

Robert Graziani-Levy

LANDS OF MEMORY

Wanderings and Wonderments of a Sephardic Jew

$19.92

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Wanderings and Wonderments of a Sephardic Jew

WITH 12 PAGES OF PHOTOGRAPHS

After a lifetime of wanderings and wonderments on the roads and seas of many continents, his memory both historical and personal overflowing with tales of past generations and living experiences, Robert Graziani-Levy, scion of a long line of Sephardic scholars and tradesmen, rejoined his ancestors during the High Holy days two years ago.

His illustrious ancestors had lived within him since early childhood, becoming his spiritual guides and guardian angels; now he relates his own tales to them in the world of the souls, written down for us and barely concluded on the eve of his last departure for the ultimate land of memory.

"And it shall be when thy son asks thee in time to come, saying: What is this? that thou shalt say to him . . ."—the narrative of the biblical exodus story mirrors itself in this personal Haggadah of memoirs and reflections of a Sephardic Jew whose ancestors experienced the forced exodus from Spain in 1492 and who found himself exiled from many lands, marching through the wilderness of his own time, never ceasing to dream about the promised land, never forgetting the historical and legendary stuff of which his childhood dreams were made.

The pages of this family Haggadah, which Robert Graziani-Levy bequeaths to those who knew him, and to those who will become acquainted with him through reading them, skillfully narrate the odyssey of a nation and a community, of a family, and an individual. They interweave the real and the imaginery, the past and the contemporaneous, the descriptive and reflective modes.

A Haggadah that relates in a symbolic structure of seven chapters—six days of the week and Sabbath, six ages of the world and the Mes-

(Continued on back flap)

Robert Graziani-Levy

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Edited and with a Foreword by

MOSHE LAZAR
University of Southern California

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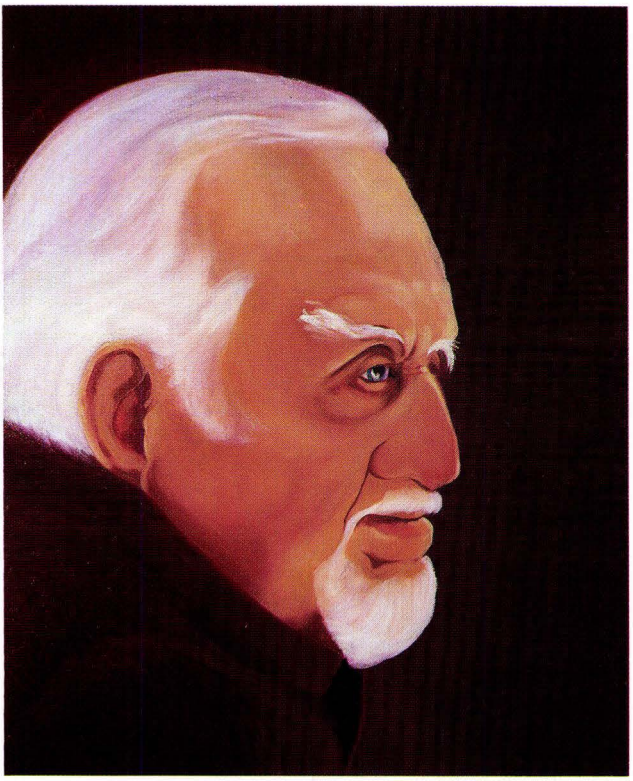
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LANDS OF MEMORY



ROBERT GRAZIANI-LEVY
1919-1989

Portrait by Evelyn Graziani-Levy

Hacham y mercader,
alegría de la mujer.

The scholarly tradesman
is the joy of his wife.
[*Ladino saying*]

Dedicated to my wife Anne

pillar of my house

and to my children

Evelyn and David

FOREWORD

After a lifetime of wanderings and wonderments on the roads and seas of many continents, his memory both historical and personal overflowing with tales of past generations and living experiences, Robert Graziani-Levy, scion of a long line of Sephardic scholars and tradesmen, rejoined his ancestors during the High Holy days two years ago.

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ters—six days of the week and Sabbath, six ages of the world and the Messianic era—journeys of hope and despair, daydreams and nightmares, identity and crisis, landings and strandings on many shores, before culminating in an ultimate meditative dream about a Jewish Renaissance both in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel.

The Land of the Dream: At its center, the House on the Hill of Pera overlooking the Bosphorus in the city of Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire; life in the family mansion of one of the well known and well-to-do *buenas familias* (Sephardic Grandees), haven and crossroad to a large circle of relatives and friends, scholars and tradesmen, dominated by the living presence of a long chain of past rabbis and a renowned kabbalist as well as by the towering figure of the writer's material grandmother—untarnishable source of biblical, historical, and legendary tales and exemplary proud witness to the glorious Sephardic tradition for the children growing up in her fold.

Among all the Jewish festivals celebrated in the synagogue and in the House on the Hill of Pera, the Passover *seder* table, surrounded by family members, relatives, and guests, shines bright in the child's memory: celebrating the Exodus from Egypt and reminiscing the Expulsion from Sefarad as if both had taken place within their own lifetime.

But soon childhood's paradise comes to an abrupt end: Ataturk's secular revolution establishes the Republic of Turkey, and Constantinople—now Istanbul—becomes a different world. A great number of Jews immigrate to the United States, others to Palestine and Latin America. And as, beside the Sephardic tradition and the Ladino language, French culture and its language had deeply influenced many Sephardic communities, the Graziani-Levy family leaves for Paris.

The Land of Hope: As a youngster, identifying with the ideals of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic era, and its granting of civil and religious rights to its Jews, he soon discovers beneath his imaginary and literary image of France the deep undercurrent of anti-Jewish attitudes in public opinion and among his schoolmates; struggling to take a political stance between the opposing factions in high-school, witnessing the ascent of fascistic and anti-Jewish movements in Europe, the adolescent boy now tries to join the International Brigades coming to the defense of the democratic Spanish Republic beleaguered by the troops of Franco.

Supported by the Church, aided by Italy and Germany, Franco, in his eyes, becomes the embodiment of the Catholic Kings and bishops who had destroyed the Golden Age of Sefarad and expelled his an-

cestors. While on the road to Spain—his parents ignoring his escapade—illness prevents him from executing his plan. With the collapse of the Spanish Republic and the rising power of Nazi Germany, his father was convinced that European Jewry would face a nightmarish reality and therefore decided the family should emigrate to Brazil.

The Land of Refuge: Río de Janeiro and its surroundings, the beaches, the majestic mountains and forests, the gentleness of the people, the fascinating beauty of its women, present to the young man—of frail health and of undermined hope in humankind—the bliss of an earthly paradise, far removed from European turmoil and the precarious situation of its Jews.

Deprived—following the death of his maternal grandmother and the loss of his father—from the two strong pillars of his life, and with the family having lost its fortune in France, the lad now has to become the family's provider, abandoning his dream of a scholarly future.

"Brazil had just started a process of intensive industrialization," he writes, "and destiny guided me toward a career that eventually set me on a trail in the tradition of my forefathers of Sefarad, that of an international trader in the context of the industrial age." The destruction of European Jewry, the Shoah, as it slowly reached the consciousness of those who had found refuge in this remote "garden of Eden," did not endanger the rebuilt and secure family life in Río. "A sense of guilt has remained with me to this day. . . ."

After World War II he met a young refugee from Vienna, married her, and both now started building a house of their own, a House on the Hill of Río, a Sephardic-Ashkenazi home for both their worlds of a vanished past which, little did they know, would not cease to haunt them in the years to come.

As the horrifying results of the Nazi Final Solution became known in their full reality, the "sense of guilt" invaded the former enjoyment of the innocent Eden; and so, on the first anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, Robert and Anne undertake a voluntary exodus and, amidst the singing and dancing masses on the streets of Tel Aviv, land as new immigrants once again.

The transplanting from the luxuriant Brazilian continent to the strip of land of reborn Israel, which was intended finally to take root in what had been, over the centuries, only a "portable homeland," was, alas, to become a traumatic experience on various levels. It is narrated in these memoirs with great sadness and pain.

"Was there really a place for a bourgeois Jew, who had been

spared the curse of war and persecution, among the survivors of the European death camps and the dejected Jews from Arab countries striving to build a new existence for themselves? . . . In the biblical land of our ancestors we had hoped to find our roots: I learned the significance of *angst* [existential anxiety]. Whether in the Ottoman Empire, France or Brazil, our identity was unquestioned; whether citizens or not, we were Jews. In Israel, I was labeled a South American.

"I also found myself in the center of a national schism between Ashkenazi and Sephardi—or Oriental—Jews, where brother did not seem to recognize brother, a dichotomy which extended further to religious and secular Jews." Finding no place in the urban and nascent industrial environment, the couple seeks national and self fulfillment in kibbutz life.

After six months of daily menial tasks and as many nights of soul searching, feeling marginalized among the old-timers, they decide to return to the "fleshpots of Brazil." Back in Río de Janeiro, ten years of successful professional career and two children enriching their lives seem to signify their ship had finally anchored in a secure and definitive haven. Not so! The new family migrates to the United States.

The Lands of Ashes: Attracted to the United States by an opportunity to further an international career and enjoy the existence of major centers of Jewish life, Robert Graziani-Levy is offered a situation, upon their arrival, by a large industrial enterprise, obliging him to move to France to represent the firm there and in the Mediterranean basin.

Having sworn years before never to return to Europe, the lands of ashes, the wandering scholar within his real self overcame the hesitations of the tradesman. And were not many of his forefathers accomplished traveling merchants? The reencounter with a post-Auschwitz Europe, the soul searching and excruciating experience of journeys through the lands of ashes—France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain—are a mosaic of memories and observations, of images and ideas, painfully conveying the various dimensions of nations and cultures engulfed in the "concentrationary universe." These turmoils had indeed reduced Europe's once thriving Jewish communities to cold cinders.

After four years of successful professional wanderings, and as many years of pilgrimage along the *via dolorosa* in the lands that had once been the professional and spiritual world of his forefathers, he

decides to settle—definitively, this time—in the land of freedom, the United States of America.

The Land of Freedom: Discovering America's pluralistic society and the variety of thriving Jewish communities, Robert Graziani-Levy has the feeling of being on the threshold of a new Golden Age in Jewish history not so dissimilar from the Golden Age of Sephardic Jewry which had developed in Moslem and Christian Spain during the Middle Ages.

He describes how the memory of the Shoah and the pride of an independent State of Israel have added new dimensions and depth to Jewish life and culture in America. He also scrutinizes the great Renaissance of Jewish life taking place in France, due to the influx of a large Sephardic population from Northern Africa, well educated in French civilization and deeply rooted in their Jewish heritage.

"Representing more than half the Jewish population, they have achieved cultural and economic parity with their Ashkenazi brethren in less than two decades. For the first time in a millennium, a symbiosis has been established between the two great traditions of Judaism; an encounter that might serve as a model toward the eventual disappearance of the dichotomy that still exists in the State of Israel."

The Land of Zion: Having revisited Israel many times in the past decades, having come to terms with his own frustrated attempt to settle in the Land of Zion, Graziani-Levy here collects his observations and reflections on social, political, and religious confrontations within the Jewish State. He also comments on the relationship between Israel and the Jewish world of the Diaspora; on the bloody confrontations between Jews and Arabs; and on the attitude of the nations of the world toward Israel.

Firmly in favor of the possible blending of Askenazi and Sephardi cultures, and in the necessity of peace between Israel and the Arabs, he writes: "If one is a realist, one has to believe in the solution of the Palestinian problem, for Israel itself is a miracle."

The Land of Jacob's Tents: Recounting in this crowning chapter the narration of physical and spiritual wanderings of a contemporary Sephardic Jew, Robert Graziani-Levy asserts his deep belief in the future of Jewish spirituality and culture, destined to sprout and flourish from the combined vitality of the three complementary dynamic Jewish societies, namely those of the United States, France, and Israel.

These memoirs and reflections were written by Robert Graziani-Levy in collaboration with Anne, his loving wife and inspirational companion, who also prepared the first draft for eventual publication. Her advice and comments were very helpful in the preparation of the final copy.

The portrait painted by his daughter, and reproduced as frontispiece, has captured an image of the spiritual radiance of her father's wandering and wondering mind. Having known him myself for several years in Los Angeles as ever anxiously alert in his quest and exploration of Jewish history and spirituality, I feel privileged in undertaking the task of editing these chronicles of a Jewish Don Quijote—a genuine Sephardic hidalgo.

Born into one of the *buenas familias* and having grown up in dual worlds—Sefarad and Ashkenaz, Europe and the Levant, spiritual and mercantile—and forced by events to abandon his dream of journeying through the scholarly realm and venturing into the labyrinths of industrial entrepreneurship, both a rationalist and a relentless dreamer, Robert Graziani-Levy survives in these pages as a scion to the House on the Hill of Pera and to the House of Sefarad.

Moshe Lazar

University of Southern California

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LANDS OF MEMORY

I.

THE LAND OF THE DREAM

The azure of the Mediterranean is the genesis of the land of my memory, enveloping me in its protective womb, but at a price—it has held me in its tyrannical grip ever since. Constantinople, the city of my birth, was the first vision epitomizing the land of the dream. The ancient capital of Byzance was enthroned like Rome on seven hills, with the sea of Marmara at its feet stretching south toward the Aegean Sea, the gate to the Mediterranean on whose shores we Sephardic Jews have dwelt since the beginning of our memory.

As the unfolding of events carried me to exile on three different continents, myth and fantasy gradually fused into reality. Just as the land of Israel had been the genesis, Constantinople had been the passage through which the winds of history swept into the four corners of the world.

The family mansion stood on the Hill of Pera, the residential quarter of wealthy Jews, Greeks, and Armenians as well as of the proconsuls of the great European powers that dominated the economic life of the Ottoman Empire. The large windows encompassed by a broad balcony overlooked the lower city and the port of Galata with its majestic landmark, the Genovese Tower. We had a sweeping view of the glittering waters of the Bosphorus which separates the European continent from Asia Minor, at points by less than a mile.

The house on the Hill of Pera totally dominated the universe of the first years of my youth; it was one with the city of Constantinople. Its soul was my maternal grandmother, who exercised the authority of an absolute monarch over the entire household. She not only filled with affection the void created by the harshness and sadism of Mademoiselle, but also the apparent aloofness of my parents.

In her recounting of family lore, whether myth or reality, she provided my childish mind with a universe in which all I saw and heard fell into place.

Part of my grandmother's daily chores, of which the most imposing was to preside over the gatherings in the salon, was to read a portion of the Bible to her three small grandsons before they went to sleep. I was convinced that those daily readings were her favorite task—what else would have justified her leaving the reception? Often the narration of the vicissitudes of the children of Israel would be interrupted by the Greek butler announcing that dinner was ready, which under no circumstances could be served before she had made her entrance into the dining room. I witnessed this regal occasion several times hidden behind thick drapes, after having successfully circumvented long corridors and staircases.

