Jews with food and clothing.<sup>37</sup> Most Jewish survivors preferred to live in Displaced Persons Camps, rather than return to their unfriendly native country, until they secured the right to immigrate to a land sympathetic to their situation.<sup>38</sup>

German non-Jews are not the only ones portrayed negatively in Soloff's books. Other countries of central Europe he criticizes for their own anti-Semitic practices. The United States also will be shown to fall into disfavor with Soloff for its behavior toward Jews during the Holocaust.

Soloff points out that Polish Jews in 1935 were treated badly in their native country. "Often their business and education are interfered with by anti-semitic [sic] hoodlums," Soloff writes in his 1935 edition.<sup>39</sup> By the 1940 edition, Soloff tells the reader that thousands of Polish Jews desired a new homeland.<sup>40</sup> Unsympathetic Polish officials told the Jews to leave if they weren't happy in Poland, but immigration laws in other countries made that virtually impossible.<sup>41</sup> The Jews were forced, then, to stay and suffer. Hitler's invasion of Poland did

not initiate that country's anti-Semitic behavior; it had pogroms and business boycotts before the Second World War began.<sup>42</sup> Once Hitler entered Poland, however, Soloff says, the Jews were gathered into one section--Lublin--and robbed of homes and possessions.<sup>43</sup> One valiant attempt Jews made to liberate themselves, the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, did not achieve Jewish freedom. Soloff holds Poles as well as Nazis responsible for the extermination of the Warsaw Ghetto Jews.<sup>44</sup>

The reader is given confusing signals concerning Russia between the years of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the conclusion and aftermath of the Second World War. Generally Soloff presents a very negative picture of Russian non-Jews, who have oppressed all their ethnic groups and have virtually destroyed Judaism in their country. However, he presents the Bolsheviks as an ally of the United States during World War II. The children are given cues that read "As Americans we like Russians, but as Jews we dislike them." He suggests negative attitudes in his 1935 text when he asks:

Why did Russian Jews suffer during the First World War?

Why did Russian Jews have to give up businesses after the Bolsheviks became the rulers of Russia.

Are Bolsheviks haters of Jews?<sup>45</sup>

In 1940, Soloff says that the Bolsheviks treated Jews like all other citizens: they could work but not in private businesses, and they could not run religious schools--this



leading to the downfall of Russia's Jewish survival.<sup>46</sup>

The student would be inclined to answer true, then, when asked: "We dislike Russians because they are anti-Semitic. True/False."<sup>47</sup>

However, Russia comes across benignly in Soloff's example of present-day (1940) anti-Semitism, and herein lies confusion for the reader. The author is describing a hypothetical situation in which a group of Jewish boys in Russia hear someone shout "Jews!"

The Jewish lads did not even stop to discuss the matter. It meant absolutely nothing. "Someone is just talking aloud," they said to themselves. People in Russia take Jews for granted, the same as all other citizens.<sup>48</sup>

The above example is used to contrast Russia with contemporary Germany, where the same group of boys run at the cry of "Jews!" This depiction of Russia's harmless treatment of Jews, combined with images elsewhere in the book, of Russia's suppression of Judaism might produce mixed responses by the children to the question, "We dislike Russians because they are anti-Semitic." Soloff does say, though, that Jews for the most part did not leave Russia in the 1930s. Rather, they chose to accustom themselves to the laws of the land, and to suppress their outward manifestations of Judaism. Soloff accounts for the disaster Jews faced after Hitler invaded Russia as being the work of the Nazis, and not the result of a sudden change of heart of the Russians. Soloff says, "The Russians hated the Nazis."<sup>49</sup>

After Germany and Russia, Soloff uses Rumania as

a prime example of anti-Semitic practices during the 1930s and 1940s. In the early 1930s, Rumanian Jews, he says, were trying to escape from "their situation."<sup>50</sup> In the late 1930s, the Rumanian non-Jewish community allowed only a few Jews to enter universities. Jews who were lucky enough to enter medical schools were not allowed to examine Christian cadavers.<sup>51</sup>

One Christian teacher felt this to be so unfair that, in his will, he requested that after his death only Jewish students be permitted to examine his body.<sup>52</sup>

Soloff relates that when the Germans invaded, the Rumanian Jewish community was taken to concentration camps, and in his 1949 edition, he says the survivors (after 1945) still faced "the continued bitter hatred of their non-Jewish neighbors."<sup>53</sup>

Surviving Jews, Soloff says in 1949, tended to want to leave Europe for more sympathetic environs. His portrayal of non-Jews in the respective countries is no more favorable after the so-called restoration of rights and property to Jews. He indicates that the remaining Jews were their own bitter testimony to these non-Jews. As was previously mentioned, Soloff describes the surviving Jewish community as "mostly poor, [who] felt their neighbors [to be] unfriendly and regarded their governments as undemocratic."<sup>54</sup>

