

A CLOSER LOOK AT POLAND AND EASTERN EUROPE

"Probably 90% of medieval people [in Europe] were peasants. But astonishingly little is known about them. Universally illiterate, like prehistoric people, they left no documents of their own. Literate members of medieval society, mainly churchmen, either ignored the peasants or, in most cases, mentioned them with contempt. To reconstruct the life of peasants, not only their economic condition but also their customs, attitudes, and inner experiences presents an impossible challenge."
[JUDD]

"[Medieval] satire [about peasants]," says Jacques Le Goff, "often emphasizes the peasant's filth, poor clothing, and minimal diet, but also a sort of bestiality that placed him ... between beasts and humans ... [This reflects] the undeniable and widespread conditioning brought on by harsh living conditions, alimentary shortages, monotonous work, a daily struggle for existence, the great scourge of famines, recurrent epidemics, and the dangers of war ... " [LE GOFF] (As recently as pre-World War II Poland, Jewish author Norman Salsitz, who was raised in that country, notes that "all across Poland the peasant was held in almost universal contempt.") [SALSITZ, N., 1992, p. 88]

These peasants are that stock from whom most Euro-Americans have descended. And these impoverished and often desperate people who harbored the greatest day to day grievances against the Jews, and who perpetrated most of the violence against them -- are rendered entirely mute in the twentieth century. We know well the Jewish martyrology myths of the Middle Ages story, told and retold by their Hebrew and Yiddish chroniclers that are popular Jewish canon today. But we don't know the peasants' version of things; there is only scant reference to them by the Christian clergy or local aristocracy, neither of whom were even remotely sympathetic to their plight.

A Jewish author, Max Dimont, lays the barest outline of the peasant torment:

"[Christian feudal life was like] a vast prison. The bars were the all-encompassing restrictions placed upon the daily life of the people. Inside the bars were the peasants, the so-called Third Estate, who comprised about 95 per cent of the total population. Outside the bars but tied to them by invisible chains were the other two estates, the priests and the nobles. Neither inside the prison nor tied to the bars outside it were the Jews, the unofficial "Fourth Estate."

The restrictions placed on the feudal serfs, as the peasants were called, pursued them from "womb to tomb." There could be no movement from one estate to another except through the ranks of

the clergy, and then only for the exceptionally gifted child. Restrictions on travel kept the serf tied to the soil. He usually saw nothing of the world except that within walking distance. Though he was technically a free man, he could own no property. He could be sold with the land by his lord ... The peasant had to grind his flour in the lord's granary, bake his bread in the lord's bakery -- all for a fee, paid either in goods or in labor. He could only own wooden dishes, and one spoon was all he was allowed for his entire family, no matter what its size. The kind of cloth he could buy, sell, or wear, was regulated. The lord was allowed to sample everything his serfs had, including their brides ... " [DIMONT, p. 247]

"In this [feudal] system," notes Eva Hoffman, "the Jews who were growing more numerous and visible could be thought of as another estate, with its own place in the ordained social order." [HOFFMAN, E., 1997, p. 47] "All Eastern European Jewry," notes a Yiddish folk saying, "is one town." [KUMOVE, S., 1985, p. 47]

"No travelers' account of Poland," says Jerzy Lukowski, "was complete without almost ritual reference to the degradation of the serfs ... In Poland, peasants were forbidden to leave their villages without seigneurial [manor lord] permission in 1496 ... Until 1768, the noble seigneur enjoyed the power of life and death over his serfs. He could buy and sell them like chattel, independently of landed transactions." [LUKOWSKI, p. 38] As late as the 1800s, says Jewish scholar Howard Sachar, "the typical Russian peasant was bound in serfdom to his soil. Diseased, ignorant, hopelessly superstitious, he lived in a rude hut, slept in his clothes, and fed his fire with animal dung." [SACHAR, p. 80] And as Sula Benet notes about Poland:

"For three hundred years, until 1784, the peasants were serfs, bound to their land and to their lords. After that, although the Constitution of 1791 nominally changed their status, there was little real change in their position or condition until Poland was reconstituted in 1919, after the first World War." [BENET, S., p. 31]

And what of the Jewish merchants and money lenders, and the Jews at-large, the people that kept to themselves and refused to interact with others except towards commercial profit, these people from whom many impoverished Gentiles sought out to borrow money, not to expand their fortunes, but merely to survive the current season?

Dimont continues:

"None of these restrictions applied to the Jews. They were free to come and go, marry and divorce, sell and buy as they pleased.... The priests were excluded from work, the nobles did not want to

work, and the serfs were not allowed to enter the bourgeoisie or middle-class professions. There was no one left to do this work except the Jews, who therefore became indispensable. The Jews were the oil that lubricated the creaky machinery of the feudal state." [DIMONT, p. 247]

Jews were visibly distinct from the rest of the population, especially by dress. They usually wore black and the men were distinguished by side locks over their ears. They also "stood out by specific mannerisms," says Janusz Tazbir, "their nervous gestures, continually emphasizing the spoken word, and their characteristic feverish haste." The Jew was to a Christian "an economic rival, an onerous creditor, accused of arrogance and impudence ... and willing to suffer any humiliation for even a small gain. " They were widely perceived as cowards and swindlers who held "occupations that did not deserve to be called 'work.'" [TAZBIR, p. 27-31]

Bernard Weinryb suggests as typical the area of Breslau in the mid-14th century: perhaps 10% of the Jewish community was "poor and about 7% 'very rich,' thus placing about four-fifths of the Jewish population in the middle-income range, whatever this may have meant to them." [WEINRYB, p. 70] Even as late as the twentieth century, there can be no comparison between the strata of "poor" in the Jewish community and the impoverished Gentile peasant society at-large around them. Ewa Morawska notes that

"At the end of the last century in Galicia [a province that is today divided between Poland and the Ukraine, including the city of Krakow], a region generally poorer than other provinces of Eastern Europe, about 50,000 peasants annually died of starvation; such catastrophes did not occur in Jewish society, even among the most deprived, partly because of the well-organized in-group assistance, but also because of a somewhat higher general standard of living." [MORAWSKA, p. 12]

A good example of chronic Jewish myopia concerning their own history, completely devoid of the wider context of European history around it, is Poland. This country -- until Hitler's campaign to exterminate Jews, and Poles, and others -- was the home for more Jews than any other place in the world. After being expelled from other areas of Europe in the mid-1300's, Jews were allowed by the ruling nobles to immigrate to feudal Poland. There, despite modern Jewish itemization of alleged Polish persecutions over the centuries, the Jewish community flourished. (Just before World War II, "84% of all the Jews in the world either lived in historically Polish territory, or came from families that had lived there." [SHERWIN, p. 157] To this day Jewish popular opinion still condemns Poles and their culture, with accusations of all sorts leading up to alleged Polish indifference to -- and betrayal of -- the Jews under the Nazis. More about that later.