My grandmother's Bible reading was the basis of my initial understanding of the world around me. She was blessed with the gift, most likely an inheritance from the long line of rabbis and kabbalists that inhabited the land of her soul, of linking biblical passages to a member of the family or an event in the world around us. Her narratives were undoubtedly embellished by her knowledge of the Greek classics and mythology, not to mention French literature, as befitted a person of her social status. Her view of the world was considerably slanted by what she considered to be good for the Jews, and how it related to the personal doings and idiosyncrasies of the crowned heads of Europe and their families, with whose demise she never came to terms. She frequently mentioned having attended a banquet offered by Sir Arthur Sassoon to his friend the Prince of Wales, later to become Edward VII, as one of the highlights of her social life. This was an event not without contradictions, for while Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were always referred to in glowing terms, the doings of the Prince of Wales were passed over in silence, as were certain passages of the Bible not intended for children's ears.

Only in later years did I realize the extent to which my grandmother had been marked by the Victorian era. The years she lived in Great Britain had a very special place in her memories. There was the daily automobile parade in Hyde Park, for Don Isaac had apparently been among the first men of London's society to claim ownership of one such revolutionary vehicle. And the honor of having sat on the right side of the Lord Mayor of London at an official banquet!

Her involvement in the universe of La Belle Epoque was not lim-

ited to the realm of Queen Victoria. It crossed the channel to include the great capitals of the European continent where Don Isaac carried out business assignments on behalf of his father's trading empire, often during long periods of time.

These voyages were not always devoid of danger, as my grandmother recounted while we listened in wonderment. Once on a boulevard in Budapest she even found herself in the midst of a crossfire the very day the Bela Kuhn revolt exploded in Hungary, and was escorted to the safety of her hotel by a platoon of black Senegalese soldiers with fixed bayonets under the command of a gallant French officer.

As the passing of time has lifted the veil of legend enveloping my youthful years, the image of my grandmother stands as the emblem of a grandee of Sefarad, a Jewish matriarch in a world dominated by men, who by her very presence asserted her authority. Firmly and almost fiercely rooted in the faith of her forefathers, she was totally at ease in the world at large, notwithstanding a certain element of arrogance.

Born and raised in an epoch when those of her class believed their world to be immutable, she was a tower of strength as long as she felt needed. But as in the distant exile of Brazil the news of the "Final Solution" started to trickle through, she lost the will to go on living and surrendered her soul to the Creator in the peace of sleep.

About my father I knew very little at the time of my early youth. I had overheard innuendos from my grandmother that the marriage of one of the daughters of such a traditional Constantinople family to a Bulgarian Jew was somewhat of a come-down, although no one contested their Sephardic lineage and they were always praised condescendingly as being spartan and hardworking.

Bulgaria was still considered by the family as a province, despite the fact that the country had achieved its independence from the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century after five hundred years. The whole region of the Balkans, including the part that was later to become Yugoslavia and Greece, was one universe in the vision of the Spanish Jews, the land of the Exile since 1492. The independent states that were eventually established at the end of World War I after years of often fratricidal struggles had their boundaries drawn not along ethnic lines, but according to the greed and interests of the victorious powers.

Although no doubt ever existed in my childish mind that I was a Sephardi, a Spanish Jew, the tales and narratives that surrounded me

gave me the certainty that the glory and power of the Ottoman Empire were also our achievement. The respect and tolerance bestowed upon the Jews were a reflection of the gratitude the Ottoman Sultan felt toward the generations of Sefarad for their contributions. Had not the Ottoman Turks been victorious due to the superior use of firearms which the exiled Jews had taught them to manufacture, as well as their good organization and strict discipline? The Ottoman Turks also relied heavily on the Jewish community in diplomacy and fiscal matters, for apart from possessing the necessary aptitudes it was the only minority that was not suspect of having treasonable sympathies with the Christian powers.

Spread over three continents, with maritime and land routes connecting it with all the countries, the Ottoman Empire provided extraordinary facilities for the activities of its Jewish inhabitants. Their knowledge of the foremost European languages—German, Italian, Spanish and French—was an asset in commercial relations, as were the old established merchant firms in Moslem ports and capitals like Alexandria, Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus and Basra, and explains the growth of cities like Safed, Algiers, Izmir and Salonika as centers of Jewish trade and industry.

The city of Salonika, predominantly Jewish with a small Greek and Moslem population from which originated Ataturk's family, had been under Turkish domination since 1430 and only reverted to Greece as the result of World War I. Apart from doctors, financiers, merchants, etc., the special feature of Salonika were the legends that surrounded the Jewish fisherman and the Jewish porter—energetic, robust, virile men of whom everybody stood in awe. They were such faithful and excellent workmen that many of the big liners would prefer Jewish porters or *hamals* from Salonika to unload their ships. Sabbath was the day of rest not only for the Jews in Salonika, it was also for the Turks, Bulgarians and Greeks. The *hamals* would dress in their ancient Spanish Sabbath clothes, silk, fur or old brocade, and walk the streets of Salonika singing old Ladino songs, our ancient Spanish vernacular preserved throughout the centuries. No ship entering Salonika on that day would be unloaded.

"Las buenas familias," as my grandmother called them, had relatives throughout the Balkans. To have been born in Constantinople was a sign of pedigree, although this point was disputed by our brethren of Salonika, who looked upon their city as the Jerusalem in Exile, spiritual heir to the communities of Spain after the great catastrophe. From my earliest memories it seemed that the rabbis, those I

had seen in the flesh and those who belonged to the realm of family legend, had spread their wisdom over the city of Salonika, not to speak of the kabbalist who had meditated there for a decade before his calling took him to the holy city of Safed. Constantinople loomed as the place where merchants and courtiers, doctors and financiers radiated their power, wealth and splendor, and sometimes their corruption. But they never forgot their less fortunate brethren in other lands. When, following the massacres of the middle of the seventeenth century in Poland, the Cossacks, Tartars, and Ukranians took many Jews into captivity and sold them in Constantinople, the Jews of that city competed with each other to observe the precept of redeeming the captives. They succeeded in saving tens of thousands of Jews. Constantinople also served as a center for the cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias and Safed, and the debts owed by the Jews of those cities were paid by the Jews of Constantinople.

Of the tales told by my grandmother, none surpassed the awesome image of the great despot, Sultan Abdul Hamid, also known as the sick man of Europe, who for over fifty years had ruled over the declining Ottoman Empire. Gladstone, Prime Minister of the British Empire, referred to him as The Great Assassin. He had been the first Sultan to appear in Europe since the unsuccessful siege of Vienna two hundred years earlier, on a state visit to France as a guest of Napoleon III. The high point of the journey, a red-letter day in the history of Turkey, was Abdul Hamid's visit to Queen Victoria. "How magnanimous is our Lord," said the Turks in Constantinople, "that he should permit a woman to be his viceroy in England." There were still people in Turkey who believed that all foreign monarchs were the Sultan's vassals! After all, he was "the vassal of God," God's shadow.

One of my grandmother's tales was preceded by a reading of passages from the Book of Esther which were not offensive to the ears of little boys. Sultan Abdul Hamid had not been convinced, like King Ahasverus, to massacre his Jewish subjects, but he did order the great massacre of the Armenians in 1898. The image of Abdul Hamid as the archetype of the tyrant was to stay with me throughout my life, although he but followed in the best tradition of countless despots whose cruelty certainly was to be surpassed in our modern times. The mention of his name still evokes in me the vision of the snake, the evil one, for still vivid in my mind is the day when my grandmother, having read the biblical passage of Eve's temptation by the serpent, set out to tell us in detail about the most dreadful pun-

ishment inflicted upon an enemy of the Sultan—to be cast into the palace's snake pit. My childish imagination could accept being decapitated and even impaled, but never come to terms with a man surrendering his soul in the midst of a deadly struggle with the creeping creatures the Creator himself had cursed beyond redemption.

The veracity of the story could not be doubted, for unlike other tales originating from an oral tradition stretching over the centuries, the existence of the snake pit was corroborated by my grandmother's uncle. He was one of the private physicians to Abdul Hamid himself, who trusted him to the point of giving him access to the harem, to watch over the health of his favorite wives.

Reference was made to our uncle, the Sultan's doctor, in the days of my youth as if he were still alive. Along with his brother, the rabbi of Salonika, and with Don Abraham Kisapshouglu, the Sultan's doctor was part of the family's crown jewels. They not only gave the family a sense of security but also pride to be one of the leading families of that universe called the Nation of the Exile by Samuel Usque, the narrator of the *Tribulations of Israel.*

A place of honor seemed to be reserved for one of my father's ancestors, the thirteenth-century rabbi of the community of Barcelona from which both branches of my family claimed a proud descendance. He was a judge on the Beth Din, the all-powerful rabbinical tribunal that had the power to pass the sentence of the *herem* (anathema), the act that would sever from the House of Israel those marked with the sign of apostasy, as well as other forms of punishment, the most fearful being the death sentence.

As a child I had not been very impressed with the idea of death, as it had not yet affected my immediate family. Of course, there had been the death of my maternal grandfather, Don Isaac, and of a little sister during an epidemic of dysentery during World War I, but I had never seen them. Grim tales of massacres were part of the atmosphere of Constantinople, and a constant subject of conversation and arguments among the family circle. Throughout the years there was the intermittent slaughter of Armenians by the Turks, a fate from which, in accordance with family lore, many of those who lived in Constantinople had been saved by Jews. There had been the recent massacre of almost the entire Moslem population of the city of Smyrna when it was conquered by the Greeks, and the massacre of its Christian citizens, dwelling there since the days of the Byzantine Empire, by the liberating army of Ataturk, not to speak of the pogroms of Jews in Russia as witnessed by my father.

All this seemed to be part of history, but the fact that Jews could be condemned to such a fate by a Jewish tribunal was difficult for me to accept. It was explained to me that the death sentence was rarely applied, and solely in the case of Jewish informers who denounced the Marranos to the evil Inquisition, to be burned on the pyres of the Auto de Fe. Only then was I able to be proud of my ancestor for inflicting just punishment. I was equally proud of my uncle Moreno Graziani, the colonel in the Bulgarian Army who had slain a man in a duel for publicly having insulted him as a Jew, an affront to the whole Jewish nation. The incident came to be known as the Dreyfus Affair of Bulgaria.

So I gradually came to accept without fear or awe the frequent references to the Angel of Death who, in accordance with my grandmother's uncle, the rabbi of Salonika, constantly hovers over us and is only kept at bay by our guardian, the Angel Gabriel.

The image of Moses Cordovero, the saintly kabbalist from whom my grandmother claimed direct descent, reigned supreme in the family annals of my youth. He was in a category quite of his own, having surpassed in his knowledge of the mysteries all our other ancestors. The rabbis who visited our house did not seem to approve of him, for whenever I attempted to ask what the mysteries were all about, I was met with a wall of silence and almost hostility that only increased my curiosity, which has not left me to this day.

Although not part of the family, the other outstanding figure of my early years, overshadowing the memory of my parents and of the many relatives surrounding them, was Mademoiselle. Our Greek governess, the Levantine version of the English nanny, sternly watched over the welfare of the three little brothers.

Every morning we would briefly visit our parents. Mother would still be in bed and father, clad in his silk dressing-gown, would be in his armchair reading a newspaper. Then we would set off down the slopes of Pera on our daily promenade, careful not to distance ourselves from Mademoiselle's shadow.

One of my earliest recollections of these outings is the figure of an Italian carabinieri in his parade uniform, who would greet us with a smart salute. He was part of the honor guard at the headquarters of the Allied Army of Occupation that had brought the Ottoman Empire tò its knees during World War I. While Mademoiselle would carry on one of seemingly endless conversations with the gallant man of war, we boys were left to watch a colorful spectacle.

French poilus in their light blue uniforms, British tommies clad in

brown, Italian bersaglieri in wide-brimmed hats with long black feathers, giant, turbanned Sikhs of the Indian army, black Senegalese of the French colonial army in broad, skirt-like red pants and fez—a dazzling array of colors and pomp as they presented arms with their long, bayonetted rifles or escorted a constant flow of arrogant-looking British, French and Italian staff officers in and out of their shining Rolls-Royces, Bugattis and Hispano-Suizas.

This glittering vision could have been what to many children of my age was their first memory of the circus, had it not been for the dark presence among all that splendor of down-cast but defiant-looking Turkish officers in their battle-worn uniforms. At a later date I learned that among the Turkish generals I had watched through the magnificent iron grill had been the great Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal Pasha. My political education had started at an early age, as this pageantry symbolized the last rites of what had been one of the world's most powerful empires, the end of an era for the Jews of the Spanish Exile who had been so closely linked to it for almost five centuries.

Mademoiselle spoke to us in French, for a person of her standing was expected to initiate the children entrusted to her care into the vernacular that epitomized the culture of the period, the basis of a cosmopolitan education. Spontaneously she was answered in the same language; occasional lapses into Ladino were met with glances of profound, almost hostile, disapproval. We knew instinctively that we must never answer her in Greek, for it might disclose the origin of a person whose greatest pride was a constant affirmation of a pure Parisian lineage.

Knowledge of Greek was the three brothers' best kept secret, the conspiratorial link between us, for it was the language we had learned while listening to conversations between our mother and grandmother, when subjects not fit for our ears were being discussed, not to mention occasional quarrels.

Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, was the language of the memory, the link in a historical and religious continuity which gave us a sense of pride not devoid of arrogance; French was the link to the vast world around us in which we had to survive while simultaneously affirming our identity as Jews, and maybe the illusion of being in the forefront of economic and cultural progress.

My brothers and I did not speak Turkish, nor did mother and grandmother. It was seldom used in the men's business, for most transactions were carried out with the international circles that domi-

nated the economic life of the realm, mostly in French, German, Greek, Italian, and Russian, not to speak of Ladino, which was spoken even by many Greeks and Armenians. The high functionaries of the Ottoman court all spoke fluent French and German, and to address them in Turkish would not have been appropriate.

In retrospect, it seems incredible that many members of a family, part of a religious minority that took great pride in its close links with the Ottoman Empire since the Spanish exile, did not even speak its language. In reality we were not expected to, as we were part of the Jewish Nation within the realm of the Sultan. As a matter of fact, it was part of family lore that one of its members had been the Haham Bashi at the court, literally the representative of the Jewish Nation. We were not Turks but Jews, Spanish Jews, Sephardim.

For us three boys the climax of the day were the late afternoons when we were brought into the living room to be seen but not to participate in what was known as *L'heure du thé* (Five o'clock tea), the social gathering of the family and a constant stream of friends and acquaintances. It would last late into the evening until dinner was served, long after we had been whisked off to our lonely supper in the company of Mademoiselle and the ignominy of bed.

Dressed in what seemed to be our eternal sailor suits, white in summer and dark blue in winter, we would make our entrance among our elders who, as if in a well-rehearsed play of manners, would either cast upon us impatient glances reserved for intruders or looks of admiration and love befitting the heirs of a dynasty. After ceremoniously marching in a row to all the ladies to be kissed on both cheeks and, depending upon the degree of intimacy, either bow to, shake hands with or kiss all the gentlemen present, we would in the most inconspicuous manner possible find our way to a sofa in one of the far corners of the room, in the hope of being forgotten and allowed to watch the spectacle that was more than the beginning of my education; it was like being thrown into the center of the world.