The non-Jews of the more democratic countries of Europe will be analyzed subsequently. First, however, there is an additional comment to be made about Soloff's negative portrayal of Gentiles during the Holocaust. This

concerns the Gentiles of the United States. Soloff defines a good American for the reader as possessing tolerance, and then he demonstrates that much of the non-Jewish community did not fall into this category. In 1940 he writes:

A good American does not believe that a person who differs from him is not as good as he is. Indeed, he may be better. But there are many people who do not have this feeling which we call "tolerance."<sup>55</sup>

Primarily, Soloff refers to intolerance toward Jews, but in 1949 he includes Negroes, Mexicans, Chinese and Japanese among those Americans receiving unfair treatment.<sup>56</sup>

Soloff devotes a great deal of his narrative on the United States to its anti-Semitic practices. He contends that this is a reverberation of European propaganda, and holds Americans not entirely responsible. However, he shows that anti-Semitism is an established American institution for which Jews are seeking solutions.

It has already been stated that certain people dislike us. We know they have no good reasons for feeling as they do. We know we are not different from our neighbors. But what can we do to protect ourselves against what they (the anti-Semites) say about us or do to us?<sup>57</sup>

Soloff gives an example, in 1940, of these "no good reasons" for disliking Jews. A "brilliant" applicant is refused admission to a medical school because of his religion. In the illustration the student is

told that the college wanted to give other medical schools the chance to get some excellent students. Of course that was not true. The college simply did not want Jews, but was ashamed to admit it.<sup>58</sup>

Soloff also mentions health resorts and neighborhoods in towns in the United States which discriminated against Jews. He labels these "Jewish problems,"<sup>59</sup> and reinforces them as such, with review questions:

It is harder for a Jew to find employment, than for a Gentile. True/False

There are people in America who are unfriendly to Jews. True/False<sup>60</sup>

Were you or your parents ever faced by a problem because of your being Jewish?<sup>61</sup>

He does not make any mention of Christian education in the public schools, although this no doubt was also a "Jewish problem" of the day.

Ironically, this is not the image of non-Jews Soloff intended to project, as will be shown later. Soloff had a great deal of confidence in, and admiration for, America and democracy. Soloff's negative comments fall between his abundant praises throughout the editions of his How the Jewish People Lives Today series.

Soloff indicates that, contrary to other views expressed, the whole world did not stand idly by and watch during the Holocaust. Indeed, "All the help given to the Jews was too little, and most of it came too late," Soloff says,<sup>62</sup> but many Gentiles offered assistance whenever and wherever they could. Soloff writes:

. . . the people living in other countries declared that the Germans were acting disgracefully. Many announced they would buy no goods from Germany as long as anyone in the land was treated as cruelly as were the Jews.<sup>63</sup>

. . . Jews alone cannot help them /German Jews/. The nations of the world must do so. It is good to know that most Americans, together with the honest, sensible, liberty-loving people of the rest of the world, are doing what they can to help the victims of the Nazis.<sup>64</sup>

Soloff realizes later, however, that he misjudged the good intentions of the world--Jewish as well as Gentile. In 1940 he could not foresee a death count of six million Jews. Nevertheless, themes of cooperation and tolerance still function in the post-war text.

(1940) How did many nations of the world express their readiness to help the victims of the Nazis?<sup>65</sup>

(1949) Christians in many of the European countries helped save Jews. In what country were Christians most helpful? Why do you think so?<sup>66</sup>

(1949) Two international conferences were held in an effort to save Jews. Where were they held?<sup>67</sup>

To reinforce his attitude that Europe should not be thought of in purely negative terms, Soloff includes a particular culminating activity in the 1940 and 1949 workbooks. The child is instructed to color in the countries of Europe on a map according to Soloff's prescribed color code:

- a) blue for countries where Jews presently are living happily.
- b) red for countries where Jews are not very happy, but not severely oppressed.
- c) black for countries where Jews are presently suffering.

Soloff gives some favorable accounts of even those countries that no doubt would be colored in black. He reports, for instance, that a small number of Polish Christians fought alongside Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto

uprising. Some Christians, too, hated the Nazis and sympathized with the Jews who suffered.<sup>68</sup>

Rumania, Italy and Hungary are reported, in 1940, to be kindlier toward Jews than the Polish government.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Lithuania, before its annexation to Russia in 1940, is reported to have granted Jews rights equal to those of Gentiles. Jews could run their own schools if they wanted, allowing the perpetuation of Judaism. Soloff says that the Jews were satisfied there, even if they were poor. Satisfaction ended when Lithuania became part of Russia.<sup>70</sup>

As for the non-Jewish communities of Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Belgium and Latvia, Soloff does not criticize them because they treated Jews fairly "on the whole. . . ." <sup>71</sup> The picture also is reported to have been a pleasant one in the Soviet Union prior to 1941. The Jews there

had no fear of anti-Semitism, because the government severely punished any person guilty of anti-Semitic conduct. On the whole, Russian Jews were satisfied because they were treated in the same way as other Russians.<sup>72</sup>

Russian non-Jews fought bravely with the Jewish soldiers during World War II, and both groups rejoiced when the Nazis were destroyed.<sup>73</sup> This positive mention of Russian non-Jews may confuse students who previously read about Bolshevik oppression of Jews.