Let's go back a few centuries. What kind of country, we might wonder, had the Jews moved to? Beyond the sacred island of Jewry, what was the indigenous populations' miserable situation? What were the

social and political forces that were boiling all around them? In war after war after war, Poland has been a country continuously ripped apart, partitioned, divided, and subdivided by invaders for centuries. If anyone has a legitimate claim to historic victimization, Poles can stake a claim as deeply valid as anybody. Here is a rudimentary chronological overview of the social upheaval, religious tension, and terrors that ripped through all or part of Polish society (which has changed and reformed in expanse) for hundreds of years, beginning with the century before the Jews' arrival:

- 1241-1242. Mongols invade Poland.
- 1246-1307. Lithuanians raid parts of Poland.
- 1248-1287. Jatvingians raid parts of Poland.
- 1328-1322. Teutonic (Germanic) knights and Bohemians crush Poland in a series of wars.
- 1350's. **Jews began immigrating en masse to Poland.**
- 1399. Mongols defeat Poland in war.
- 1410. Poland defeat Teutonic knights in war.
- 1419. Protestant Hussite rebellion.
- 1454-1467. Polish uprising against the Teutonic knights.
- 1475, 1484. Ottoman Empire attacks parts of Poland.
- 1486-94. Russian Tsar Ivan II the Great attacks Lithuania.
- 1492. Tatars raid parts of Poland.
- 1497. Moldavians militarily defeat Poles.
- 1498-99. Tatar invasion reaches Krakov, one of Poland's greatest cities.
- 1500-1503. Tsar Ivan II attacks Lithuania again.
- 1507-1508. Polish war with Russia over Lithuania.
- 1512-22. Polish war with Russia over Lithuania.
- 1524. Ottoman troops cut through parts of Poland and conquer sections of Hungary.
- 1558-82. Russian Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible fights 24 year long war against Teutonic kingdom.
- 1563-70. Russia invades Poland in First Nordic War.
- 1578-81. Poland defeats Russia in three campaigns.
- 1600-1635. Swedish-Poland war.
- 1618-1648. Thirty Years War, of which Poland has peripheral involvement.
- 1620. Poles defeat Prince of Transylvania.
- 1621-1631. Poles defeat Turks in battle, but Turkish attacks continue for ten more years.
- 1633-34. Poles attack Turks, Russians, and Swedes.
- 1635. Poland seizes Swedish ports on Baltic Sea.
- 1648, 1651. Rebellion of Cossacks against Polish nobles. With armed aid from Tatars and Turks, hundreds of

thousands of people are massacred.

1654-1655. Russia attacks Poland and conquers eastern part.

1655, 1657. Poles defeat Swedish and Brandenburg armies.

1660-62. Polish union with Ukraine and defeat of Russia.

Polish rebellion against King of Poland.

1672-1673. Turks attack Poland; Poland loses two-thirds of
Ukraine.

1673. Turks defeated.

1683. Turks driven from Vienna, a crucial event for Europe.

1700-21. The Northern War. Polish alliances attack Sweden.

1704-1710. Swedish troops destroy one-third of all Polish cities.

1756-63. Seven Years War. Russian armies used Polish bases in
their war against Prussia.

1768-72. Polish Catholic uprisings, known as the Confederation of
Bar.

1794. Polish popular insurrection against Russia and Prussia.

1797-1801. Polish legions, formed from former Austrian prisoners
of war, fight Austria.

1806. France attacks Prussia, Russia aids France, and Poles rebel
against Prussia.

1809. Napoleonic Wars of 1809.

1830-31. Polish insurrection and war against Russia.

1833-1846. Rebellious Polish revolutionary cells captured and
imprisoned.

1846. Polish rebellion put down by Austrian troops.

1853-56. Russia's Crimean War leads to reforms in Poland.

1863. Polish insurrection, put down. Executions and exile.

Russian governor makes "every effort to stamp out Polish
culture altogether."

1905. Polish patriots take part in abortive revolution against Russian
government.

1914. World War I. 800,000 Poles killed and destruction of the
country.

1917. Russian Revolution.

1918. Polish uprising against Germans in city of Poznan.

1920. Polish-Soviet war.

1929. Polish unemployment hits 33%, not including those employed
in agriculture.

1936, 1938. Violent uprisings, strikes.

1939. Fall of Poland to the Nazis in World War II.

[ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, 1993]

This is the kind of country Poland's Jews lived in since the fourteenth century. "The established order (of the Polish state) has been overturned on at least five occasions -- in 1138, in 1795, in 1813, in 1864, and in 1939, on each occasion all concrete manifestations of a unified political community were lost."

[DAVIES, p. x] In just the 1600's, for instance, "war, the bubonic plague, slave raids, and mass murders had reduced the total [Polish population] ... [to] 45% of the former total population." [E. Britt., 25, p. 946] Jews were, as elsewhere in Europe, for centuries not obliged to serve in the military and distanced themselves from warring factions as much as possible, unless, of course, it was clearly opportune to make an allegiance. Jews principally functioned -- at least till the Enlightenment -- with the intertwined aims of insular self-survival, weathering others' socio-political catastrophes, and advancing wherever and whenever possible towards the objectives of Jewish individual and communal opportunism.

The failed Polish insurrection against Russian rule in 1863, notes Theodore Weeks, had the following effect on the populace in Poland:

"The Jews of Russian Poland were also affected by the post-1863 repressions. On the whole, however, the Russian administration did not single them out -- unlike the Poles -- for specific restrictive measures ... Thus as Polish rights were further restricted, on the whole, the Jewish legal situation in Russian Poland remained relatively untouched." [WEEKS, T., p. 64]

"Only a very small percentage of the population in Poland," notes Bernard Weinryb, "in about 1600 estimated at less than 10 per cent of the country's total population, had any aspiration to "rights." Less than half of this small group (the magnates and the wealthy landed gentry) had standing and influence in the country." [WEINBRYB, p. 160]

Discriminated against on one hand (as everyone, short of nobility and clergy, was throughout medieval Europe in some form), the Jewish community in Poland was also afforded special privileges by the ruling aristocracy. While Jews were sometimes prohibited from owning land (as were most other people), they could pay the owning nobles a flat fee to lease it; profits beyond this fee were theirs to keep. "The belief that Jews could not own land," notes Albert Lindemann, "ranks as one of the most often overheard simplifications about their status, both in Russia and elsewhere in Europe ... The real issue was not whether Jews could own land, if they would work it with their own hands, but whether they could own land that allowed them to exploit the labor of the peasants." [LANDEMANN, Esau's, p. 63]

Jewish author Norman Salsitz notes another version of the land issue, in his book about growing up in pre-World War II Poland:

"My father's father was born and spent his life on an estate not far from Kolbuszowa. The estate belonged to Jacob Eckstein, certainly the most estimable Jew in our town. Naftali Saleschutz, my grandfather, served as manager, which brought him into close relations with many

peasants who worked in the fields belonging to Eckstein and gave him a sense of connection with the soil. (The Jews had lived in the area since the sixteenth century; they were originally farmers but had in time moved off to the towns and villages and lost direct contact with the land)." [SALSITZ, N., 1992, p. 28]

For the non-Jewish part, notes Michael Aronson, "Russian peasants endured a hunger not only for food. They suffered from land hunger as well." [ARONSON, p. 25]

Jews in Poland were formally protected and served as tax-collectors, bankers, and administrators of the money mints, breweries and salt mines. (In later centuries Jews eventually owned many of such important industries). Even the Polish King Casimir the Great fell into debt to Jewish lenders, as did King Lewis of Hungary. [LEON, p. 156] "In the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries," says Abram Leon, "Jewish usurers succeeded in taking possession of the lands belonging to the nobles." [LEON, p. 185] Until the union of Poland and Lithuania, Jews perhaps had it even better in Lithuania. "Lithuanian Jews," says Leon, "enjoyed the same rights of the free population. In their hands lay big business, banking, the customhouses, etc. The farming of taxes and customs brought them great wealth. Their clothes glittered with gold and they wore swords just like the gentry." [LEON, p. 189]

"Jews in southeastern Poland ...," notes Jewish scholar Bernard Weinryb,

"were legally on par with the nobles with regard to the amounts paid as indemnification for being wounded or killed. If we go beyond formality and consider the prevailing practice the position of the Jew appears in a more favorable light. If he could not be nobleman, he could be like one -- or in the place of one. Jewish lessees of the king's or nobles' villages and towns, or of various taxes and other sources of revenue, were accorded broad powers and status-bearing functions, often over large expanses populated by many people, not all of them peasants.