In the haze of memory enveloping the multitude that passed through the large reception rooms, I can no longer differentiate family members from friends and acquaintances. It was clear, though, that the most important personages were cousins, three generations of them, for some were as old as I imagined my ancestor the kabbalist to have looked.

The object of my special hero-worship was one of my mother's cousins, a tall young man in a Turkish army officer's uniform, who

was an interpreter on the staff of Ataturk. In his presence, a hush would fall on the gathering as they listened to his words as to an oracle, for who better could give them an inkling of what the future had in store for the Jews, now that the era of the Ottoman sultans was over?

At those moments I would pray to make me invisible so as to escape Mademoiselle's pat on the back, the dreaded moment announcing supper and bed, inexorably severing me midway from the vision of Ataturk, the Grey Fox, destroying his enemies. In a martial pose the young cousin, as if describing his own exploits, narrated in great detail how the ragged Turkish infantry, exhorted by turbanned *mullahs* placed there by Ataturk himself to fight and die for the greater glory of Islam, had inflicted a shattering defeat on the Franco-British troops attempting to open the Straits of the Dardanelles by throwing the enemy into the Bosphorus.

Our young hero was looked upon by the family with a mixture of admiration and suspicion, for military men were not part of the tradition of a clan who prided itself on its rabbis, doctors and merchants, and never lost an opportunity to narrate its fame and latest achievements. The family's glory, however, was slightly tainted by another category of relatives whose exploits were only mentioned in whispers, and whom I gradually came to identify through the glances of disapproval cast upon them by the ladies, especially my grandmother, matriarch of the clan. They were gentlemen of distinguished aspect, usually dressed in the latest fashion but lacking the serious and worried countenance of their peers.

Only after we moved to Paris was I to understand what at the height of the Belle Epoque was known as *boulevardiers*, gentlemen whose only function seemed to be walking up and down the fashionable boulevards of the City of Lights. The truth was that they were the family's black sheep, like the cousin who eloped with a famous dancer of the Moulin Rouge, and the uncle who gambled away part of his father's fortune at Europe's fashionable casinos.

Of the greatest consequence to my youthful imagination, however, were the terrible words I once overheard through the whispers of a conversation between Tante Rachel and Cousine Hermosa, behind the lacquered fans gently waived by the two beautiful ladies: my grandfather had been a *boulevardier*. None else than Don Isaac, known to many as Don Isaac Pasha, who had been recalled to his Creator in the same year I saw the light of this world, and after whom I had been named; the venerated husband of my maternal

grandmother, who unceasingly reminded everybody how much I resembled him, and whose favorite grandson I unequivocally was. All these elements burdened my early youth with the certitude that I was destined to become a *boulevardier*, a notion that cast dark clouds on my visions of a glorious future, not the least modest of which was to be a Napoleon whose military genius would turn the tide of the Battle of Waterloo in favor of his Grande Armée.

A span of time had to elapse before my soul came to be at peace: Don Isaac had not been a *boulevardier* in the real sense of the word; and I was to follow in his path at least as far as one aspect of his life was concerned. Don Isaac was the oldest of the four sons of Don Abraham, also known as Kisapshouglu, the King of the Metals in the Levantine trade jargon, founder of what the family's oral tradition immodestly declared to have been one of the largest trading firms of the Mediterranean during the nineteenth century, the Rothschilds of the Balkans. Their activities eventually expanded as far north as Moscow and encompassed in its sweep Vienna, Berlin, and Paris all the way to London in the west. In the best tradition, Don Abraham saw in his four sons the heirs to a dynasty who would protect and expand the family interests in the glittering capitals of Europe. Whether his four sons lacked the acumen of the descendants of Amschel Mayer of Frankfurt, or the political foresight, Don Abraham's aspirations as well as the empire he had built rapidly disintegrated, and when my father married his granddaughter, he was the only hope for saving the remnants of the moribund Kisapshouglu dynasty.

Don Isaac, destined to succeed his father as the head of the family enterprise, had spent most of his life in the capitals of Europe and died in Vienna of a brain tumor at the Loew Sanatorium, the same place where an infant destined to become my wife was born a few years later. Obviously, if Don Isaac had frequented the Sassoons in London and the circle of the Constantinople-born Jewish Count Camondo in Paris, he must have been a *habitué* at Maxim's and at the Café Royal, the roots of his reputation as a *boulevardier*, but, as my grandmother once confided in me, always in her company.

There were poor Jews in Constantinople, but few were destitute. In reality, I had never been exposed to them with the exception of those who regularly came to our house before the Sabbath or the High Holy days and Passover to receive their allowance of money and food or clothing. I knew that most of them lived in the district of Stambul across the Galata bridge which we crossed but rarely, always accompanied by a man of the family, to visit the great mosques or

the Roman and Byzantine walls surrounding the city.

Looking back at those days, I often ask myself the question, how did we see ourselves? My memory is that of a family, a clan, an integrated universe. Were we part of a nationality, a religion? The two were blurred and never questioned. It was clear that we were not Turks, who were all Moslems. We were Jews, and like the Greeks and Armenians, we were foreigners who inhabited the realm of the Sultan. We were Sephardic Jews who spoke Ladino, and the memory of Spain was still alive among us. We seemed to live in a land of our own, which did not relate to our immediate surroundings.

Were we religious? Of course we were; how could a Jew not be religious? Only after living for many years in mostly Ashkenazi communities did I realize how different our concept of religion was. On Friday nights, grandmother would light the candles and we children would be allowed to participate in the festive evening meal, with its freshly baked white loaves of bread and special little dishes, although we had to go to bed right after the dessert.

There were some very religious members of our family who went to synagogue every Sabbath and seemed to spend the whole day praying; but then my mother and grandmother spent most of the day reading and never touched their knitting or embroidery, while the men never smoked. And whenever my father was not traveling, he would take us for long walks on that day, without the dreaded presence of Mademoiselle.

The highlights of our religious life were the High Holy days and Passover, each of which took on a special dimension of its own in my mind, where reality blended with fantasy and mythology.

The main celebration of Rosh Hashanah seemed to take place around the large dining table in the house on the Hill of Pera, where the whole family would gather to savor what in retrospect were banquets epitomizing the best of Levantine and French cuisine.

But despite the tedious hours spent at the synagogue, the religious ritual remains in my memory as the day when the family, the clan and their friends paraded their glory. I would rush to stand in the most inconspicuous place of the entrance to the synagogue before and immediately after the service to stare in awe at the unfolding spectacle. There was Uncle Marco ostentating what I had internalized as the image of a Parisian *boulevardier*, carrying his gold-encrusted walking stick; or Cousin Victor garbed in the best that Bond Street had to offer, with his bowler hat; Aunt Lilly and Cousin Hermosa dressed in what I had overheard as being the latest Faubourg

St. Honore fashion; and all the other colorfully dressed ladies in their fanciful hats, trailing a scent of sweet perfume. It marked me with a vision I would only find in the years to come in Schnitzler's film "La Ronde," or the pages of Barbara Tuchman's *The Proud Tower.*

It was a ritual enacted by the Jewish *buenas familias* (noble families, grandees), still under the mystique of the pre-war Belle Epoque, when they had reached the very zenith of wealth and power. A few of the men, however, among them my father, showed in their somber countenance the awareness of the eclipse of an era, of a world. They were standing on the shifting sands of an empire in the process of disintegration.

There were forty congregations spread throughout the city of Constantinople, each representing the origin, and often the social and economic status, of its congregants. Our synagogue was the center where the wealthy Jews of Pera worshiped, and it represented for me a vision of that glorious past my grandmother so often lyrically dwelled upon. Its multicolored window panes alternating with mosaic panels enveloped in the brilliance of myriads of candles that cast a luminosity over the Holy Ark revealed the splendor of the Sacred Scrolls of the Law. Garbed in richly embroidered colored velvets and silver crowns, or encased in precious metal frames of time immemorial, they were brought out of the Holy Ark on the shoulders of men who had been granted the honor of being their bearers; I had a vision of their forefathers who five centuries before had carried these very Torah scrolls on their shoulders into exile, as the token of their loyalty.

At that early stage in my life, the Day of Atonement left in my soul the spark that would make me search throughout my life for an understanding of the eternity of Israel. At those moments when my father walked up to the *bimah* at the center of the synagogue amidst the assembled multitude to read out of the Sacred Scroll, or when we children were taken downstairs to join the men for the priestly benediction so that we should be inscribed in the Book of Life, and my father spread his large *tallith* over our heads like the wings of an angel, I felt in the presence of past generations.

My certainty that all Jews were religious suffered its first blow when our salon was honored with the presence of a Jew from Odessa whom my father had befriended during his Russian odyssey. He was passing through Constantinople to convince Jews to settle in Palestine. His passionate oratory of how a new Garden of Eden would be built in our ancient homeland galvanized the family and the

large number of guests who had been invited. A discordant note was struck in my imagination, however, when he affirmed vigorously that the new socialist society would finally free the Jewish people from the yoke of the rabbis and the curse of religion.

Socialism had been a constant subject of heated debate among the men of the clan ever since my father, upon his return from Russia, had solemnly stated that it might be the only hope for Europe to end all wars, and finish with the poverty and oppression that existed in Turkey. His suggestion that we Jews should help build this new society and in the process might lose part of our wealth provoked an explosion of feelings as I had never witnessed before, in a milieu excitable by its very nature.

But contrary to his Ashkenazi friend from Odessa, my father's commitment was not linked to an anti-religious sentiment. It was the first time I had heard my father mention that he considered himself to be a Zionist since his early youth. He expressed the conviction, as the grandson of the rabbi of a small Bulgarian community, that only in their own land would the Jews be able to revitalize their religion and rid it of anachronisms acquired throughout their wanderings in so many lands.

My growing doubts about who was religious were further aggravated when I surprised my father one day in his study listening attentively to three men in long black satin coats and wide, fur-rimmed hats. My questioning of my grandmother revealed that the visitors were rabbis, Ashkenazim like the Zionist from Odessa, who were so religious that they refused to touch any food or drink offered them for fear of being given unclean sustenance, notwithstanding the fact that we considered our home to be strictly kosher. Upon asking whether the rabbis from Russia were also on their way to build a country for the Jews in Palestine, I was told that they were adamantly opposed to a Jewish state before the coming of the Messiah, who would lead the Jews back to the Promised Land. They considered the Zionist from Odessa nothing short of an apostate, no longer a Jew.

That response, beyond baffling me, established a profound dent in the universe my mind had framed. The cousin who had defied the *herem* and returned to Spain almost five hundred years after the Expulsion, I could accept as an apostate. But a Jew returning to the land of the Bible after two thousand years to rebuild it—that was unconceivable.

The climax of our religious life was the celebration of Passover,

the Seder being the only occasion when we three brothers and other little cousins became the center of attention, without the threat of being whisked off to bed before the narrative of the Exodus had unfolded and which stretched far into the night.

The enormous table was covered with a beautifully embroidered white cloth, laden with glittering silverware and lit candles in the very candlesticks which, according to oral family tradition, had been brought out of Catalonia by our forefathers at the time of their expulsion. They cast a mysterious light upon the heavy drapes covering the high window-doors which encircled the large dining room, and created in me an awareness that this setting was meant to close the world out of our celebration so as not to intrude upon the presences.

I had acquired the certitude that one of the very purposes of the Passover Seder was to allow our forefathers, whose memory had been so well preserved by the family legends, to participate in the great celebration of the miracles of the liberation from Egypt and from the yoke of the Spanish Inquisition. For apart from those sitting around the table, I not only felt those presences but at moments could visualize their fluttering shadows.

My various attempts to elicit a clarification from my grandmother were met with a short statement that there were things better left unanswered, especially for little children, followed by a long silence and a wondrous look in her eyes, from which I could only conclude that her ancestor the kabbalist was the one to have an answer.

Equally shrouded in mystery was the notion of the coming of the Messiah, reinforced by the vagueness of my grandmother's answers to my probing. He would be our King when the Jews returned to the Holy Land, but more so than King David; his reign would not be limited to Israel but would encompass all the nations, to whom he would bring peace. Judging by all the tales of war, revolution and riots with which I was constantly being bombarded, it seemed that the world was in urgent need of his arrival. I was therefore convinced that I would personally be a witness to the great event, and had great expectations whenever the door was opened for the prophet Elijah.

Suddenly the relaxed atmosphere, often filled with the joy of festivities and permeated with laughter, was gone from the house on the Hill of Pera. So were the large tea and dinner gatherings, now substituted by the solemn visits of small groups of relatives and friends with downcast expressions, for we were leaving Constantinople. My grandmother, with my mother following in her footsteps, was

directing servants in the packing of huge trunks. My father was already in Paris to prepare for our arrival.

The glittering image of Paris, the Arch of Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, the Invalides with all the glories of the Revolution and Napoleon's *Grande Armée* all of a sudden seemed to fade. When the heavy drapes were taken down from the large windows, I felt cold and afraid. Doubts gnawed at me; why were we really leaving Constantinople? We were not the only ones, for many of our relatives and friends had already departed and others were getting ready. When I had last mentioned the name of the city my mother, fearful of being overheard, had whispered to me, "Don't call it Constantinople any longer, it is now Istanbul. Constantinople is a Greek name."

Was it because the city where I had been born was now Istanbul and no longer the capital of Turkey that we had to leave? Or because the country had ceased to be an empire and was now a republic? Ataturk himself had founded the republic which, just like France, was the consequence of a revolution. Maybe that was why we should remain and remember that he must be a friend of the Jews, because our gallant cousin had fought alongside him at Gallipoli. But maybe Ataturk was not a friend of the Jews after all, for we had always supported the Sultans who had protected us for almost five hundred years, and the last of the line had just been deposed by Ataturk. No, I could not accept that, for it would have been too ungrateful for a great general like him to turn against the descendants of the men of Sefarad who had introduced cannons in the Turkish armies and whose merchants had made the country wealthy.

My grandmother no longer seemed to have the time or the patience to listen to or answer my interminable questions, which only increased my apprehension. It could be that behind Ataturk there was an evil influence wanting to expel us from Turkey. Just like the days of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, who had fallen under the influence of Torquemada. The scene of Don Isaac Abrabanel, our legendary ancestor, so often narrated by my grandmother, as he pleaded in vain with the Catholic Kings to revoke the Decree of Expulsion, took on fearsome dimensions. The dreadful vision of the evil inquisitor Torquemada bursting out from behind the heavy drapes where he was hiding, eyes aflame and brandishing a huge crucifix to menace the King and Queen with eternal damnation should they succumb to temptation, made very real the dangers with which we might be threatened.

Could it be that it was all the fault of the Greeks? I knew from

Mademoiselle that they hated us because they believed the Jews had killed their god Jesus Christ, which I could not understand—how could a god be killed? I knew from my grandmother's stories that the Greeks had killed the Jews in Palestine so that we revolted under the Maccabees and defeated them; that was why we celebrated Hanukkah. Also, just a few years ago the Greeks had captured Salonika and slaughtered many Jewish men, women, and children. Even now they had launched a terrible war against Turkey, which Ataturk's army was bravely resisting; the purpose was the capture of Constantinople, which they claimed as their capital. I concluded that we were leaving before the Greeks conquered the city and massacred us. It was all very confusing and increasingly frightening, for everybody looked very worried and there was no more laughter in the house.