Soloff does not emphasize the number of kind, sympathetic Gentiles in western and northern European countries. He summarizes their contributions to Jewish

survival but does not go into detail. A summary of Soloff's remarks follows:

Denmark--Gentiles endangered their lives secretly loading Jews on ships bound for Sweden.  
 Sweden--Jews were "kindly received and well treated."  
 Switzerland, Spain, Portugal--These countries received Jews during the war.  
 France, Holland--Christians hid Jews. Instances were reported of Christians even breaking into trains that were taking Jews to concentration camps and setting those Jews free. In Holland, the Star of David was worn by Christians as well as Jews.<sup>74</sup>

Soloff devotes great attention to the positive aspects of the United States. He refers to this country as "the happiest place in the world," and a "blessed land."<sup>75</sup> He comments briefly in the original text that "Jews are well treated" and owe a great deal to the United States. This theme takes on greater proportion in the expanded 1940 edition. In Soloff's opinion, American Jews are well-treated because of the religious freedom and educational and job opportunities afforded them, even if, as he adds, quota systems prevent some Jews from attaining their goals.<sup>76</sup> He probably expects a response of "true" to the following review question, but an astute child in 1940 may answer otherwise.

Most Americans agree that Jews, like Gentiles, have the right not only to be citizens, earn a living, and worship God as they please, but also to hold any office in the government for which they are fit. True/False?<sup>77</sup>

Soloff says that the Jewish and non-Jewish communities worked together to strengthen this country, and furthermore, they were doing a good job in the 1930s and 1940s.

. . . good Americans are not satisfied with merely obeying the laws. They want to do everything they can to make America a still better country, and its inhabitants happier, healthier, and more prosperous.<sup>78</sup>

Even before Hitler rose to power in Germany, many prominent Protestants invited Catholics and Jews to form the National Conference of Christians and Jews. This organization arranges thousands of meetings throughout the country, where Christians and Jews gather to discuss questions in which all are interested. They thus learn to know and understand each other. The Protestants also arrange many meetings under their own direction in which they call upon all good people to shun anti-Semitism and to be friendly with Jews and Christians alike. A bulletin which they publish denounces anti-Semitism and calls upon all religious people to fight this un-American movement. The Catholics are now also issuing a magazine which teaches its readers to be friendly with Jews.<sup>79</sup>

The periodicals to which Soloff refers are mentioned by name in his accompanying Teacher's Book on page 169.

They are The Voice (Catholic) and Information Service (Protestant). Soloff suggests the children attend a Brotherhood Day service in their community, to witness friendship between religious groups.<sup>80</sup>

This approval of religious groups working together does not include their finding joint solutions to the Jewish problem in Europe. It is on the government level that Soloff commends Americans in this regard. In 1940, he reports that the American ambassador to Germany was called home to show America's displeasure over Germany's treatment of Jews; a high duty was imposed on all goods imported from Germany; visiting Germans were allowed to remain in the United States until the situation cooled at home; and the United States allowed 30,000 German refugees, most of them Jews, to enter every year [though this certainly was a



minuscule fraction of all the Jews seeking refuge<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, President Roosevelt urged that a world conference be convened for the purpose of saving the persecuted Jews. The conference did take place, in Evian France, thanks to Roosevelt's efforts.<sup>81</sup> Soloff, in 1940 as well as in 1949, praises American newspapers, politicians and citizens who denounced Nazi actions<sup>82</sup> and took objection to their infiltrating the United States. Soloff makes clear that Jews are a minority group here and that the country is Christian-dominated. Thus, when he projects a pro-American stance, the reader senses a pro-American Christian attitude.

### Conclusion

Soloff's presentation of the Holocaust years is in agreement with the CCAR's view of those decades that America secured Judaism's future. His praise for and faith in America is unyielding, even though he is aware of anti-Semitic practices in this country. Gentiles are seen in a more positive than negative light because Soloff assumes that (a) they are too wise to fall into the trap of Nazi propaganda and that (b) they are willing to sit down with the Jewish community to iron out differences which might exist. For Soloff, democracy will triumph and Judaism will not be destroyed in the United States.

This is not the case with his portrayal of most of European Gentiles. The oppression of most of the Jewish communities there prevents him from excusing this behavior

or from believing that the situation will reverse itself. However, instead of projecting an attitude of fear and distrust, which was the tenor of the 1930s and 1940s, Soloff teaches that Nazi intolerance and ignorance caused this unbelievable world situation.