To these Jews were transformed almost Lord's power, mostly including the perquisites of local justice. A number of Jews actually did behave like nobles -- conducting themselves haughtily, arrogantly, arbitrarily, dictatorially, and sometimes even recklessly ... A number of cases are known in which a non-Jewish tax collector, or nobleman, or a court usher, was simply afraid to enter the houses of prominent Jews on business, not wanting to risk being thrown out or beaten up ... Many ... instances are known in which Polish Jewish communities or other groups refused to follow Polish court summonses or orders from other offices." [WEINRYB, p. 162-163]

In later centuries, however, "increasingly," says Leon, "the Jews came in contact only with the poor, the artisans, and the peasants. And often the anger of the people, despoiled by the Kings and Lords and compelled to pledge their last belongings to the Jews, turning against the walls of the [Jewish] ghetto." [LEON, p. 155]

The Jewish role of hated tax collector was common not only in Poland, but throughout Europe. Salo Baron writes that:

"Most widespread was the Jewish contribution to tax farming. The medieval regimes, as a rule, aided by only small, inefficient, and unreliable bureaucracies, often preferred to delegate tax collection to private entrepreneurs who, for a specific lump sum they paid the treasury, were prepared to exact the payments due from the taxpayers. Of course, the risks of under collection were, as a rule, more than made up by considerable surpluses obtained, if need be, by ruthless methods. [BARON, EH of J, p. 46]

"Wealthy Jews," notes Bernard Weinryb, "with good connections among those in power, and on one hand, underworld elements, believed in their own ability to take care of themselves, or to invoke the protection of the powerful. They frequently resorted to hard and brutal measures to achieve their ends ... " [WEINRYB, p. 164] Typically, Jewish apologists like Leon Poliakov -- following traditional martyrological models -- blame Jewish economic "aggression" against non-Jews as a response to Gentile hostility to them:

"The Jews replied to Christian animosity by a hatred just as intense but necessarily restrained or repressed. Whereas the aggressive potential of the Christians could be expressed at will and discharged directly, Jewish aggression was obliged to seek other channels and to become in some way transmuted. The psychic energy thus accumulated had ample opportunity to function in the realm of the struggle for existence -- in the pursuit of negotiable currency." [POLIAKOV, p. 87]

Along with Jewish leases on tax collecting, inns, dairies, flour mills, tolls, and other essentials of commerce, says Simon Dubnov, "the Jews inherited from the landed gentry some of the rights over the serfs. The lessees endeavored to extract as much revenue as possible from the nobleman's estates, and to do that it was necessary to exploit the peasantry." [DUBNOV, v. 4, p. 26]

"Jews," writes Witold Rymankowki, "in contrast to the millions of serfs and the impoverished townspeople who were oppressed by the nobility, constituted a privileged group which ... effectively represented the only class in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to concentrate finance and liquid assets in its hands." [POLONSKY, p. 156] An old Latin proverb proclaimed that the Polish Commonwealth

was "heaven for the nobles, purgatory for the townsfolk, hell for the peasants, and paradise for the Jews." [HAGEN, p. 13]

"The Council of Four Lands," says David Biale, "which was the supracommunal governing body of the Polish Jews, maintained a virtual 'Jewish lobby' at the Polish parliament. In the eyes of enemies of the Jews, the power of this lobby was such that, according to a statement from 1669, 'in practice Jews do not let any law materialize which is unfavorable to them.'" [BIALE, POWER, p. 72]

Jews prospered so well that, when the Polish and Lithuanian nobility merged forces in the mid-sixteenth century, Jews followed up with their "services." With Polish expansion into the Ukrainian frontiers, Jews leased land there too from the aristocracy, and dictated over the population of serf-slaves. Wealthy Jews established themselves securely throughout the Polish economy and farmed out work and management opportunities to relatives and co-religionists. "During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," says Salo Baron, "domestic commerce (in Poland and Lithuania) as well as export (timber, grain, furs) and import (cloth, wine, luxuries) were for the most part in Jewish hands." [BARON, EHOJ, p. 227] In fact, Heinrich Graetz states that "circumstances were such at the time that the Jews of Poland could form a state within a state." [GRAETZ, Pop Hist, p. 10, v. 5; in LEON, p. 190]

The Jews of Poland were exploited by the Polish nobility (in the sense that they were heavily taxed as a communal entity). But Jews in turn ruthlessly exploited the masses of impoverished peasants beneath them, most of the non-Jews of the land, and even the burghers, townsfolk, and sometimes nobles. "[Jews] enjoyed religious and communal autonomy and enriched themselves, becoming the most numerous group of capitalists in the country. They were sufficiently protected by law, and living in wealth they turned to Talmudic studies." [OXFORD POLAND, p. 567]

In Germany, the Jewish opportunity to collect money for no work (per usury) was noted by an ancient rabbi, Shalom ben Isaac Sekel:

"The reason why the Torah holds a higher place [for Jews] in Germany than in other places is that the Jews here charge interest to Gentiles and need not engage in an [time-consuming] occupation. On this score they have time to study the Torah." [BARON, EHOJ, p. 55]

The upper strata of Jewish wealth attracted malevolent attention. In sixteenth century Poland there were formal complaints that "Jews in the royal towns have synagogues and houses, which are finer and more numerous than the churches and the houses of Christians. There is a need for the King to act fast to rectify this." [POLONSKY, p. 58]

In seventeenth century Poland, Hirsz Kiejdanower, identified as a Jewish "mystic," wrote:

"I have seen Jewish women out on the street, dressed not as Jews

but as nobles. They question their husbands' opinions and bring Christian hatred and jealousy upon us." [POLONSKY, p. 50]

For their part, the peasants were in a despicable state. In Poland the aristocracy's complete control over commoner lives was legalized with statutes in 1496, 1518, 1532, and 1543, whereby the poor were formally rendered as human chattel living "under conditions of virtual slavery as cheap laborers for the noble's farmstead economy." [ENCY BR, 25, p. 949]