According to the secretive whispers among the adults, strange things were happening in the city. It seemed to be clouded in silence, for we were no longer awakened in the early hours by the familiar chant of the *mullahs* echoing from the distant minarets of the great mosques across the Bosphorus, calling the faithful to their prayers. We gradually spent more time in the house, as Mademoiselle no longer took us for our daily walks. At first I thought that she was afraid of being discovered to be Greek and killed by the Turks, but then I realized that the people in the streets seemed changed, walking with their heads down and in silence, and then I noticed that many men were no longer wearing the fez. Also, newspapers were no longer printed in the beautiful Arab characters but with those of the French books in which I was beginning to immerse myself.

Was Ataturk going to install the guillotine soon, as was done during the French Revolution? I was shattered when my mother entered the house one day with a terrified look on her face, screaming, "There are bodies hanging on the Galata bridge! We must leave quickly, they will turn against the foreigners and the Jews next!"

Apparently my hero Ataturk, in his zeal to transform what was left of Turkey into a modern European country, among other measures like changing the alphabet and abolishing the veil, had under penalty of death prohibited his Turkish subjects to wear the traditional fez, the identification with their religion. The result were the corpses hanging by their neck from the Galata bridge. Although the new republic did not yet have the guillotine, this was obviously just the beginning.

All my hesitations as to whether we should depart from Constantinople were suddenly gone. For I was told that apart from new laws

making life almost impossible for Jewish merchants, I would no longer be able to start my French education at the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Ataturk was having all foreign schools closed, and the teaching of Turkish was to be made obligatory. The date for our departure was set.

Accompanied by my brothers, my parents and our inseparable grandmother, I embarked on one of those magic vessels which, like peaceful swans gliding through the gentle waters of the Bosphorus, had been part of my earliest visions, enthralled by the promise that its destination was France and eventually Paris.

My initial encounters with the sea had occurred during those golden months when the family would move to the island of Prinkipo, where we were taken daily to the beach and on frequent boat trips to the surrounding islands. At that time I developed the all-embracing passion and feeling of unison with the ocean, which was to be a faithful companion and source of solace throughout my life.

It was dusk when the ship left the port, and the setting sun cast its luminosity on the ramparts of ancient Byzantine fortresses intermingled with the minarets of the mosques. All along the shore glowed the lights of multicolored lanterns of countless taverns and restaurants from which on special occasions I had been privileged to watch the slow fading of a long summer twilight.

I was totally unprepared, however, for the vision that unfolded before my eyes when I walked on deck the next morning: the vastness of the deep blue waters of the sea of Marmara blending into a luminous sky that seemed to stretch forever, to encompass the entire globe.

Like the momentous sweep of all the movies that would possess me in the years to come and further shatter the limits of a feverish imagination, it was with open mouth and eyes aghast that I watched the tales filling my universe suddenly come to life, as the vessel followed its route through the Straits of the Dardanelles into the port of Salonika, to continue among the myriads of islands emerging like encrusted diamonds out of the Aegean Sea; then from Athens into the Mediterranean to Naples and Marseille, finally to cross the Straits of Gibraltar into the dark Atlantic Ocean, Lisbon, and its destination, Le Havre.

The awesome vision of the cliffs of Gallipoli, its shores still littered with the hulls of British and French vessels from which wave after wave of gallant infantrymen had landed, vainly attempting to dislodge the rugged Turkish soldiers from the heights! Empty fortifications

entangled in meshes of barbed wire could still be discerned on the cliffs, as well as whole patches of beach covered with rustic crosses, the markings of the fallen Allied soldiers.

For my grandmother, one of the high points of the voyage was undoubtedly taking her three grandsons on a pilgrimage to her native city of Salonika, the Jerusalem in Exile. According to her testimony, the city had come to a standstill when a crowd of fifteen thousand, all those he had helped during his sojourn in this world, had accompanied the revered rabbi to his last resting place. We visited the house where our ancestor, the kabbalist, was supposed to have dwelled before his departure for the Holy Land to help establish the famous academy of Safed, not to speak of the house of her birth, the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and, of course, the old synagogue of Catalonia where she had been married. In a tone touched with melancholy we were told that Salonika was now a strange city, for many Jews had left when it became part of Greece after the end of the war. While under the Ottoman Turks they had lived in a climate of national autonomy and religious tolerance, the new masters had brought with them the religious fanaticism that had so long plagued our brethren in other countries of Christian Europe.

Her observation about the intolerance of the Greeks greatly perturbed me, for France also was a Christian country, but grandmother reassured me that France was a republic, and among other things had eliminated the influence of the church in public education. There was no comparison with Greece, which was a backward country and had nothing in common with ancient Greece, whose history and mythology she knew so well; that had been another world.

Athens was our next port of call, and my grandmother's comments cast the first doubt on the veracity of her narratives. Could it be true that the present inhabitants of the land were not the heirs to those who had created such beauty? As we slowly moved forward on the ancient road leading to the Acropolis, my vision was blurred by the luminosity emanating from the masses of white marble, which the setting sun was projecting through the huge columns of the Parthenon. When I stood at its feet, I suddenly felt as if the cryptic mass of solitary stone had taken on life, staring into the vastness of the Aegean Sea and the Peloponnesian peninsula. Paul Valéry has put into words what I sensed at that time: "Some buildings are silent, some speak, and a few even sing. There are structures whose blending with nature is so harmonious that it seems the Muses had predestined them for immortality." An awareness of the souls embedded in

stone—that would follow me when I first entered the City of Lights.

The assurance that not all Roman Catholic countries were intolerant, with the exception of Spain, of course, set me at ease when in Naples I was first confronted with the many churches that adorned almost every street, not to speak of the countless little niches harboring images and statues of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the numerous saints, all surrounded by multicolored flowers and forests of lit candles, in front of which mostly women and old men knelt in silent adoration. It was a picturesque but not too impressive sight, for it did not seem to match the fervor of the multitude of Moslem men, young and old, who thrice daily prostrated themselves throughout the streets of Constantinople whenever the chants emanating from the many minarets would call them to prayer.

The religious pageantry was greatly overshadowed in my mind by the towering and menacing presence of Vesuvius, whose incandescent lava might one day engulf all to share the fate of those poor inhabitants of Pompeii to whose ruins I was taken, a thought that together with the snake pit of the Sultan filled the horror chamber of my youthful universe.

At Marseille the ship stayed only for a couple of hours and we were not allowed to go ashore, which put a painful damper on my urge finally to step on French soil. I had to be content with the sight of the contours of the city, and the tricolor flag fluttering over the port and the tower of the Château d'If perched on an island standing guard to the entrance of the harbor.

When the ship passed through the narrow strip of ocean that separates Europe from Africa, my grandmother pointed out the great mountain reaching into the sky and exclaimed in a voice choked with emotion, "This is our Spain!" The Rock of Gibraltar became engraved in my mind as the symbol of all the family tales. It did not sit well with my mother, as Gibraltar was one of the crown jewels of the British Empire of which she was a proud subject. Her British citizenship was looked upon by the family with a mixture of derision and respect. What glory could be derived from that land by one born of the grandees of Sefarad, the aristocracy of the Jewish people? On the other hand, to be the holder of a passport of the British Empire that ruled over one-sixth of the globe was the subject of no small envy in a family whose sense of security greatly depended on the nationalities to which it could lay claim.

Actually, my grandmother was very near to the truth when she called Gibraltar "Our Spain," for Djabal al Tarik, as the Moslems

called it, was named after Tarik, leader of the Berber tribes from North Africa who first landed west of Gibraltar in the year 711 to set out on the conquest of what was to become Moslem Spain, and who some historians now affirm was Jewish. Tales abound as to how, when the victorious army marched on Granada, the Jewish population revolted against their Visigothic oppressors, opened the gates to their city and joined Tarik's ranks, thus helping to conquer the land.

The tales surrounding Tarik's army and its Jewish combatants gave me the feeling that my ancestors had liberated the land from the yoke of our Christian oppressors, a mystique that was further nurtured by narratives of some of the Spanish Jews defending their honor and their religion with weapons in their hands before the expulsion. I fully identified with them during my early youth; they were my most tangible link with Judaism.

The universe of my martial fantasy stretched all the way from the valiant Maccabees and the defenders of Jerusalem against the Roman legions to the valiant Jewish warriors in Tarik's army and the heroic stand of our forefathers when the curtain fell over the land of Sefarad, to culminate with the saga of our Bulgarian colonel. With time, however, I began to doubt whether all these martial deeds were really in defense of the Jewish nation. For while our colonel had fought on the side of the Germans, I often heard of the cousin who fell fighting for France at the battle of Verdun. And there was mention of the heroic Jewish commander of the Australian army, Sir John Monach, whom my grandmother and Don Isaac had befriended in London, when the battle of Gallipoli was narrated.

Now, as I look back over the years, Istanbul is but a geographical site, without further significance; Constantinople remains the land of memory. Though I sometimes wonder whether it is real, it left a strong mark. Whenever in my travels my path has brought me across a man from Sefarad, originating from the Balkans or what had been the domain of the Ottoman Empire, a kinship of legend would be established, a tapestry of visions and tales would unfold sometimes cutting across five centuries to Sefarad, the land of the dream.

Endeavoring to separate myth from reality, or to be more exact, the myths that through the decades have turned out to be reality, I can only conclude that a great deal remains engulfed in the realm of oblivion. However, during the wandering on three continents where the continuation of the exile has taken me, I have reached the certainty that, if every Jew were to tear but a few of the veils that cover his ancestral memory, enough would be revealed to provide him with

a sense of historical identity, which would avoid the pitfalls of fear and existential vacuum whenever he is confronted with an assault of the nations who have not yet come to terms with the continuous survival of the people of Israel.

II.

THE LAND OF HOPE

The dream was about to be fulfilled; the last port of call before landing on French soil, the Land of Hope, was Lisbon.

We were royally received by Tante Lilly, one of my mother's cousins, notorious not only for her beauty, but also for having married a Danish diplomat; whether he was a Jew or not was a question that had remained unanswered. Tante Lilly, who lived in Paris, owned an apartment in the resort town of Estoril, apparently bought by her husband while serving in Portugal.

During the course of the elaborate lunch served by a white-gloved butler, the conversation was centered around the Sephardic families of our acquaintance who had recently moved to France and England, and around the royalty of Europe whose kingdoms had collapsed under the impact of the Great War and the Russian Revolution, and who had chosen Estoril as their haven. The turn of the conversation left me aghast at the profound knowledge my grandmother possessed on intimate details of the life of the blue-blooded princes and princesses of Europe, which seemed at least to equal that of Tante Lilly.

My father, who had trouble hiding his irritation at the discussion on European royalty, asked to be excused at the end of the repast to call on a business acquaintance, a member of one of the most influential banking families in the land. They belonged to the few who had been able to survive the yoke of centuries of the Inquisition as Marranos, a term I would only come to understand fully in the years to follow; he was still considered a New Christian by his peers.

At our final port of destination, Le Havre, we took the boat train to Paris, one of those trains that are becoming a relic of the past as the new jet age takes over; to me at that time it represented the

portal into a new world, and with the years would take on an almost legendary dimension, connected to the memory of the Land of the Dream.

From the train station, we drove through the heart of the city and along its famous boulevards amidst the glittering lights of Paris, a phantasmagoric vision that was to remain part of me.

My father had rented an apartment for us in Neuilly, a fashionable Parisian suburb so similar in its isolation from the reality of the city as the Hill of Pera had been from that of Constantinople, or, going back five centuries, Montjuich perched on a hilltop of Barcelona from that of the swarming multitude of its port.

Neuilly was to continue a certain pattern from which I have never been able to escape, intentionally perhaps, however strong might have been the urge to deny it, that of the grand lifestyle of "*las buenas familias*." A lifestyle that was maintained even throughout the dark days of immigration to distant lands, when my parents were not sure where the means of sustenance would come from day to day. I can only conclude that this was part of the posture that enabled us to face the vicissitudes of life with what my father always called *tête haute*, and which our Ashkenazi brethren often labeled Sephardic arrogance or false pride.

In my family, two cities had been part of the dream, the land of the future, Jerusalem and Paris. While Jerusalem was the city of Messianic hope, the end of our pilgrimage through history, Paris was the temporal vision to be fulfilled in our lifetime, where most of our relatives and friends at some point during my early youth had found their way. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, many of the poor Sephardim emigrated to South and North America, but all those who had the means chose the road to Paris.

My adaptation and that of my brothers to the new land was smooth and seemed natural, as if we had always belonged there. From the cradle we had learned to speak Ladino and French, and whatever Levantine traces remained in our speech could always be taken for a Southern accent. And, of course, we were entrusted to a new Mademoiselle, this time a Swiss spinster who saw it as her sacred task to integrate the three little boys into the culture of the land by dragging them to what seemed all the churches of Paris. These symbols of Catholic France did not unduly affect me, apart from a feeling of resentment at being deprived of the full splendor of the military glory of France emanating from every corner of the city.

An additional link with this universe were the tales of the Comtesse de Ségur, soon followed by the children's version of the historical novels by Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas and, of course, the countless *feuilletons* on "La Grande Guerre" (The Great War).

Every word of these tales came to life when we faced the towering image of La Marseillaise over the Arch of Triumph, her face contorted with martial fury, outstretched arm brandishing the flaming sword of defiance, adjuring the citizens of the Republic to take arms to defend the great revolution.

The imagery of delegations of war veterans, many with mutilated faces and limbless bodies, holding the battle-torn fanions of their regiments who daily at sunset rekindled the eternal flame on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in memory of almost two million of their comrades fallen for "La Patrie" (the Fatherland) in the Great War.

The Invalides, under whose vast dome rested the remnants of Napoleon, surrounded by the relics of La Grande Armée that had swept throughout Europe to establish the concepts of Liberté, Fraternité, Egalité.

Had it all been in vain, just to end in the defeat on the plains of Waterloo, a defeat which in the fiery imagination of my youth stood for that of the virtues of the Republic, to which I maintained a messianic devotion until the debacle of 1940 and the reality of Auschwitz?

Although in the universe of my fantasy the world of Sefarad was being substituted by that of France, one indestructible link remained: that of martial glory. For in my imagination, the soldiers of the Revolution of Napoleon's army, in their zeal to destroy the forces of tyranny and implement justice for all men, were the worthy descendants of the warriors of ancient Judea and of my heroic ancestors of Sefarad. Over this vision of historical fantasy hung a dark cloud, however; our gallant cousin, the aide-de-camp to Ataturk, and my heroic uncle the Bulgarian colonel, had fought on the wrong side in the Great War. A tragedy for a Jewish boy reared in the mystique of his Sephardic ancestors and longing to accept La Patrie as his own.