Soloff appears to agree with what Emanuel Gamoran said was a purpose in teaching Jewish history, namely, fostering positive attitudes toward Judaism. Soloff does this, without lessening positive attitudes toward non-Jews. Those European Gentiles who either hid Jews or helped them escape are recognized as friends of Jews. American non-Jews are shown wherever possible to be understanding of and sympathetic toward the critical situation of European Jewry, while also interested in strengthening the bonds between American Jews and non-Jews.

Soloff is honest in presenting both sides of the American picture; anti-Semitism is shown to be as real a problem here as in Europe, although certainly not equal in dimension to European anti-Semitism. This allows the reader to be objective in his evaluation of the status of Jews in modern American society.

## CONCLUSION

Dorothy Zeligs and Mordecai Soloff share concern for their contemporary world situation, especially with regard to the future of the Jewish people. Both authors portray Jews during this period as a victimized minority, and they show that Jews historically have fallen into this role. The authors agree that Jews as a total community were making a valiant attempt to preserve themselves. Zeligs and Soloff display great compassion for the European Jews as well as admiration and pride for American Jews who tried earnestly to help them.

Zeligs, however, emphasizes throughout her writing that Jews were able to take care of themselves without a great deal of help from non-Jews, while Soloff shows that Jews needed and appreciated non-Jewish support during these decades. The two authors also differ in their expressions of hope for Judaism's future. Zeligs sees a future for European Jewry, even in countries in which Judaism seems to be doomed by Nazi control. Soloff, with a more realistic optimism, stresses that the future of world Jewry is in democratic countries which allow minority groups to thrive.

The authors attempt to show that the gravity of the world situation during the 1930s and 1940s was a result of Jewish-Gentile misunderstanding. They dwell

most heavily on Hitler and the Nazis, who epitomized anti-Semitism and who were directly responsible for the destruction of European Jews. Although Zeligs and Soloff are equally outraged by Nazi activities, their accounts of the Holocaust are painted in different pictures. Soloff gives the more graphic account, describing the trains which carried Jews to the death camps and the furnaces which killed them, while Zeligs skirts this information by using phrases such as "Jews lost their lives." Perhaps she feels that children ten through thirteen years of age are too young to comprehend this, or perhaps too young to be exposed to such horrors. Zeligs' negative portrayal of the Nazi atrocities, although emotional, is not as pronounced or well-defined as Soloff's descriptions.

Nazis are not the only non-Jews portrayed during the Holocaust period in these textbooks, and the authors' attitudes toward Nazis do not represent their attitudes toward all non-Jews. Both authors separate non-Jews into nationalities, just as they consider Jews a nationality. Some countries were sympathetic to Jews and offered help. Non-Jews of these countries are therefore portrayed positively. Non-Jews of countries which would not allow Jews to live in peace are portrayed negatively. The authors are in agreement concerning which groups of non-Jews were friendly toward Jews and which were not. Furthermore, both Zeligs and Soloff explain to the reader the tactics employed by anti-Semitic individuals and

governments. The pupil ten through thirteen years of age begins to comprehend the complexity of these decades.

Favorable accounts of non-Jews are less extensive than the unfavorable ones, but the reader learns that not all non-Jews were bad. Particularly, the Scandinavians, Dutch, Swiss and French non-Jews are commended for their assistance to Jews.

Both authors exhibit strong loyalty to the United States and its democratic political system. They agree that Judaism's future appeared brightest here. Soloff is optimistic even while pointing out that anti-Semitic tremors reached the United States. Zeligs avoids this negative side of American non-Jews by concentrating her writing on the American Jewish community and its contributions to the war effort. American anti-Semitism does not enter Zeligs' view at all. She and Soloff wished to praise all Americans and to stimulate positive feelings toward the non-Jewish community.

As was stated in the Introduction, this paper is not meant to be an all-encompassing survey of the Holocaust period. In this limited view of this time in Jewish history a great deal is to be said beyond the recitation of facts and figures. Children were learning history as it was happening, which meant their comprehension of it was based partly on the contents of books and partly on experience. The same holds true for the authors who wrote the history textbooks. Their books reflect personal

opinion as well as facts. Zeligs and Soloff express the same facts and figures differently due to their own perceptions of the contemporary world situation.

The tenor of these decades did not lend itself to good relations between different groups of people. The information these authors relayed concerning this historical time period is not pleasant, and therefore the reader receives more negative messages than positive. But at no time does either author suggest hating anti-Semites as a solution to the problem. Instead, they look forward to a positive future when Jewry will thrive without the presence of anti-Semitism. Soloff carries this a step further and includes other minority groups who also will enjoy a brighter future.

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