"The Jewish arendator [leasee of land, mills, inns, breweries, tax farming, etc.]," writes Norman Davies, "became the master of life and death over the population of entire districts and, having nothing but a short-term and purely financial interest in the relationship, was faced with the irresistible temptation to pare his temporary subjects to the bone. On the noble estates, he tended to put all his relatives and co-religionists in charge of the flour mill, the brewery, and in particular the Lords' tavern, where by custom the peasants were obliged to drink. On the church estates, he became the collector of all ecclesiastical dues, standing by the church door for his payment from tithe-payers ... the baptized infant, newly-weds, and mourners ... The Jewish community became the symbol of social and economic exploitation." [DAVIES, p. 444]

"The Jewish steward," adds seminal Jewish historian, Heinrich Graetz, "strove to draw as much as possible from the manors and to exploit the peasants as much as possible." [GRAETZ, in LEON, p. 192] Likewise, "the toll farmer," remarks Bernard Weinryb, "had many opportunities to practice abuse. Rates were not clearly fixed. The toll farmer and his employees had the right to search traveler's wagons to confiscate the wares of anyone trying to avoid payment of tolls ... Those who thought they had been overcharged tended to regard this as Jewish oppression." [WEINRYB, p. 64]

"Jews," notes Hillel Levine, "sometimes even managed whole villages and oversaw the economic development and exploitation of forests, mines, mints, custom houses, toll roads, and breweries on the gentry's estates, using serf labor ... Jews were motivated ... to squeeze profits out of the margins. These included more rigorous supervision of the serfs and more efficient collection of rents and taxes, adding to the harshness of the serfs' lives and by no means making the Jewish arendator [lessee of a business enterprise from the lords] beloved." [LEVINE, p. 63]

Chaim Bermant notes:

"In Poland, the Jews became so numerous, prosperous and entrenched, that they began to lose something of their caution. Their whole economy was based mainly on the arenda system under which they became tax farmers and collectors for the crown, or lessees of the forests, estates, mills and salt mines of the nobility. Some operated on a large scale, many on a small scale, leasing a few acres of land, or operating a small distillery or tavern, but their utility to their superiors rested in their powers of extraction. The peasantry, the work force, the cattle, the land, were all regarded in much the same light and were pressed

for their maximum yield, and if the nobility were thus the ultimate exploiters, the Jews were the visible ones and aroused the most immediate hostility. Rabbis warned that Jews were sowing a terrible harvest of hatred, but while the revenues rolled in the warnings were ignored. Moreover, the rabbis themselves were beneficiaries of the system." [BERMANT, C., 1977, p. 26]

The Cambridge History of Poland notes that:

"Jesuit preachers ... used to complain that peasants were mere slaves. Their field service had been steadily increased and all kinds of abuses had been practiced. The squires wanted to sell their badly-brewed ale and so peasants were simply forced to drink it. The Jewish innkeeper had to distribute set quantities among the peasants, who could throw it away, but pay for it they must. [The peasants'] right to buy and sell became limited; their children were taken away from them in order to serve at the manor; they were not allowed to go to the town in order to earn money or acquire some learning. The worst condition existed on the large domains of the nobility in Ruthenia. The noblemen usually farmed out their immense domains to the so-called commissaries, and these would extort money from the peasants, with the active help of the Jews." [CAMBRIDGE, p. 566]

The reference to ale is important here. Jewish merchants were eventually afforded a monopoly on alcohol distribution throughout most of Poland, including the Ukraine. This meant that the person who regularly demanded tax payments from such peasant "slaves," the person who managed the land and made decisions upon which the impoverished peasants were exploited, the person who dragged the peasant's child away, the man who drove the peasant into deeper debt, and the man who sold the peasants booze to drink away their misery, all had a Jewish face.

In the mid-eighteenth century, in rural areas of parts of Eastern Europe, up to 85% of the Jewish population "was involved in some aspect of manufacturing, wholesaling, or retailing of beer, mead, wine, and grain-based intoxicants, like vodka." [LEVINE, p. 9]

"Anti-Semites," says H. H. Ben-Sasson, "ascribed the drunkenness prevalent among the peasants and their permanent state of indebtedness to the wily Jewish taverner, who also extended credit to them." [BARON, ECHJ, p. 136] (Gentile accusations that Jewish saloon owners were poisoning the non-Jewish populace with alcohol and contributing to moral decay even had a direct parallel to Jewish commercial activities in the American South at the turn of the twentieth century. Jews, who "overwhelmingly opposed prohibition," yet were known themselves as "unusually sober," were singled out for attack by Christian temperance leaders for their great role in the liquor trade, for what was described as Jewish greed and pursuit of profit at the expense of public health and morality. [LINDEMANN, p. 232] During the prohibition years, the Seagram's alcohol fortune was built by the Bronfman family, who ran illegal

liquor into the United States from Canada; one of the heirs of this fortune, Edgar Bronfman, is the current head of the Jewish World Congress).

Eastern European Jews had a popular Yiddish song for this aspect of their prosperity: "*Shicker is a goy ... trinker muss er.* (The Gentile is a drunkard; he has to drink.)" [CANTOR, SC, p. 183] Jews themselves had a marked tendency towards sobriety. George Mosse suggests that "the reasons for their moderation in the consumption of alcohol may have ... been ... economic.... Avoidance of drunkenness helped to avoid expenses and thus assisted in the primary accumulation of capital." Staying sober, needless to say, is also a distinct advantage, economically or otherwise, over the intoxicated. And alcoholism is a steady, reliable source for profit. "The Jews," says Hillel Levine, ".... could avert facing his contribution to the plight of the serf -- 'A goy,' he might mutter with self-righteousness, 'drunken sloth is the essence of the Gentile.'" [LEVINE, p. 10]

It is disturbing to note how deeply ingrained the disdain for non-Jews is in Jewish folk tradition (as well as the lengths they go to hide it from Gentiles). In a 1955 study of Jewish American stereotypes equating non-Jews with drunkenness, 38 of 73 Jewish respondents denied they had ever heard about an association of Gentiles and alcoholics as children, but "when asked specifically about a childhood ditty called 'Drunken is the Gentile,' only 17 denied familiarity with it. This turnabout, wrote the researcher, Charles Snyder, was because Jewish respondents recognized that "the interviewer knew the prevailing folk beliefs and that it was no longer necessary to conceal ethnocentric ideas behind a universalistic front." [SKLARE, p. 576]

Under the veil of objective scholarship, a pair of modern (1952) scholars even echoed classical Jewish stereotypes and contempt for non-Jewish peasantry with this defaming vignette from their book about their beloved Eastern European Jewish community:

"It is no rare occurrence for the market day to end in violence. The peasant, having sold his wares, will celebrate his profits -- and perhaps drink them away -- at a Jewish inn. When he can no longer pay for liquor and still insists on more, he will be thrown out, whereupon if he is already inflamed by drinking he sets up a cry, "The Jew has cheated me!" If a group of comrades who have shared the activities of the day should join him, a token riot may follow." [ZBOROWSKI, p. 67]

Anthropologist Frances Pine notes traditional peasant perceptions of local lawyers and innkeepers (code words for Jews, especially the latter) in the Polish mountain area known as the Podhale:

"Lawyers and innkeepers were portrayed as encouraging village men to drink and then, when they were unable to pay their debts, taking their lands as forfeit. Many of these stories probably contain substantial truths; for instance, land records from the 19th until the mid-20th century show frequent mortgaging of lands and transfers of land title to pay off debt to non-villagers who are

listed as innkeepers and advocates." [Pine, F., 1999, p. 52]

Jews continued to invest in and propagate alcohol, a product they recognized was harmful and were disinclined to use themselves (short of ritual wine uses). By the late nineteenth century perhaps the largest brewery in Europe, Schultheiss-Patzenhofer, "was a 'Jewish firm' (in terms of management, Board membership, and financial links)." [MOSSE, p. 12-13] In the Ukraine, by 1872, after the feudal system had passed into history, wealthy Jews owned about 90% of Ukraine's distilleries, as well as 56% of its sawmills, 48% of its tobacco production, and 33% of the sugar refineries. [SUBTLENY, p. 277] In the Russian province of Zhitomir, 73.7% of the Jews living there made their living by leasing distilleries and selling alcohol at taverns. [LINDEMANN, p. 152] Even in the Polish town of Oswiecim (renamed and known infamously as the Nazi site for the concentration camp Auschwitz) Jakob Habermeld, a Jewish "liquor magnate" owned (up to the World War II era) the most beautiful building in the area -- a 40-room mansion. [GOLDMAN, A., 1998, p. A1](On the subject of Jewish reclamation, in 2001 heirs to the Jewish Wertheim department store dynasty were even taking ownership to land in Berlin [once owned by the Wertheim family] that was the site of Adolf Hitler's personal bunker. [BOYES, R., 6-26-01]

Hayim Zhitlowsky was from the Jewish village of Uschah in what later became part of the Soviet Union. He was, as one Jewish historian puts it, "the outstanding thinker of the Jewish cultural renaissance in the Yiddish language in the twentieth century." He was no vicious, prejudicial, peasant anti-Semite; he was a lover of his own Jewish people, and influential in preserving their culture. But Zhitlowsky was deeply troubled by the omnipresent Jewish exploitation of their surrounding non-Jewish peasant neighbors. In 1883 he wrote:

"[The Jewish businessman] Samuel Solomovich Poliakov built railroads for Russia. Those railroads were, according to Nekrasov's famous poem, built on the skeletons of the Russian peasantry. My uncle Michael in the [Jewish town of] Uschach distilled vodka for the Russian people and made a fortune on the liquor tax. My cousin sold vodka to the peasants. The whole town hired them to cut down Russian woods which he bought from the greatest exploiter of the Russian peasants, the Russian landowner.... Wherever I turned my eyes to ordinary, day-to-day Jewish life, I saw only one thing, that which anti-Semites were agitating about; the injurious effect of Jewish merchantry on Russian peasantry." [In CUDDIHY, p. 138]

Other Jews, especially among socialists, were moved by the Eastern European peasants' plight at the hands of Jewish communities. "We were convinced," wrote one, "that all the Jews were swindlers." Another, Pavel Akselrod, said that "however great the poverty and deprivation ... of the Jewish masses ... the fact remains that, taken overall, some half of them function as a non-productive element, sitting astride the neck of the lower classes in Russia." [LINDEMANN, p. 141] Isaac Deutscher notes the case of prominent Jewish communist leader Leo Trotsky: "Trotsky saw poverty and exploitation from the window of the home of an upstart Jewish landowner, whose son he was." [DEUTSCHER, p. 24]

Ber Borochov, a Jew, a socialist, and a Zionist, explained Jewish exploitation of non-Jews this way: "The vast majority of non-Jews gain their livelihood from nature ... whereas the majority of Jews earn their living directly from other men. In Russia and Galicia 70-80% of non-Jews earn their livelihood from nature; a similar percentage of the Jews earn theirs from men." [BOROCHOV, p. 68] By 1918, notes Richard Rubenstein, "in addition to the miserable condition of the peasants ... between seven and eight million Poles were unemployed or woefully underemployed in a country of 32,500,000." [RUBENSTEIN, R., p. 117] And as Sula Benet observes:

"Before [1946], about sixty per cent of all farms were too small to support a family, while at the same time almost half of the arable land was owned by a landed nobility representing less than six-tenths of one per cent of the agricultural population ... The great majority of peasants -- almost ten million -- owned farms too small to furnish a family subsistence." [BENET, S., p. 32-33]

Richard Watt is one of many scholars to have written a book about some aspect of Polish history. And Watt, like virtually all modern historians, feels obligated to, with broad strokes, make reference to the Jewish poor to tone down what must be said about the economic dominance Jews enjoyed in the country. So, on one hand, Watt remarks that "as a group [the Jews] were very poor -- but Poland itself was a poor country." [WATT, p. 360] But he also observes, however incongruously, that "in every village a Jew owned the store, a Jew was the horse-and-cattle trader, and a Jew was the moneylender ... Some Jews dominated the professions of law and medicine. They played major roles in banking and the insurance industry. In fact, Jews handled practically all of preindependence Poland's commerce ... [WATT, p. 359] ... Although Poland's Jews comprised 10 percent of the population, they paid between 35 and 40 percent of Poland's taxes. And because they owned a substantial amount of Poland's wealth, their mass emigration would have seriously drained the nation of capital." [WATT, p. 365]

As W. D. Rubinstein notes, in citing the studies of fellow Jewish scholar Joseph Marcus, "Jew received about 40 per cent of all income earned by Poland's Group I earners [i.e., the wealthiest people in Poland], *including* incomes earned in the agricultural sector." [RUBINSTEIN, WD, 2000, p. 8] [The implication here, of course, is that the Jewish percentage of the top incomes in Poland was far higher in the commercial and financial sectors].

In 1975 a Jewish American, Leona Schecter (living earlier in Moscow with her husband, Time magazine bureau correspondent Jerrold) recalled a conversation she had with her Ukrainian maid who said "Yes, it's always the same with the Jews. They've always pushed their children to do well. It was always that way here and it's the same with you. At least you don't push food into your children to make them fat, like the Russian Jews do. In Odessa every Jewish child knew two or three languages and could play on at least two musical instruments. It paid off -- they have the easy jobs, they are the intelligentsia with all the privileges. You never see a Jew in a factory or on a collective farm." "I was stunned," writes Schecter, "but there was nothing I could contradict in what she said." [SCHECTER, 1975, p. 121]

By 1905, notes Theodore Weeks in the journal Eastern European Jewish Affairs,

"the former landowning elites of noble background were in many cases overshadowed or even eclipsed by 'new men,' many of whom were Jewish or of Jewish origin ... Poles could, and did, argue that Jews had profited from equal rights to enrich themselves with no thought to the general good of the Polish land. Furthermore, following this argument, nationalist Poles accused Jews of continuing their own selfish, anti-Polish interests, of forming Jewish nationalist groups which specifically demanded nationalist rights for non-Polish languages and culture, and, worst of all, acting (actively or passively) as agents of russification in the Polish provinces." [WEEKS, T., p. 66]