This "secret" took on a horrendous dimension one Armistice Day, when the entire class of the elementary school was taken to the memorial at Verdun, not to forget. There we stood on the hill as if nailed to the ground, overlooking as far as the eyes could reach an ocean of crosses for some of the half million French and German soldiers who had fought each other to death over the possession of a

piece of the Lord's earth no larger than some tens of square miles. To the whispered question of a little companion at my side as to whether my father had been at Verdun, I answered yes, the great lie that was to weigh on my conscience for many years.

Over the link I had established in my youthful fantasy between the warriors of the Republic on one side and the heroes of Judea and Sefarad on the other, there hovered another cloud of doubt, initially implanted by the Mademoiselle we had left behind in Constantinople, and given new magnitude by her Parisian successor: that France was a Catholic country where the Church ruled supreme, and that the revolution which had brought forth the Republic was an aberration to true Frenchmen, rightful heirs to noble kings and, of course, Jeanne d'Arc.

In the image projected by Mademoiselle I could clearly visualize the enemy that had to be fought. It was the same Catholic Church that evoked the vision of countless ancestors surrendering their souls on the pyres of the Spanish Inquisition for refusing to abjure their faith, and which had unceasingly tried to destroy the Republic in coalition with the trembling kings of Europe. Thus Mademoiselle's devotion to these values and the fanaticism with which she strove to instill them in us gave me the certitude that the battle was still going on.

Our Jewish education had been far from what is considered orthodox, but it did not fit entirely into the pattern of a liberal Jewish education. I look back with great nostalgia on the Jewish universe that surrounded our house on the Hill of Pera. Though attendance at synagogue was limited to the High Holy days, the joy and intensity with which the festivals were celebrated around the large family dining table, where most of the conversation and often heated arguments related to the Jewish people, past, present and future, plus of course the daily Bible readings and narratives of my grandmother, inculcated in me a strong Jewish consciousness that not even the desire to become a Frenchman could obfuscate. A Frenchman, yes, but a proud Jew, an inheritance that would always be part of me. I was already immunized against the impact of that other side of Paris, the monuments to its Catholic and royalist past, still the staunch basis of much of the French bourgeoisie, as I was to find out in later days.

At one point, however, it seemed as if the onslaught that Mademoiselle had unleashed upon me in alliance with the forces of evil was about to break my resistance. Among the myriads of statues of

bleeding Christs, Saints, and Kings, and the huge colored stained-glass windows and paintings in all the churches she took us to visit, invariably stood the devil, in vivid red, flaming eyes, black tail, and long horns, brandishing a huge double spike. This image was the instrument Mademoiselle introduced into my nights to transform them into a reign of terror. For in punishment for not accepting the road to salvation of my sinful soul, the devil himself, hidden by the darkness of night, would snatch me from my bed and cast me into the eternal flames of hell.

When I tried to tell my mother about my fears, she retorted, not without a trace of amusement, that I must be the victim of my wild imagination, for which I was beginning to acquire a reputation in the family. Without contradicting my mother, my grandmother took me aside and sternly inquired whether I religiously recited the *Shema Yisrael* (Hear, O Israel) before going to sleep. A question asked with an expression of concern, or maybe even guilt, for she used to participate in this ritual in Constantinople, and since her involvement in the whirlwind of Parisian life had relegated it to Mademoiselle. She added that we did not believe in the devil's power over little children, and if I said my prayer before I went to sleep, all the great rabbis among my forefathers would form a shield around me that no evil force could pierce. As to Satan himself, if he dared to come, one glance from the family's kabbalist would fulminate him and force him to retreat into the pit of darkness. And thus I was saved from the devil through the power of my ancestors.

As to our Swiss governess, the impact of Catholic Paris put her into such a profound state of religious zeal that she set out to rescue the imperiled souls of the three little Jewish boys at all cost. This of course included saving us from the sins of the flesh—how else account for the fact that my parents, arriving late one night and checking on their sleeping sons, found them lying on their backs with outstretched arms tied at the wrists to the brass railing of those large French beds! Obviously, Mademoiselle was immediately whisked back to Switzerland, where it was rumored she entered a convent, and this was the end of the saga of the nannies.

While my father set out to re-establish his trading links with the four corners of a Europe whose geography had totally been changed by the War and the Russian Revolution, my mother and grandmother became involved in the process of social integration within the world of the rich—and not so rich—Sephardic families and numerous relatives, many of them friends who had preceded them to Paris.

A name that radiated in their newly found social universe was that of the family of Count Camondo. A Sephardic count, born in Constantinople, where he had started as a money lender and later became a very successful banker—his assets were said to be matched in the Levant only by the Armenian Gulbenkian—he had been the financial partner of none other than my great-grandfather, Don Abraham Kisapshouglu. Don Isaac Camondo, no longer happy with a Sephardic pedigree, upon his retirement in Paris at the turn of the century decided to become a patron of the arts, especially of the impressionist painters, and had purchased the title of Count.

The Camondo family was expected to become a bridge to that social world of Paris to which my mother and grandmother aspired. But although my parents were invited to some receptions at their mansion, it was more a gesture to a relationship that had existed generations before, as our standing was but a shadow of the glory that had been. Today, the Camondo mansion is one of the numerous museums of Paris, but Count Camondo left a sad monument to the glories of the past. The last male heir of the Camondos had died as a pilot in the French Air Force in World War I; his sister, her husband, and children were deported to Auschwitz.

After our Swiss Mademoiselle had been dispatched back to her native land, it was decided that my brothers and I should enter the neighborhood Ecole Communale (Public School) for boys. The private tutoring we had received from my grandmother and our governess, the only task in which she seemed to have been half-way successful, had prepared us for the initial exams of the French language and other basic knowledge that would place us in the right classes according to our age.

The tolerance emanating from our secular school of republican persuasion introduced a breach into the world of social prejudice of the ladies of the family which had separated us from the Ashkenazi Jews, the *polacos* and *russos*. The families of our classmates who opened the doors of their homes to the three brothers to participate in the festive events of their children were mostly Ashkenazim, either originating with the old families from Alsace which carried a certain pedigree, or from Russia and Poland, who within one generation had acquired the affluence to integrate themselves into the bourgeoisie of Neuilly. Although a phenomenon that could never have taken place in Constantinople, Salonika, Sofia, or Belgrade, my mother and grandmother had to come to terms with the fact that the *buenas familias* could no longer remain a monopoly of the *hidalgo*

families from Sefarad.

The few years spent at the Ecole Communale were very happy ones, as the spirit of camaraderie made me aware of the meaning of friendship among peers, especially when in unison with the entire class I sang the Marseillaise at the beginning of each school day.

Some dark clouds still lingered, like that of the family members who had fought on the wrong side in the Great War, my dark secret. Another element of uncertainty toward my becoming a real *citoyen* was the frequent mention during history class of "nos ancêtres les Gaulois," with a clear indication from our teacher that they were the ancestors of all Frenchmen, the fierce warriors who had faced the might of Rome. To accept the image of a savage, long-haired man of war eternally brandishing a battle axe would have been to deny my proud ancestors, the gallant warriors of Judea, who had inflicted such humiliating defeats on the Roman legions. This problem was solved when I found out that many of my classmates did not have roots on French soil reaching that far back in history either, being sons of immigrants and often immigrants themselves.

One feature of the Ecole Communale to which I did not give any importance at the time and which followed me into the Lycée, was that I never witnessed any act of physical violence on the part of my schoolmates nor was personally a victim or aggressor. This was contrary to schools in other countries on the road of the exile which my children attended, where the frequent fist-fights were looked upon as part of an educational process that would transform boys into men.

To a different form of aggression, however, I became conditioned from the first days I attended school: that of using words as weapons. During my frequent trips to Paris after World War II, I sometimes would peep into schoolyards at break time invariably to see numerous boys and girls standing in circles, in the midst of hot debates always accompanied by excited gesticulations. Nothing had changed.

The formative years at the Ecole Communale thus seemed to have fully prepared me for the world I was to encounter at the Lycée. As my grandmother pointed out, provided we were ready to study very hard and pass the dreaded baccalaureate, the Lycée was the first step toward admittance into one of France's Grandes Ecoles, like the Sorbonne, or the Ecole Polytechnique, whose pupils still paraded on the fourteenth of July in uniforms designed by Napoleon himself. There would be no limit to the opportunities the French Republic offered to the three Jewish youngsters, heirs to such a splendid tradition. A great burden to be placed upon the frail shoulders of three

boys entering a world where they would gradually undergo the painful transition from adolescence into manhood, and which was changing at such a rapid pace. Its reality seemed to have escaped the grasp of the remnants of a clan still basking in the proud memory of a glorious past, which they believed powerful enough to provide their offspring with a stake in a future that was also theirs.

Thinking back now over the decades, it seems that the year I entered the Lycée represented for me the rite of passage. Several elements converged during that period when I was abandoning the universe of my childhood, mainly peopled by women, for one dominated by men.

The Lycée undoubtedly was its portal, strengthened by the notion that the preparation for my Bar Mitzvah simultaneously represented my acceptance as a man into the world of my forefathers. Even the Hebrew letters took on masculine proportions, a domain of which women had no part. The link with the memory of Mademoiselle, the constant, overwhelming signs of affection being showered upon us by the women of the family that seemed to hold me for eternity in the prison of a net of emotions, was being severed.

This rite of passage into manhood, with the Bar Mitzvah linking me to the generations of the past and projecting me into the world of the future, coincided with the year Adolf Hitler set out to establish his Reich of a Thousand Years, that would seek to dominate the world and exterminate all the Jews.

The world of my father, which up to then had been enshrined in a haze of mystery, became reality at the Lycée where, apart from cramming grammar, mathematics, and history, the sons were fighting the battle of their fathers, the arena in which the daily events of the world around us were dissected by the sharp weapon of the word.

It was an ongoing conflict on positions to be attacked or defended, with the maximum violence the word was capable of, in order to snatch an ephemeral victory or a momentary humiliation under the yoke of defeat. At stake was the honor of concepts, of a way of life or attitude towards the world around us, reflecting the legends and realities of oral traditions interpreted by the daily papers and history books as well as by a father, and most likely also a grandfather, uncle, or older brother of every young warrior.

I found myself in the midst of what one might label a debating society, but one beyond the confines of worthy civility, similar to what had gone on almost daily at the house on the Hill of Pera and, on a smaller scale, at the apartment of Neuilly. The issues did differ

somewhat in context, though. The family discussions were mostly centered around the destiny of the Jews, especially that of the Sephardim, apart from family and business events, and my role was limited to that of a listener. At the Lycée, I found myself as a full participant, and was finally able to give free reign to whatever I wanted to express.

In the midst of what our modern Anglo-Saxon world would define as shouting matches, listening to the family debates had adequately prepared me not only to hold my own, when being heard at all depended on the capacity of one's voice to overwhelm that of one's adversaries, but also to neutralize their intensity through frequent interruptions. A verbosity that not only found its outlet in the courtyard of the Lycée and in the nearby cafés, but eventually in the streets of Paris. Under the impact of the issues of the 'thirties, the students went out not only to assert their bursting manhood, for which the bordelos could provide only partial release, but also to bear witness to the generations that had stood on both sides of the barricades since 1789, and participate in the battles of their fathers.

"My father had always known," was the sudden awareness that filled me with pride and confidence when entering the arena; his narratives since the earliest days of my memory, in between long absences, provided me with the weapons to stand as an equal among my peers. In the days at the house on the Hill of Pera, the change of mood the presence of my father would bring about considerably chilled the expectations I had about the world outside. His expression always seemed to be rather somber and serious, and the only occasions I remember him laughing was early in the morning when he took his three little sons into his bed, or on the rare Sunday walks on which he would take us.

While in elementary school, the "political" conversations were limited to recounting the gallantry and bravery of fathers on the battlefields of the Great War, the discussions at the Lycée focused on two issues. Foremost was the looming menace of the traditional enemy across the Rhine, once more under the yoke of militarism, but this time masked by a new philosophy, Nazism. The other issue was the Russian Revolution, on which my schoolmates seemed to be divided into two distinct camps; one that saw it as the symbol of a new liberated world, the other as the source of all the evils now plaguing Europe.

On both these issues I considered myself an expert, for after surviving his Russian saga, my father most frequently traveled to Ger-

many. I would keep my audience spellbound for periods longer than anyone else when narrating episodes my father had witnessed during the Russian Revolution while attempting to save his brother. The vision of men whose limbs were torn apart tied to two horses pulling in different directions, and other scenes of horror with which most of us were familiar through the Goya prints at the Louvre but never believed to be real, brought expressions of horror to the faces of the listeners.

The question of Russia, its Revolution and Civil War, threatened to engulf me in the cross currents and passions emanating from both camps in the arena, clearly defined as Reds and Whites, and I had to use all the verbal skills to which I had been exposed in order to extricate myself. "Twisted talmudic mind," was thrown at me, meant of course as an insult and undoubtedly rooted in the tradition of the anti-Dreyfusards; had it not been preceded by the word "twisted," I would have considered it an honor, in the best family tradition.

My arguments on the Russian Revolution did in fact involve a certain amount of twisting, derived from the elements of doubt, not to say confusion, that my father's narratives had caused in me, and which I was forced to interpret and divulge to my audience in accordance with my vision of the world. From the Red camp in the arena was hurled the accusation that if my uncle was about to be shot by the Bolsheviks, it would be because he had conspired against the great Revolution, while for the Whites it only confirmed the evil nature of the Bolsheviks who had enslaved the Holy Russian Nation and had not hesitated to kill the Tsar and his family. An ambivalence that reflected the feelings of my own family, especially my father, prevented me from revealing the true picture, and was to follow me throughout the long road of the exile.

Actually, the purpose of my father's trips to Russia after the Revolution and throughout the Civil War was the vain attempt to save what was left of the Russian investments of the family business after the death of my maternal grandfather. An attempt doomed to failure, which occurred almost simultaneously with the collapse of the trading enterprise built by Don Abraham Kisapshouglu after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

My father's saga in Russia was connected to the Allies' military intervention in the Russian Civil War on behalf of the Whites, who were attempting to destroy the armies of the revolution; one of my father's brothers had accompanied an expeditionary force consisting of British, French, and American forces that landed on the Crimean

peninsula. When the attempt failed and as a consequence the city of Odessa was retaken by the Bolsheviks, my uncle was taken prisoner, prompting my father to rush to save him from execution by paying ransom. One detail my father hesitantly revealed years later was that Odessa had been surrendered to the Reds as the result of a bribe paid to the respective commanders of the allied expeditionary forces.

Although the Russian Revolution had marked the end of Don Kisapshouglu's trading empire and its considerable fortune, it was with understanding and sympathy that my father saw the struggle that was changing the face of the land. As a man who had been born and spent his youth in Bulgaria, a country which due to its proximity to Russia had absorbed much of its culture, he always told the family how the land of the tsars, whose language he spoke fluently and where he had traveled frequently, was more than a century behind Western Europe—about where France had been before its Revolution, with the same callousness and indifference toward its own people.

At the apartment of Neuilly the Russian Revolution had become the subject of heated discussions, as I had accepted whole-heartedly the analogy between the Russian and French revolutions. Had not what remained of the Russian battleships been renamed Marat, Danton, Robespierre? I had even seen a movie that showed the Red Guards storming the Winter Palace singing the Marseillaise. My grandmother would retort that, regardless of the revolution, the Russians were savages and nothing was going to change them; they were even worse than the Turks.

For Frenchmen, the issue of the Russian Revolution was clear-cut between Reds and Whites; it was far more complex in relation to the nation across the Rhine. Although born after the Great War, most of my companions at the Lycée were sons of war veterans, many of whom bore the marks of the carnage on their flesh and had been raised in the memory of an uncle and sometimes a grandfather who had died fighting Germany—a traditional enemy who twice had ravaged France in less than a century, and once more under the leadership of a new Kaiser, whom they now called the Führer, was brandishing the threat of revenge over the head of their Patrie (Fatherland).

However unanimous the boys' hate and fear of the Third Reich appeared to be, one could detect among some a certain element of respect and even admiration for the order and discipline their new leader had imposed on the country as the result of having extirpated

from it the influence of corrupt politicians, communist traitors, and . . . Jews, who had stabbed the nation in the back.

These utterances at first left me speechless, and gradually introduced an ever increasing wedge of doubt and confusion in my universe of certitude on the path I was to follow. Not only would I become a full-fledged citizen of the Third Republic, but in the process of graduating at the Sorbonne in history, a career upon which I had already set my mind, I would become an officer in the reserve of the glorious French army, the fulfillment of my most cherished childhood dreams.

The Dreyfus affair had been the subject of hot debates in the family, for the saga and martyrdom of the Jewish captain was the measure of the extent to which France had been, or still was, antisemitic. There was the monstrous condemnation and banishment of Dreyfus to Devil's Island, but had this act not been redeemed by the valiant struggle of Emile Zola on his behalf, even at the price of banishment from France? Had he not had the full support of the great Clémenceau, the "Tiger," architect of the nation's victory in the Great War, among many others, mainly intellectuals? After all, despite the injustice perpetrated on him, Dreyfus had been a member of the sacrosanct French General Staff, a fact unheard of in the other armies of Europe. I had entered the Lycée with the firm conviction that if the enemies of Dreyfus had been defeated, antisemitism no longer existed in France, an illusion destroyed first in the courtyard of the school and later on the very streets of Paris, finding its climax in what in my memory is the Battle of the Place de la Concorde.

The heated and controversial debates at the Lycée on the Russian Revolution gave me a sense of exhilaration. I saw myself as a tribune in the best tradition of the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews, to whom the citizens of the French Republic were the rightful heirs.

On Germany, however, I felt gradually being cornered by the first veiled and very soon open insinuations that behind the inherent evil of the German nation was the corrupting hand of the Jew, who was simultaneously undermining the virtues of France itself. These attacks, under which my blind faith that all citizens were imbued with the virtues of the Republic suffered its first blow, served to help me discern the two faces of France; the France of Republican tradition as opposed to the other France, the one that had never come to terms with the Revolution and had found expression in its hatred of the Jews during the Dreyfus affair, which was to reach its very climax

in the Vichy government of Marshal Pétain.

While a number of my Jewish classmates seemed to shrink under the onslaught and limited their reaction to a few utterances of "anti-semitism," I found myself staunchly supported by a number of others who responded to the vituperous accusations with shouts of "Fascists!" Thus it was in the arena of the Lycée that I first saw the signs of the monster that would tarnish a certain image I had of France and would gradually spread its venom throughout the old continent.

Those years were marked by events which alternatively threw me into states of total despair and heights of exhilaration. To one born in the aftermath of the Great War which was to end all wars, it not only shattered many of the dreams I had armed myself with before entering the arena of men, but gradually confirmed in me the feeling that Europe was heading toward another conflict.

It looked like a war might be necessary to eliminate the forces of evil gathering on France's borders and threatening to unleash a catastrophe on the Jewish people. Had it not already started in Germany, and could Germany ever be stopped by any other means than war? Like many of my fellow students I was of a generation whose fathers, the survivors of the trenches, had instilled in them the vision of a society that would erase all the iniquities plaguing mankind. Was it not, as I had so often heard from my grandmother and from my father in later years, the message that the Jewish Prophets had left us as their legacy?

I was already discerning on the horizon the rising shadow of a man who seemed to be the direct heir of the ancient Prophets of Israel. The name of Léon Blum was being mentioned, either in a tone of veneration or of rage, ever more frequently at the Lycée or in the headlines of the newspapers of which I had become an avid reader. The roles had changed, for it was now up to me to read to my grandmother and keep her informed as to what was going on in the world.

The turmoil of events unfolding all around me, or at least in my vision of the universe, thrust me prematurely into adulthood. This was not infrequent at the time, where the rite of passage projected my peers straight into the world of history rather than into that of sports and sex, as in retrospect was the case in the Americas, both North and South.

Caught between the stifling love of an overzealous bourgeois Jewish family and a harsh and cruel world which implanted in me the fear of being trapped by a tidal wave of violence and destruction, I developed into a fragile and oversensitive youth. The very fear of

choking under a tidal wave must have brought about the bronchial ailment that with time became chronic, and especially during the long winters tied me for ever-increasing periods to the big brass bed in our apartment of Neuilly.

The advent to power of the Nazi Party in Germany did not seem to have too strong a repercussion among my peers. On the other hand, the denunciation of the Treaty of Versailles and the occupation of the Rhineland brought about a reaction of pride and defiance. They felt that the Germans wanted war, but were convinced that the French army would be victorious.

This atmosphere enveloped me in a mood of confidence. When the discussion at the family dinner table turned to ever-increasing pessimism and dismay at the persecution of Jews in Germany, I would tell them with a note of defiance that they had nothing to worry about, that soon there would be a war between France and Germany, that the Nazis would be thrown out and that nobody would dare touch the hair of a Jew. My father would try to warn me about being overconfident, since he had found on his frequent trips to Germany that they had learned the lesson of the last war, while the French seemed to see the next war as a continuation of the last one and basked in the illusion of victory, which to him was very disturbing.

His words could not shake my faith in the military might of the French nation. However, I was beginning to hear increasingly alarming remarks around me: that Mussolini's Fascism might be a model that could be applied to France; that it would put an end to all the strikes and the increasing power of the communists; that a strong government would reestablish order and restore France to the position it deserved in the world.

After the leftist and liberal parties had unified under the Front Populaire, the country was being polarized, as my father said, with ever increasing hostility between the political right and left. Hardly a week passed without one of the camps parading down the Champs Elysées or gathering around the Place de la Bastille in order to show its might. The Croix de Feu, consisting of war veterans who with their chests covered with medals and proudly carrying the fanions of their regiments, filled admiring crowds with awe; although politically conservative, it was rumored that there were Jews among its ranks. When parading in their blue shirts, black berets, and jackboots the Action Française shouted their slogans, "La France pour les Français" (France for the Frenchmen) and "A bas les Juifs" (Down with

the Jews), I felt afraid for the first time. It confirmed what my father had said about the extent to which French society had been infected by the poison from across the Rhine and the Italian Alps. Besides, a number of my schoolmates had already revealed that their fathers belonged to the Croix de Feu, not without a tone of defiance and sharp glances directed at me and the other Jewish boys.

The men and women of the Front Populaire would gather around the Place de la Bastille and march down the broad avenues of Paris, arms interlinked, row upon row; on one occasion a million of them had assembled, brandishing waves of tricolor and red flags, and the banners of their parties and labor syndicates. They were the adherents of the socialist party, the communists, the bourgeois party of the radical socialists, the CGT, and many other smaller factions of the liberal and radical left.

Yes, even many members of the bourgeoisie supported the Front Populaire as reflected by the pupils of the Lycée, as well as the majority of the intellectuals and those in the liberal professions. And all of them were not Jews—on the very contrary, for there were relatively few Jews in France.

The mystique of the Front Populaire did frighten the majority of the bourgeoisie and the profoundly traditional Catholic layers of the nation, not to speak of the officer corps.

The fear one could sense emanating from the crowd of bystanders along the Champs Elysées, when thousands upon thousands of rows of members of the Front Populaire marched down the broad boulevard to the sound of the Marseillaise and the Internationale, was but a slight indication of what would take place at the Battle of the Place de la Concorde.

The head of the socalist party, and symbol of my youthful hopes, Léon Blum, was also becoming the subject of many conversations in our home. Even on the part of my grandmother, not because of any specific sympathy for the socialist party although she always showed great compassion for the poor and oppressed, but solely on the basis that Léon Blum was Jewish and destined to become prime minister of the Third Republic, an event she awaited with great expectation. As to my father, I was developing a certain amount of resentment of his pessimism, for he seemed bent on destroying the image I had created about France as the embodiment of all virtues, an example to the entire world. Being a Jew to me was perfectly natural, and I saw in it no contradiction to also being a citizen of France. Why did he have to keep reminding me of my responsibilities as a Jew? I kept

telling him that the problem was no longer one of antisemitism, but the oppression of all mankind. When all the enslaved peoples would be free, there would be no more Jewish problem.

Since the end of 1933 Paris had been involved in a certain mood, like the atmosphere that precedes the unleashing of the violent forces of nature; this time, however, it was the violence of men. At the school the discussions had taken on ever more virulent proportions between the now well defined opposing camps. On one hand, those who now openly advocated the overthrow of a corrupt republic to give way to a strong regime that would impose discipline on the country along the line of Mussolini's Italy, and on the other, the staunch defenders of the republic, heir to the great revolution, which despite all its shortcomings had to be maintained and strengthened as the only bulwark against Fascism.

I had not paid much attention to the headlines in the newspapers, and the rumors among my classmates that the mass rally by the parties of the right and the veterans' associations against the government would be different from other street manifestations that had by now become routine. So on that grey winter day, as I walked down the Champs Elysées toward the Place de la Concorde on my almost daily evening foray after school, I soon realized that something out of the ordinary was in the making.

The Chamber of Deputies that stands across the Seine, facing the Place de la Concorde, had been convened to vote on the formation of a new government, an event that repeated itself with such frequency that I no longer paid much attention to it. I had read that the new candidate, a man of the political center who could only be elected with the support of the socialist party, had the support of Léon Blum, who probably at that very moment was addressing the assembled deputies.

Reaching the Rond Point, I found myself engulfed by a multitude that streamed in from all the side streets and pushed toward the Place de la Concorde, from where came the distant roar of an unleashed crowd. Did I hear gunshots?

I remembered my father's admonition: "Whenever you feel the crowd is on the verge of a riot, get out. There is nothing to stop it before it has vented its fury. It happened in Russia during the revolution, even in Turkey during a religious procession."

Turn back? Impossible! I was being pushed from behind by an inexorable force. Why turn back, am I a coward? I had heard many times at the Lycée that the passage into manhood is a good scuffle

with the police. As I looked around me at the rows upon rows of men from all classes of society—students, and phalanx formations of uniformed members of the different leagues, all covered by an ocean of tricolors—I suddenly felt the exhilaration of a man possessed by the spirit of the crowd when, emptied of all rational thought, he is caught in the centrifugal forces generated by a human mass thrown back into the primordial.

That mass of thousands of people was strangely silent, and little could be heard but the rhythmic cadence of footsteps. Not for long, though; as the crowd neared the Place de la Concorde it was suddenly hit by what sounded like the agonized howl of wounded animals. In an attempt to maintain its discipline like an army before battle, the crowd burst into the Marseillaise. To no avail; the crowd unleashed its fury and hurled itself forward into the large square. Shouts of "The police are firing on the people!" "Let's throw the deputies into the Seine!" "The military to power!" burst all around me. I was able to keep my composure with an element of thrill, only to freeze in terror when I heard near me, "Better Hitler than Léon Blum!"

A terror that brought me to my senses, for I knew this was not for me, that I had to get out. Hurled into the Place de la Conrcorde by a wave of howling, raging humanity gone insane, I saw no way of extricating myself, and for a moment felt I would be trapped and go under two tidal waves crashing in opposite directions, for like a sudden change of the tide I saw a mass of people running towards me, attempting to escape back into the Champs Elysées. At that moment my grandmother's assertion that the angel Gabriel watches over the children of Israel must have turned into reality, for the human current had carried me in its sway to the front of the Hotel Crillon, where I was able to find refuge behind one of its iron grills, and where, paralyzed by fear, I was saved from being crushed by the crowd that was now scattering in all directions.

Although night had fallen over Paris, the scene was illuminated by the glow of numerous burning cars and buses. It was a vision out of Dante's Inferno. The large square of the Place de la Concorde had been transformed into a huge Roman arena where thousands of men on foot and on horseback were locked in what seemed a battle to the finish. Mounted, steel-helmeted "gardes mobiles" (mounted police) were mercilessly slashing their sabres at the rioters, who with equal fury hurled massive objects including cobble stones, and violently struck at the legs of the mounts of their contenders with their

canes. Only when I heard the piercing howls of the horses sprawling on the ground did I realize that those canes had razors attached at their extremities. Forever stamped in my memory are the terror-stricken faces of those "gardes mobiles" being brought down by their stricken horses, while countless fists and canes were descending to reap vengeance on their defenseless bodies.

The square seemed littered with fallen bodies and many wounded were being carried away by their comrades. Sporadic shots could be heard. However, while one wave of rioters would be broken and flee in panic under the cavalry charge, time and again another would regroup and under the battle cry, "Death to the cops and the deputies!" throw itself at the cavalrymen.

It looked like the crowd was directing its efforts toward breaking the police defense guarding the Pont de la Concorde and storming the Chamber of Deputies on the other side of the Seine. The forces of order must have panicked, for suddenly I heard a volley coming from that direction and saw people falling near me. The cry went up, "The cops are shooting to kill!"

Do not panic, do not panic, I kept telling myself, remembering my father's admonition not to get trampled during a riot. I instinctively joined a retreating group into the Rue Royale from the corner of the Hotel Crillon, certain that by walking toward Madeleine Square and then into one of the Grands Boulevards I would find my way back to the refuge of the apartment in Neuilly. My hopes were soon dashed as, turning into the fashionable street, I witnessed a scene that dealt a dreadful blow to my image of France.

Another phalanx was marching in battle formation towards the Place de la Concorde, not like the earlier mob that had come down the Champs Elysées, but rows upon rows of mostly well-dressed war veterans, chests covered with decorations, carrying the fanions of their regiments and singing the Marseillaise with a fervor that could not have been less than that of the volunteers of the army of the Republic who, in 1793, had flocked to the borders to defend the Revolution against the massed armies of the crowned heads of Europe bent on its destruction.

These were the heroes of the Marne and Verdun, the fathers of my classmates, ready to storm not the Bastille like their forefathers to depose the monarchy, but the very symbol of the Republic, the National Assembly. Had they gone mad? I muttered in utter despair and confusion, as the tears streamed down my face. The endless squares marched on, for every regiment, city, and town of France

seemed to be present. To my further consternation, an equally stoic legion paraded in front of me, this time to the tune of the Internationale. The Communist war veterans had joined their comrades of the extreme right, those who advocated a fascist regime for France, in an attempt to overthrow the Republic.