In the early 1800s, in the wake of the Enlightenment, Russian laws were devised to pry Jews out of their tight ethnocentric ring and pull them into the broader non-Jewish community. Jewish communal autonomy was legally deconstructed, limits were put on Jewish trade, Jewish schools were forced to teach the language of the people in whose midst they lived, and some Jews were conscripted into the military for the first time (they had earlier bought their way out). Jews were forced to choose family surnames and some were relocated to work in agricultural establishments, but "agriculture held little if any attraction to them." [SACHAR, p. 78] The Russian government's intention, says Lionel Kochan, was to "decrease the Jewish identity." [KOCHAN, p. 114]

It didn't work. Russian Jewry could not be convinced, cajoled, coerced, or torn away from their traditions of "separateness" and "uniqueness." In spite of every conceivable repressive measure, notes Howard Sachar, "the Jews remained a cohesive mass, devoutly traditional in religion and occupation, a separate nation sticking like a bone in Russia's throat." [SACHAR, p. 84] (Despite later being forcibly assimilated in the next century under Soviet communism, 69% of the Jews of Vilnius (17,000 people; 7 percent of that city's population) declared in the census of 1959 that Yiddish was their "mother tongue." In Riga, where 30,000 Jews were 5% of the city population, 48% declared Yiddish to be their mother tongue. For the Soviet Union at-large in that same year, nearly 20% of all Jews formally declared Yiddish to be their principle language.) [KOREY, W., 1973, p. 173] "As late as 1897, 96.9 percent of Russian Jewry declared [Yiddish] to be their mother tongue." [ASCHHEIM, S., 1982, p. 11]

With the emancipation of the peasant serfs in the 1860s and 1870s, Jewish socio-economic life was changing; aristocratic-linked privileges including complete self-autonomy were eroding. "The commercial monopoly of the Jews declined," notes Abram Leon, "in the degree that the peoples whose exploitation had fed it, developed." [LEON, p. 136] By the turn of the twentieth century a large Jewish proletariat had grown and their principal agitation tended to be about "being Jewish." "By far the most significant Jewish Marxist party was the Bund," notes Kochan, "It far exceeded other Russian social democratic parties in size and influence." [KOCHAN, p. 122] The Bund expressly demanded distinctly Jewish *nationalist* rights in Russia. A second Jewish political movement of nationalist separation was

Zionism, which sought to transplant the Russian Jewish population to some other country to establish Jewish nationalism. In the context of Jewish traditional economic exploitation of the non-Jewish people, its long -- and continuing -- tradition of insularity, and rising Jewish agitation for its own separatist demands even within Russia, some Russian Gentiles responded violently.

Riots against Jews began in 1881 after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II; the fact that there was a Jewish member (Gessia Gelfman) in the assassin's group enflamed already existing negative public opinion against Jews. [LOWE, p. 59] In the further context of collapsed grain prices, Russian crop failure, an industrial slump, and gathering groups of peasants looking for seasonal work where there was none, 45% of all Jews who were attacked were engaged in trade. [LOWE, p. 58] "Jews operated independently of, and outside, the corporatist framework," says Lowe, "which had the ... advantage that they could avoid special taxes and other obligations in kind owed to the guilds. This situation gave rise to the frequent complaint that Jews tried to avoid their obligations." [LOWE, p. 60] In this vein, the official government newspaper aggravated hostility against Jews by writing that "90% of Jews avoided military conscription." [LOWE, p. 61] During the Russian-Japanese War, notes Stuart Kahan, "many Jews tried various tactics to stay out of the army. Some submitted to baptism, converting to the Church in order to delay military duty. Or, if not that, at least be assigned to a nondangerous position. Others bribed officers with anything they could get their hands on in order to get out of military service." [KAHAN, S., p. 43]

In Lithuania, notes World Zionist organization president Nahum Goldmann, "There was a law exempting only sons [i.e., one son in a family] from military service, and in Jewish communities it was the rabbi who kept the birth register. So when a father had three sons they were each entered under a different name; in my own family my grandfather was called Leibmann, my father Goldmann, and my uncle Szalkowitz!" [GOLDMANN, N., 1978, p. 16]

Even relatively liberal newspapers continually published accusations against the Jewish community. "In article after article," notes Michael Aronson, "[Russian] newspapers accused the Jews within the Pale of Settlement of being merciless exploiters of the Russian laboring classes and the major source of their impoverishment and suffering." [ARONSON, p. 68] The Russian Ministry of Interior published a statement in reaction to growing attacks upon Jews:

"In the last 20 years the Jews, little by little, have taken over not only trade and production, but through rent or purchase, significant amounts of landed property. Because of their clannishness and solidarity, all but a few of them have bent every rule not to increase the productive forces of the country, but to exploit the native inhabitants, primarily the poorer classes. This provoked the protest of the latter, finding such deplorable expression in acts of violence." [LOWE, p. 64]

In the midst of riots against Jews in Russia in 1881 a socialist organization called People's Will proclaimed that

"The people in the Ukraine suffer most of all from the Jews. Who takes the land, the woods, and the taverns from out of your hands? The Jews. From whom does the peasant, often with tears in his eyes, have to beg permission to get to his own field? The Jews. Where ever you go -- the Jews are everywhere." [LINDEMANN, p. 141]

During the Russian pogroms against the Jews in the late 1800s, "Jewish liquor stores," notes Heinz-Dietrich Lowe, "and inns were often a major, or even first, target of attack." [LOEWE, p. 56] But, says Israeli scholar Boas Evron, "the Russian pogroms were aimed against traditionalist Jews [those who resisted assimilation into Russian society], and only rarely did they touch the more affluent neighborhoods where the assimilated [Jews] lived." [EVRON, p. 49] Let us recall briefly again, the nonassimilative Talmudic Jewish world view of the non-Jew around him. As a German Jewish observer, I. Horowitz, noted:

"The Polish Jews of the ghetto were filled with contempt for everything outside their world. Their servile, craven exterior simply masked their real sense of the Talmudic superiority. Beneath the helpless aspect lay a cynical, arrogant view of the non-Jew: Jews had shut themselves off and created states within states. The ghetto, originally born of compulsion, had become a second nature, an inner necessity." [in ASCHHEIM, S., 1982, p. 23]

The British vice-consul to Russia, L. Wagstaff, noted the circumstances leading up to the 1880s rioting against Jews in Eastern Europe:

"It is chiefly as brokers or middlemen that the Jews are so prominent. Seldom a business transaction of any kind takes place without their intervention, and from both sides they receive compensation. To enumerate some of their other occupations, constantly denounced by the public: they are the principal dealers in spirits; keepers of 'vodka' (drinking) shops and houses of ill-fame; receivers of stolen goods; illegal pawnbrokers and usurers. A branch they also succeed in is as government contractors. With their knowledge of handling money, they collude with unscrupulous officials in defrauding the State to vast amounts annually ... It must, however, be said that there are many well educated, highly respectable Jews in Russia, but they form a small minority ... In the leasing by action of government and provincial lands, it is invariably a Jew who outbids the others and afterwards re-lets plots to the peasantry at exorbitant prices... From first to last, the Jew has had his hand in everything ... In their relation to Russia [Jews] are compared to parasites that have settled on a plant not vigorous enough to throw them off, and which is

being sapped of its vitality." [MACDONALD, 1998. [p. 79-80]

In 1919, a three-man committee was appointed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to study the situation in Poland. "The three Americans, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Brigadier General Edgar Jadwin, and Homer H. Johnson," notes Sonja Wentling,