The words of my father came back to my mind, telling me how the Communists in Germany, rather than ally themselves with the Socialists in order to stop the onslaught of the Nazis, had joined them in order to destroy the Weimar Republic. I had accused him of lying then, but now I saw it with my own eyes. Unable to walk against the swelling tide, I looked for a refuge, and when I heard the steel door of a Café right behind me swing open to let in some wounded men, I dashed in just in time to hear the door slam down behind me.

The Café on the Rue Royale became my refuge where, trapped interminable hours, I witnessed the unfolding of the battle on which hung the fate of the Republic and which raged throughout the night.

Petrified with anguish I stood behind the iron door that was opened at intervals to let in some wounded or let out others whenever an ambulance arrived, for the Café had been transformed into a first aid station, a Red Cross flag having been hung at its entrance.

It soon overflowed with wounded men, sitting on chairs or lying on the floor, filling the enclosed space with their groans and screams. A number of doctors had found their way into the Café and with improvised means were attempting to relieve the suffering around them. But they mainly established a priority as to the wounded to be carried away first by the few ambulances that managed to battle their way through the crowds.

I must have caught the attention of one of the doctors, who reproachfully shouted at me, "Pull out of it, young man, come and help!" Pretty soon I found myself giving water to some of the stricken men, and before I knew it I was helping to carry them into the Café and out to the ambulances.

As men came in bringing the wounded, rumors abounded. There were 40,000 men . . . 100,000 were taking part . . . twenty assaults had already been made against the barricade held by gendarmes, Republican Guards, and mounted police, but they were still holding out . . . there were many dead. At around eleven p.m. the news came in that 10,000 men were ready for the final assault on the Chamber of Deputies. This was confirmed by the deadly rattle of regular gunfire, and no more wounded could be taken in. Among the whispers and cries during those hours, I heard that the army would soon

march . . . that the decision had been made . . . that such and such a garrison had already revolted . . . that Marshal Pétain was the new leader. . . .

But the back of the attack had been broken, and the Army had not intervened at the side of the rioters. Finally the doctor nudged me, "Go home, young man, it is safe now. You have earned your first war medal."

As I walked across the Place de la Concorde, the fire still ablaze at the Ministry, the dead horses and burnt carcasses of buses all around me, I knew I had had my first glimpse of war, a ghost that would never abandon me. The cost: approximately 30 civilians killed and 1,000 wounded; the forces of order: 1 killed and more than 1,500 wounded. The greatest riot since the Commune in 1871. The Republic had been saved, but it was critically wounded.

When I attempted to rise from my bed the next morning, my chest was hit by a choking grip as if by one of those stray bullets of the night before; my legs would not carry me. The bronchial ailment that afflicted me during the Parisian winters had suddenly burst forth in one of those asthma attacks which, like the inexorable cycles of nature, would insert into the days and nights of my youth the spectre of terror. Hardly capable of taking any food, snatching moments of sleep which, rather than providing brief respite, would plunge me into the phantasmagorical realm of nightmares, and the endless waking hours as if stretching into eternity.

After those infernal cycles of three days and three nights would release me from their yoke and I could walk out into the broad avenue facing the Bois de Boulogne, I would stare at the heavens and the glory of creation all around me with the wonderment of a man who had struggled back into the lost memory of the Garden of Eden.

During those moments when life seemed about to deliver me into the clutches of the Angel of Death, it was only through the written word that I was able to gather the strength to repeal its embrace; the word took on the stature of my guardian angel, the link to life and the world outside the stifling confines of the four walls around me, through the incessant flow of books on my knees or on the mouth of one of the family, mostly my grandmother.

I would be sitting on my bed with crossed legs, over which rested a large pillow, the base for two long, thin arms that, like outstretched branches, deployed two open hands with long, bony fingers as the only support for a large head totally disproportionate to the emaciated, curved body; my gasping mouth struggling to take in a breath of

air at intervals that would take on the dimension of eternity; two bulging eyes focused on the book across the pillow, as if on the oblivion granted by the written word depended the survival of a curved shadow.

By that time I had already evolved from the historical fantasies of Alexandre Dumas, and had been projected full force into the political and social universe of Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, and other classics, which seemed to be directly linked to the events all around me.

Through Victor Hugo's narration of the years stretching all the way from the French Revolution, the Civil War in the Vendée, the Napoleonic era and the return of the Monarchy to the revolutions of 1838, 1848, and climaxing with the Paris Commune of 1871, there unfolded like a motion picture the establishment of the Republic and the endless struggle to preserve it, the social inequalities that persisted and the constant lapses of the nation into political, religious, and racial absolutism and ignorance.

Emile Zola's series of the Rougon-Macquart, *Le Débâcle*, and especially *J'Accuse*, the thundering pamphlet in defense of Dreyfus, projected in front of my eyes a vision of French history that gradually shed light on what I had witnessed at the Place de la Concorde. It had been the very climax of that thrust.

Not that I had totally abandoned my romantic view of France, for I was at an age when the Self desperately needs to identify with an all-embracing mystique. No, I was just at the beginning of a long process of slowly distinguishing illusion from reality, which despite the painful decades that were to follow, would only deepen my attachment and debt to the heritage of Republican France.

The interminable Cabinet changes of the Third Republic, the deepening economic crisis and continuous riots taking place in the streets of Paris, added to the news of the mounting persecution of Jews in Germany, the *putsch* of the fascist Heimwehr in Austria, and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, all in the face of the passivity of France and Great Britain, engulfed the apartment of Neuilly in an ever increasing mood of pessimism.

I was jolted out of that mood by the ominous events of 1936, the victory of the Front Populaire in France and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The world seemed to be filled with hope again; the battle lines were clearly defined, and I knew on what side I belonged. The vital forces of the French nation had rallied behind a real leader, none else but my hero Léon Blum, who would save the Republic and Europe from the forces that were threatening it.

Between April, when the French people had gone to the polls in record numbers to elect a majority of deputies of the parties of the center and the left, of which the Socialists were the strongest, until June when the government of the Front Populaire was formed, Paris was swept by powerful waves of euphoria bordering on veneration on one hand, and hate on the fringe of insanity on the other, all centered around the figure of Léon Blum, who single-handedly seemed to have made its victory possible.

Who really was this man, worshiped by one half of the nation and equally hated by the other? A tall, white-haired man, always erect, with piercing eyes blown out of proportion by thick lenses over a long nose under which a bushy moustache half covered an almost permanent sad smile. The figure and the features of a patrician who, with oustretched arms and a resounding voice, could galvanize those who fell under his spell; the vision of an ancient Prophet of Israel. He would strive to eradicate injustice and oppression from the face of the earth; after so many shattered expectations, was the world around me falling into place? Had the vision of history I had created not been an illusion after all?

The euphoria brought about by the election of the Front Populaire and its apotheosis that took place in the streets of Paris on July 14 of that year had relegated to oblivion all the hate that had been unleashed against Léon Blum and the Jews in general. Everything made sense. I felt I had grasped the meaning of history, and I was proud of being a Jew. Nevertheless, on that day there was a dark cloud on the horizon—or was it just the heaviness of a summer day? It turned out to be an ominous premonition, for just four days later the Spanish Civil War started.

When the news broke of the revolt of the Spanish generals in Morocco and of the uprising of the military garrisons in Andalusia and Catalonia to overthrow the Republic, followed by the occupation of Sevilla by the rebels and their defeat in Barcelona by the armed population, it was not surprising that my family and most of our friends reacted as if we were personally involved. A historical link, severed five centuries before, and kept alive in an atmosphere of nostalgia mixed with profound resentment against those who had taken away our Spain, our Sefarad, was all of a sudden reestablished.

To my grandmother the conflict that was rapidly developing into a civil war was not one of a legally constituted Republic on the one hand, and an attempt to impose a Spanish version of Italian Fascism and German Nazism on the other, but that of the descendants of

Ferdinand and Isabella, of Torquemada and his Inquisition, attempting to impose their yoke on the Spanish people as they had done to our forefathers of Sefarad in the past.

One young man of our circle even suggested that we Sephardic Jews should volunteer to fight in defense of the Republic, for the news was arriving that the air forces of Italy and Germany were already supporting the rebels and a large Italian expeditionary force was on its way, while thousands of volunteers were coming from all over Europe to defend the Spanish government against the open fascist onslaught. It was said at the Lycée that Paris was the center of mobilization; what were to become known as the International Brigades were being formed.

During the first days of the conflict, the Blum government openly vowed its support for the Spanish Republic. A newspaper of the right even published a list, which was supposed to be secret, of the armaments being prepared in France to be shipped across the Pyrénées.

In a state of feverish exaltation, I gathered my courage and announced at the dinner table that I had decided to go and fight for the Spanish Republic. I was after all both a Sephardic Jew and a Spanish citizen. An announcement that unleashed a tempest of emotion and recriminations I had seldom witnessed even in a family where only the most intimate feelings were kept to oneself.

After my mother and grandmother had mutually accused each other of having caused this disaster, my father put a stop to the discussion by declaring that he would never give his consent, since I was not yet of age and was afflicted by asthma, although he did respect my decision and courage.

My father's threat to stop me by force if necessary only made me more determined. I decided to try to find my way to Spain on my own and present myself there as a Spanish citizen, for although I could only obtain a passport with my father's authorization, I did have a French identity card stating that I was of Spanish nationality. After all, I did speak Ladino which I had been told was pure Castilian, although rather archaic.

All the volunteers were entering Spain either by rail or by boat departing from Marseille. It was common knowledge that every night train No. 77 left the Gare de Lyon from Paris, arriving the next morning in Perpignan, from where it was easy to cross the border.

Thus one evening, after a few weeks of hesitation, I packed my rucksack, put on my hiking clothes, told my father I was going on a

weekend excursion, and with my savings of a few hundred Francs in my pocket went off to catch train No. 77. My departure did not raise any concern, for since the emotional storm that had swept our family, I had no longer raised the subject and was confident that my parents were convinced I had given up the idea.

The long subway ride to the Gare de Lyon still stands in my memory, as if I had wished it would last forever and my destination would never be reached. I felt that the moment I stepped unto the train, my entire world would be obliterated and I would be entering the universe of the unknown. As I stared at the familiar faces in the metro, faces that had surrounded me during all those years in Paris, the world which I had so much hoped would be mine for the rest of my days, I was overwhelmed for the first time in my life with the panic of the individual snatched from his roots by inexorable forces over which he has no control.

Like a robot I walked through the huge railway station with multitudes of people rushing in all directions, until I found myself on the platform from which train No. 77 would depart, destination Perpignan. From there over the Pyrénées Mountains into Spain, into the unknown, perhaps to die. Death, or the Angel of Death, as my grandmother referred to it, was by now an almost familiar presence, for during the long vigils struggling for the breath of life I had felt the touch of its wings. This was different, though, for I would be seeking the encounter out of my own free will.

The train had not yet arrived, but the platform was crowded with men speaking languages whose meaning I could not grasp. I knew that many were speaking German, and yes, quite a number spoke English, which thanks to my mother's efforts I already spoke quite well. Even had I not understood their language I could have spotted them, for they kept aloof, as if their path was not identical to that of the rest of the crowd.

As I looked at the faces of the men around me, I realized that my sense of panic was gone. All of a sudden I felt in unison with the crowd, for each individual was on his way to participate in a war in defense of the Spanish Republic against the onslaught of Fascism, or whatever mask under which tyranny hid its face. I looked around me, attempting to guess who had struggled against the Nazis in Germany, had been with the anti-fascists in Italy, had opposed themselves to the antisemitism and iron-fist rule of the colonels in Poland, had stood fighting in the apartment complexes the Social Democrats had built for the working classes in Vienna, or had been massacred by

the militias of the Heimwehr under the command of Chancellor Dolfuss in his attempt to impose on Austria his own brand of Fascism. Or the Frenchmen who, by fighting to defeat Franco and his hordes, wanted to prevent France from falling under the yoke of the native brand of a *caudillo*, and who came to total one-third of the International Brigades. There were many Spaniards living in France, and as I found out later, many Jews—actually twenty percent of the foreign volunteers.

The reverie I had fallen into, relating the events that had taken place outside of France during the last few years to the features, gestures, and voices of human beings, had distracted me from the fact that the multitude had hurled itself into the train which had just tracked. By the time I found my way into a third-class carriage I could not find a seat, and had to resign myself to spend the long journey either standing in the long corridors or crouching in the solitude of a corner.

Nobody took any notice of me, for everyone seemed to be part of a group, centered around a nationality or a social class; those intellectuals who were not traveling second class formed a conspicuous group by themselves.

It was already autumn, and throughout the sleepless night on an empty stomach I felt the fever gradually creeping into my body, and the vise tightening my chest. In the early morning, when the train reached Perpignan, I hardly had enough breath to get out of the train and collapsed in the middle of the station. I was whisked off to the emergency station by a gendarme, where I was given an injection of adrenaline. The police, upon verifying that I was a minor, cabled my father who had me taken to a hospital. After three days I was on my way back to Paris, this time in the comfort of a second-class carriage. Thus ended my attempt at participating in the first battle of the terrible war that would gradually engulf most of the world in the years to come, which was the Spanish Civil War.

In retrospect, I wonder whether many of those who fell in defense of Madrid in 1936 as volunteers in the International Brigades, especially the Jews, were not better off than the survivors, whose final destiny would be Auschwitz. Destiny, however, willed it differently. Can a Jew, who through the long road of exile has slowly plodded his way back to the faith of his ancestors, not believe in destiny?

No mention of my failed escapade to fight in Spain was ever made by my family, but there seemed to be a silent reproach, for since that time my health deteriorated considerably, the asthma attacks repeat-

ing themselves more frequently, which prevented me from entering the Sorbonne. I could not fail to detect a change of attitude, however; I was now being treated like a man who had to be taken seriously, a silent recognition that I had won the respect of the family.

The ever longer periods I spent crouched on my large brass bed had become a refuge from the reality of a dreaded outside world. Did I feel rejected because I had not been able to participate in the struggle against Fascism in Spain? Maybe I had not tried hard enough, and just used my ailment as a cowardly excuse.

The family doctor advised my parents that a change of climate was recommended, and I was sent to a sanatorium in the vicinity of the beautiful city of Pau, at the foot of the Pyrénées, known for its mild climate. Far from the reality of Paris, engulfed in books and a newly found determination to be a witness to history rather than be crushed by it, I seemed to have become insulated from the full significance of the political events unfolding in rapid succession throughout Europe.

The epic defense of Madrid had brought a ray of hope to the Spanish Republic in 1937, but it was soon followed by the adherence of France and Great Britain to the non-intervention pact which stopped any supplies of arms to the legal government, while Germany and Italy blatantly increased their help to Franco, sealing the fate of the Republic. Although my admiration for Léon Blum increased over the years, I could never come to terms with the fact that my modern Prophet had held in his hands and relinquished the power to win the first battle against Fascism, and stop what later became an inexorable tide, the drift toward World War II.

In June of that year the government of the Front Populaire resigned in defeat, to be followed by an interminable succession of cabinets that not only closed its eyes in 1938 to the Anschluss but agreed, together with the notorious Mr. Chamberlain, to the dismantling of Czechoslovakia at the infamous Conference of Munich. Peace at the expense of territory, I remembered five decades later in Jerusalem.