"agreed that excesses had occurred, but they differed over the causes and extent of the violence [against Jews]. Morgenthau, an assimilated Jew who opposed Jewish separatism and nationalism, submitted a report that was very different in character from the one submitted by his colleagues. While Morgenthau emphasized the deliberate murder of Jews based solely on the fact that they were Jews, Jadwin and Johnson concluded that the problem in Poland was due in large part to Jewish separatism and commercial competition ... In their [Jadwin's and Johnson's] opinion, it was not religious differences that had kept Poles and Jews apart, but the history and attitude of the Jews." [WENTLING, S., 2000, p. 388]

In a statement which can be applied virtually anywhere, historian Mack Holt notes that "civil war, popular revolt, and social violence were endemic to pre-modern society." [HOLT, p. 3] Whatever the context of the riots/pogroms beginning in the late nineteenth century in Russia against Jews, they must be weighed (as they never are) within the growing socio-political turmoil in that country -- a society wresting free from its foundation in (non-Jewish) indentured servitude. Violent peasant outbursts in their struggles for justice, freedom, and dignity were many: between 1826 and 1861 there were 1,186 "peasant uprisings" in Russia [WOLF, E., p. 52] struggling against feudal oppressors, whoever they were. The culmination of a century's turmoil was ultimately expressed in the Russian civil war of 1919-20 in which *nine million* people perished. [KAHAN, S., p. 99] Other estimates cite Russian deaths at *sixteen million* between 1914 and 1921, the result of war and revolution. [CLEMENTS, B., p. 172] Bryan Moynahan notes *further*, a decade later, that "the terror-famine inflicted as a matter of Socialist policy from the beginning of 1930 probably killed fourteen million peasants ... Whole villages were depopulated ... The Soviet Union was still massively a peasant country; more than 80 per cent of the population lived in its 600,000 hamlets and villages. The Communist attitude to country people, however, was murderous. The Party never enjoyed any rural affection." [MOYNAHAN, p. 107-108] Those thousands of peasants deported to other areas of Russia "sometimes spent weeks in the [train] cars as they rolled slowly toward their place of deportation, stacked into cattle wagons or 'Stolypin cars,' windowless prisons. The legs of some did not touch the floor for days, because they were so tightly packed that they hung suspended between each other." [MOYNAHAN, p. 113] As noted earlier, many Bolshevik Jews were at the helms of these mass oppressions and mass murders.

Judeo-centric history, however, is only interested in the martyrological legends of its tribe and largely focuses on the seminal 1881 rioting/pogroms against Jews which spread into 8 provinces and 240 communities in parts of Russia. As Jewish scholar Michael Aronson notes, however, "The number of cases of rape and murder (one of the highest estimates refers to 40 dead and 225 rapes in 1881) seems

relatively low by twentieth-century standards. But this did not prevent the stormy events of 1881-84 from having a deeply shocking and long-lasting impact on [largely Jewish] contemporaries." [ARONSON, p. 61] For Jews, especially in the West, the attacks upon Jewish communities merely informed, and confirmed, convictions of Jewish innocence and the specialness of their unique suffering within their religiously-based martyrological tradition.

As Chaim Bermant notes, Jewish innocence and passivity to Polish attack is not accurate:

"After the 1881 pogroms Jews began to organize self-defence units. In the late 'eighties, for example, a large gang which set upon the Jews of Odessa found themselves confronted by Jewish bands, armed with clubs and iron-bars (and according to the police, fire-arms), and quickly drew back. The same happened in Berdichev and several other centres. Jews often gave as good as they got, even better on occasion, but their efforts were restricted by the police and the army, nominally there to keep the peace, but usually siding with the attackers. In August 1903, there was a pitched battle in the streets of Gomel between Jews, peasants and railway workers in which twelve Jews and eight Christians were killed and many hundreds were injured: much property was looted and destroyed. In a pogrom at Zhitomir which extended over three days in April 1905, ten Christians and sixteen Jews were killed -- mainly through police action. On the third day of the fighting a crowd of about a thousand Jews made their way to the governor and warned that if their attackers were not called off they would embark upon a general slaughter. 'Rivers of blood will flow. We will kill all Christians irrespective of their age, sex, class ...' [BERMANT, C., 1977, p. 211]

The Polish side of the story in anti-Jewish "pogroms" in that country is never mentioned in mainstream Jewish history. As Tadeusz Piotrowski notes about violence against Jews, for example, in the towns of Kielce and Czestochowa, "the first was sparked by a massive demonstration involving 300 young Jews who marched up and down the town streets chanting: 'Long live Lenin! Long live Trotsky! To hell with Poland!' The second was precipitated by the shooting of a Polish soldier by a Jew." [PIOTROWSKI, p. 43] Likewise too, much of the violence against Jews in the early years of the twentieth century, in the context of a World War, the Polish-Soviet War, and the Polish-Ukrainian War, means -- *in context* -- something quite different than an exclusive Polish expression of single-minded hatred of Jews: i.e., irrational anti-Semitism. As Norman Davies notes in the case of the years 1918-1920, "the scale of Jewish casualties was minimal considering the conditions in which they occurred ... That fewer than one thousand Jewish civilians perished, when the Polish army during the same period suffered over 250,000 casualties, is a fair indication of the scale of the [Polish] disaster." [PIOTROWSKI, p. 43]

Meticulous Jewish documentation of "anti-Semitism," pogroms, and other acts of violence against Jews in Europe is a central part of Jewish history and identity. Yet, far less examined as context to anti-Jewish animosity are the likes of Norman Salsitz's depiction of his Jewish boyhood in small-town Poland:

"We stole fruit off the trees and out of the orchards of the townspeople and peasants. Why we did it no one seemed to know. The Poles, of course, knew of this practice and tried their best to protect their property. Dogs were set upon us, and if Poles caught up with us we could expect a beating. But year after year it was the same all over again. Instead of actually taking fruit, too often we just managed to break off the tree limbs and ruin what was on them... In the summer peasants also stood [in the town market area] selling wild strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries that they brought along in heavy, thick baskets ... My friends and I missed few chances to sneak up to the baskets and run off with a handful of berries. Why did we do it? The berries we enjoyed, of course, but there can be no denying the thrill that stealing the berries brought us, especially when peasants gave chase for a short distance in a vain effort to retrieve what was rightfully theirs ... Snatching berries didn't bother me as much as the large number we crushed when we made our grab."
[SALSITZ, N., 1992, p. 64-65, 126]

And the terrible context for this maliciousness? As Salsitz notes elsewhere:

"Peasants rarely had it well off. The overwhelmingly majority barely scraped by. Either they worked the fields for others and received a portion of the harvest, or they cultivated their own plots (a large majority owned their land), few of which were large enough for subsistence, let alone surplus. Most led a hand-to-mouth existence, and worse than that in the early summer months, when reserve provisions were nearly exhausted and the desperately needed new crop was still not ripe ... They survived in part because they made do with so little and because of Kolbuszowa, where they might find an occasional job." [SALSITZ, N., 1992, p. 88]

In the Ukraine, Jews positioned themselves throughout history into especially volatile situations. Orest Subtleny, a scholar of the Ukraine, writes:

"Forbidden to own land, but allowed to lease it, Jews often became leaseholders. Thus, on the vast lands of the Ostrorog family, for example, there were about 4000 Jewish leaseholders, in 1616, over half the crown lands in Ukraine were leased to Jewish entrepreneurs. Because they had to make good their investments in a relatively short period of two or three years, they exploited the properties and peasants mercilessly, without regard for future consequences. It was not uncommon for a leaseholder to demand six or seven days

of labor from the peasants and, with the help of the magnate's minions, to drive them into the fields." [SUBTLENY]

"In 1768," notes Jerzy Lukowski, "there occurred ... one of the bloodiest peasant uprisings in European history, the so-called Koliscyzna ... [in the area of Hunan] one modern study suggests (the massacre) of 5,000 nobles and 7,000 Jews. The Jews were particularly hated in the Ukraine, where they dominated the peasant economy as millers, inn keepers, usurers and middlemen -- in short, as the alien instrument of an alien authority." [LUKOWSKI, p. 60]

"In exchange for their services," notes Subtleny, "Jewish merchants attempted to extract the highest possible profits. To many non-Jews it appeared that they were not only excessive, but ill-gotten. For example, after studying the economic relationship between Jews and Ukrainians in Transcarpathia, a Hungarian economist of Irish descent, Edmund Egan, reported to the government that while the administration, magistrates, and estate owners contributed to the woeful plight of the peasantry, the main fault lay with the Jews, who as moneylenders, merchants, and tavern-keepers, were 'disposing the Ruthenians of their money and their property.'" [SUBTLENY, p. 311]

An 1890 Hapsburg police report noted that "except for their daily bread, the peasants are dependent on the Jew at every state in their lives. He serves as their customer, counselor, agent, and factotum, in the full sense of the word." [SUBTLENY, p. 312-313]

Jewish economic dominance of Eastern Europe commoners goes back many centuries. Abram Leon notes that "Polish money has been discovered bearing Hebraic characters and dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This fact in itself proves that Polish trade was in the hands of the Jews." [LEON, p. 184-185]

In 1810 a Russian military officer, V. Bronewsky, wrote that "Poland should in all justice be called a Jewish kingdom ... Jewish taverns mark out all the main roads ... Apart from some rare manors which are administered by the Lords themselves, all the others are farmed out or pledged to the Jews. They possess enormous capitals and no one can get along without their help. Only some few very rich Lords are not plunged to the neck in debt with the Jews." [LEON, p. 196] Another Eastern European traveler, one Von Furtenbach, wrote that "Everything is in [Jewish] hands. They lend money to the Lords and peasants." [LEON, p. 196]

"The success of the Polish Jews in the [later arendar] period," notes Hillel Levine, "in squeezing profits from unprofitable enterprises and returning unrealistically high yields from mandatory loans has something to do with their capacity to take advantage of their international connections. Indeed, the rise of the arendars must be compared with, and even linked to, the rise of the better known Court Jews in central and western Europe." [LEVINE, p. 64]

The Polish and Ukrainian Jews first felt large scale retribution for their self-aggrandizing policies on the backs of the non-Jewish poor in 1648. It is a particularly accursed year in both Jewish and Polish history,

but is considered a heroic one of rebellion in today's Ukraine. It is also the date of the beginning of an event sometimes referred to in Jewish history as their "Third Great Catastrophe." Tens of thousands of Ukrainian Cossacks, led by Bogdan Chmielnicki, rose up against Polish noble domination and engaged in a vindictive orgy of vengeance and murder throughout the Ukraine and Poland. The catalyst was when Chmielnicki came home one day to find his home confiscated by a Polish noble, one of his sons killed, and his fiancée kidnapped. From his personal rage Chmielnicki forged a unified revolt amongst his people against the suffocating aristocracy. And Jews, omnipresently exploitive appendages of aristocratic oppression as land managers, tax collectors, financial advisors, tavern owners and merchants were soon to bear the wrath and fury, full force, of Cossack revenge. "[The Cossacks] first attacked the soldiers of the Polish nobles and the Jewish communities settled on their estates, and which frequently served as their estate managers." [REVOLT AND THE PEASANT, p. 161] The nobles' Polish armies were routed and thousands of Jews were massacred. (One scholar believes that the Jewish community's "rejection of their own poor" during the Cossack attacks contributed to some Jews' conversion to Christianity.) [POLONSKY, p. 59] The Polish people at-large, however, may have borne up to ten times the Jewish number of casualties. [DIMONT, p. 240]

Some Jewish sources have claimed 2.4 to 3.3 million deaths during the Cossack rebellions even though there may have been as few as 50,000 Jews in the area in which the insurrection occurred. "The fragmentary information of the period, and to a great extent information from subsequent years including reports of recovery -- clearly indicate that the catastrophe may not have been as great as had been assumed." [WEINRYB, p. 193-194]

"Contemporaries of the Cossack revolt," says Bernard Weinryb, "attribute it also to the extortionist practices of the Jews. Some memoir writers (the memoirs having been written and published later) mention also that the people hated the Jews because the latter were leaseholders of the Greek Orthodox churches. They allegedly held the keys to these church buildings and controlled their use. It is said that the Jews demanded a fee for permitting the christening of a child, a wedding, and other church affairs. This theme appears again and again in Ukrainian folk songs and other material." [WEINRYB, p. 186]

As Israel Shahak notes

"This *typical* peasant uprising against extreme oppression, an uprising accompanied not only by massacres committed by the rebels but also by even more horrible atrocities and 'counter-terror' of the Polish-magnates' private armies, has remained emblazoned in the consciousness of East-European Jews to this very day -- not, however, as a peasant uprising, a revolt of the oppressed, of the wretched of the earth, nor even as a vengeance visited upon all the servants of the Polish nobility, but as an act of gratuitous anti-Semitism directed against Jews as such." [SHAHAK, p. 66]

In this regard, two Jewish authors, Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, expressing common Judeo-centrism, parallel the Chmielicki attacks to the Holocaust:

"In both instances, all Jews, including infants, were targeted for murder; the general populace nearly always joined in the attacks.

[PRAGER, p.19]

A well-known historian of Eastern Europe, scholar Norman Davies, notes the typical Jewish myopia and distortion on the subject as evidenced in Martin Gilbert's Jewish History Atlas. Gilbert claims that over 100,000 Jews were massacred in attacks by Cossacks beginning in 1648. Martin even writes that "[the Cossacks] joined with the Polish peasants in attacking the Jews." "[Gilbert's readers]," notes Davies, "might easily get the impression that the Chmielnicki massacres were directed mainly, if not exclusively, at Jews. In fact, there were virtually no Polish peasants at that period in the areas marked on Gilbert's map, and the attacks on the Jews were but one part of a terrible vengeance wracked by the Cossacks and their associates on everyone who they regarded as agents of feudal oppression." Gilbert also noted an area where 5,000 Jews a year died of starvation in 1880-1914. "Again," says Davies, "the unsuspecting reader might be led to assume that the Jews of Galicia were the main or even only victims of starvation. There is nothing in the text to indicate that the Polish and Ukrainian peasants of Galicia were starving in even greater numbers." [DAVIES, Between, p. 248]