By the beginning of 1939 my health had improved to the point where the doctor found me fit to enter the University after the summer vacation. Meanwhile, in rapid succession, the fall of Madrid had marked the victory of Generalissimo Franco and his hordes, and Czechoslovakia was invaded by the German army without France and England lifting a finger.

Soon after, my parents asked me to return to Paris, where my

father somberly called me aside to give me the news that the decision had been made to emigrate to Brazil. We would leave Europe, for it was his profound conviction that France and Great Britain had proved they did not have the will to stop the Nazi onslaught and that the rest of Europe would be overwhelmed. The Jews of Europe would be trapped and probably decimated, for he felt that Hitler meant what he said, as events since 1932 had shown.

It seemed that all the preparations had already been made, and we sailed for Brazil. Upon our arrival in Rio de Janeiro the news came that Germany had invaded Poland. This time France and Great Britain reacted; World War II had begun.

III.

THE LAND OF REFUGE

Brazil

Even in times of stress—and there were many—the family mood usually was a rather joyful one, permeated by a certain sense of tragedy, not to say melodrama, an expression of our Mediterranean or Levantine temperament, as it was often called, in a derogatory way. It was therefore difficult for me to understand the mood of despair that possessed both my mother and grandmother the moment we stepped on board the ship.

This mood did not contaminate me. I watched in wonderment as the vast expanse of ocean and sky gradually lost the mild azure of a European summer and, as we approached the equator, transformed itself into a panoply of blue not even matched by the brilliance of the Bosphorus as I remembered it. The vision that invaded me, and the ever increasing warmth that emanated from it, filled me with a joy bordering on ecstasy. The yoke under whose burden I had lived ever since the battle of the Place de la Concorde was beginning to loosen its grip.

The French luxury liner was a symbol of the Paris we had left behind, not only for the women of the family but also for me; Paradise Lost. When I told my grandmother that we were heading toward what must be the continuation of the exile and that we had better forget about the fleshpots of Egypt, I saw her crying for the first time. In an outburst of emotion she poured out her grievances, speaking to me no longer as to a child, but an adult who for the rest of her life, days of alienation and nostalgic longing, would become her main support. She questioned my father's insistence on going to a country peopled by savages and adventurers. She worried about

what kind of education my brothers and I would be able to get, and she confessed to me that all her friends had thought we were crazy. It was absurd to think that France would ever persecute the Jews, or to doubt that the French, together with the British, would defeat Germany.

My grandmother's observation about France and England being able to defeat the Germans reminded me of an event we had witnessed a few weeks before our departure, and which had almost brought a last-minute change of plans; it had even made my father waver for a moment. Maybe we were making a mistake and were being too hasty.

On that 14th of July, when even nature seemed to bestow on the city of Paris its greatest bounty, the might and glory of France paraded down the Champs Elysées covered in an ocean of tricolors in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Revolution.

A delirious multitude cheered the mechanized units of the army, tanks and heavy artillery of which the Germans apparently had no equal; the infantry, proud descendants of the heroes of the Marne and Verdun marching to the tune of "Somme et Meuse," the symbol of a citizens' army of 4 million that could be mobilized in a week; the colorful spectacle of all the regiments representing every part of an empire stretching across the globe; squadrons of fighters and bombers darkening the sky, all behind the protective steel and concrete belt of the Maginot Line. There could be no doubt that France would be the victor if Germany dared go any further. Perhaps Léon Blum had been right after all not to intervene in Spain to give the country time to re-arm.

On the grandstand, next to the President of the Republic, stood the King and Queen of the British Empire and the two little Princesses. How Paris glowed in the splendor of the royal visit, the living affirmation that the Entente Cordiale was indestructible.

My father's hesitation did not last long. Although the display of France's strength had made him waver for a moment, he intended to go ahead with our departure as planned. He considered allowing my younger brother and me to stay behind to continue our studies, but had to give up the idea in view of the violent reaction of the women of the family. It was bad enough that we had to move to the wilderness, but leaving two of the boys behind was unthinkable. Either the entire family would go or nobody.

Watching the might of the Republic, in which all my youthful romantic hopes had been placed, I not only had felt anger against my

father but shame. I was going to turn my back on it and flee, when I should stand firm and fight, like everybody else. The result of my confrontation with my father was that, after being reminded of the debacle of my Spanish escapade and the fact that I would never pass the medical exam for induction into the army, I resigned myself to my fate. Although I would not admit it, I had felt a certain amount of excitement before our departure, which developed into exhilaration as soon as the ship sailed. It was not only the explosion of sun and ocean; I was following in the footsteps of my forefathers, the great travelers of Sefarad, whose tales had filled the universe of my imagination.

During the two years of forced exile in Pau I had spent most of the time reading, when not walking in the adjacent beautiful woods of the Bas-Pyrénées. My father had provided me with a number of books on the life of the Jews in Medieval Spain, our Sephardic Golden Age, through which I had discovered that many tales of my youth were historical fact, among them the figure of Benjamin de Tudela, the greatest traveler of them all, who in the twelfth century had journeyed all across the known world as far as Persia.

I was particularly fascinated by the notion that among the Spanish and Portuguese navigators who sailed to discover the New World were many Marranos, Jews who had accepted baptism in order to escape the Expulsion, but remained secretly faithful to the religion of their birth. It was even hinted that Christopher Columbus had been a Marrano, and as I soon found out upon my arrival in Brazil, many Marranos, including his second-in-command, had accompanied the expedition of Pedro Alvares Cabral, who had discovered the land.

The very thought that among the first to land in Brazil were Sephardic Jews gave me a sense of identity with the country that would grant us its hospitality. Many Marranos had found a haven there, often returning openly to Judaism; when the Dutch took the northern part of the country from the Portuguese colonizers during the seventeenth century they were followed by many Portuguese and Spanish Jews who had taken refuge in Holland, especially Amsterdam. Among them were shareholders of the Dutch West Indies Company, founded to develop trade with those lands of the New World that were taken by force of arms from the competing powers of Spain, Portugal, France, and England. Thus, among the Dutch conquerors of the north of Brazil were many Sephardic Jews who, as I was to discover in later years, had established the first sugar mills and tobacco plantations.

During the long voyage toward the new land, I listened with fascination about how my father during his business trips to Holland had developed friendships with some of the descendants of the old Marrano families, with names such as Carvalho, Pinto, etc., now pillars of the Jewish community. They would tell him about the oral tradition of forefathers who had sailed with the Dutch to the cities of Recife and Bahia. Some were never heard from again, as they had reverted to Christianity after the Inquisition caught up with them when the Portuguese reconquered the land; others once more took the road of exile, a few to find their way to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, the first Jewish settlers of what is now New York.

As we approached the coast of Brazil, it seemed that the mood of despair, in which my mother and grandmother had been engulfed since our departure, was gradually lifting. An obvious sign was the increasing intimacy they were developing with many of our fellow passengers, especially the numerous Argentinian and Brazilian ladies returning from their yearly vacation in Europe. There were also the wives of French and British businessmen representing their trading companies, with whom a good rapport was established when it was revealed by our fluent French that we had lived in Paris, and among the more reserved English, that my mother had been born in London. These new friendships seemed to confirm my father's reassurance that Brazil was not inhabited only by savages. Nevertheless, the suspicion lingered on that our first-class traveling companions might not be quite representative of the inhabitants of the land.

The Portuguese spoken by the Brazilians had a sing-song quality that fascinated me, and by the time we reached Rio de Janeiro I had become quite familiar with it. To my sorrow in later days, however, our traditional Ladino fell into oblivion in the process of expressing myself in Portuguese; and when later I mastered Spanish, I could no longer differentiate one from the other.

At first it was taken for granted that we were French; however, when my mother and grandmother inadvertently lapsed into Ladino, it was revealed that we were of Spanish nationality. And after a certain degree of intimacy had been reached with the Brazilian passengers sitting at our table, my grandmother could no longer hold back her Sephardic pride and ventured to say that we were Spanish Jews. Accustomed to certain antisemitic undertones of much of the Parisian bourgeoisie, I was afraid of a similar attitude on the part of our table companions, most likely followed by a slight cooling toward us; this might have destroyed the ray of hope the women of the family

were beginning to develop in regard to the land of our destination.

To their obvious delight and my reassurance, this revelation brought about glances of admiration and exclamations of praise; this explained why we were so cultured and spoke so many languages, as did some of the best families in Brazil who had Jewish ancestors, many of them being descendants of the first colonizers of the country. These members of the old oligarchy, of coffee and sugar plantation families, had clearly not been infected by the image of the Jew projected by Nazi Germany, and still wore their Jewish ancestry like a badge of honor. I was rather perplexed. Maybe my father was right and Brazil was another world, one that would provide his sons with an existence of greater freedom.

Imbued with the urge that had first set me on the path to discover the city of Paris, the compulsive part of my being that would attempt to grasp the essence and secrets of every nook and cranny of the cities I was to visit and live in, I was determined to discover the mysteries hidden in the vessel's iron universe.

My forays into the city of Paris had been mostly limited to its centers of art and learning as well as those of the roots of its historical development, the splendor of the city; I had never seen the city's other face, the gruesome working class districts and the drab, lower middle-class neighborhoods. The political discussions at the Lycée, and the books of Victor Hugo and Emile Zola had projected an image of struggling, dejected masses, the majority of humanity. I had intellectualized their saga and established a symbiosis with that of the persecution and suffering of the Jewish people and of the nations under the yoke of Fascism, however little I had been exposed to its reality. That I might be personally affected had never occurred to me, as the socio-economic strata in which I lived seemed immutable.

Only during the Battle of the Place de la Concorde and on train No. 77 to Perpignan had I glimpsed the possibility that the other world might engulf me, and I had felt fear of being dragged down and lost in the anonymity and poverty of a struggling humanity and in the horrors of war. However, there had been the return to the warmth, security, and love permeating our residence in the beautiful district of Neuilly, and now my ivory tower had been transplanted onto a luxury liner.

My father took me along to the second class to visit one of his business acquaintances from Germany, a Jew who had obtained for himself and his family one of the prized Brazilian visas. Although the conversation was carried on in German, which my father spoke flu-

ently, I was able to gather that many passengers were German and Austrian refugees, whose destination was either Brazil or Argentina. The mood was grim, for many who had been part of the middle and upper-middle class in their country had all their properties confiscated by the Nazis and had been allowed to take only their personal belongings after purchasing a second-class ticket. Some would be met by relatives at their destination, but the rest would be dependent on Jewish welfare organizations from the start.

They seemed to be a tightly knit group, and my father's friend introduced me to some of the young men who spoke English or French and became my companions throughout the voyage. I was delighted at discovering in them an intellectual and cultural background very similar to mine.

My newly found friends seemed to look upon Spanish Jews as an aristocracy, the first outside confirmation of my grandmother's arrogant view; especially the old families of Hamburg that had been in Germany for centuries but still considered themselves Sephardim. The fact that we were traveling on Spanish passports was no surprise to them, as they had heard of Sephardic Jews who had regained their Spanish nationality in a similar way and were thus able to find a haven in that country, apparently not intimidated by the *herem*.

The subject of our Spanish passports had been quite a worry to my father during the trip, which he revealed to us only after our safe arrival in Brazil. They had been issued by the Consulate of the Spanish Republic, and since its defeat both France and Brazil had recognized the nationalist government of General Franco. The sympathetic French authorities had still accepted our passports upon embarcation, but he did not know what the attitude of the Brazilian authorities would be.

A good part of my days was spent with my new companions, who took me along to visit the third class, as they had discovered among its passengers several Republican veterans of the Spanish Civil War, as well as Jews, mostly from Poland. After walking down narrow iron stairs and along endless corridors, what from afar looked like amorphous shapes took on the form of human beings. My instinctive reaction was to run back to the refuge of my first-class ivory tower rather than look into the face of that other Europe.

The impulse to turn tail and run when under the first impact of misery and suffering, and the iron grip that clutched at my lungs and paralyzed my body was but the refusal to come to terms with the reality of the human condition, as I eventually came to realize. Hav-

ing found refuge in physical pain, after suffering defeat at the hands of reality both at the Battle of the Place de la Concorde and on my way to the Spanish Civil War, I had made the firm decision no longer to retreat in the face of adversity. Armed with the awareness that this was the first opportunity to test my free will, I immersed myself into the mass of the rejected and oppressed of the old continent.

I had seen poor people before, for there were plenty in Paris even in the *beaux quartiers* (fashionable districts), and the memory of the great masses of Constantinople was still vivid in my mind—but never such abject misery. It was the poverty of the landless peasants of Spain, Portugal, Italy, Central, and Eastern Europe, the emaciated and somber figures of industrial workers hopelessly unemployed as the result of the great depression.

Worst of all, there were Jews whom I would not have recognized but for my German friend, who could understand Yiddish and told me they came from Poland. Never had I seen poor Jews in such a state of dejection. How was it possible? I had always been told that Jews took care of their own; the women of the family always seemed involved in organizations to help poor Jews. I could now better understand the cry from the heart that said, "To live like a King in France."

We eventually found our way to the open deck at the stern of the vessel, which was conveniently hidden from the view of the first class, for it was located on a level lower than the open decks of the second class; it was the only access to the surface for the class of the dejected, so crowded together there was not even room for the children to run.

As I elbowed my way through the packed deck, fear once more took possession of me. All these people who were headed toward the Promised Land—what would they find? How would they make a living? What kind of society would it be? These people and those of the first class were a world apart. Where would I stand in the midst of such inequalities? Was it not one of the reasons we were leaving Europe?

To my surprise, I quickly regained my composure. It must have been the first exercise of my free will in the face of another possible retreat. Suddenly I understood the scene of the exodus which we retold every year at Passover: On the way to the Promised Land, the Land of Redemption, do not forget that you were once slaves in Egypt. It was the real significance of our ancient Jewish festival, and it applied to all of humanity. What did my father once say that

caused such a revolt in me? That the Jews were the creators of universalism. Maybe he was right after all. As my grandmother had always maintained, the Exodus was not yet over. I felt a profound pity for her.

After the ship passed the equator there was a distinct change, as if the shades of blue of ocean and sky had become more intense. For days there was not a cloud in the sky, and the luminosity that enveloped us only uncovered its other facet under the mantle of the night, when the dark heavens were lit up by millions of stars surrounding the constellation of the Southern Cross.

The exhilaration of those days and nights was transformed into anxiety mixed with fascination when the vessel docked at the port of the northeastern Brazilian city of Recife. As we toured the narrow streets of the old baroque city, still slumbering in what appeared to be its 18th-century colonial past, I could hear my grandmother angrily muttering to herself that it was worse than Constantinople, which at least was at the tip of Europe and itself an old civilization.

We were in the tropics, and not even the beauty of the landscape and its profusion of baroque churches and buildings could distract us from the poverty of the steaming masses around us. An all-pervading stench of decay emanated from the swamp on which the city had been built, mixed with that of the garbage littering the streets. And of course, heat we had never felt before, that made the perspiration-soaked clothes stick to the skin as if they were part of it.

Notwithstanding the anxiety projected by my parents, I was fascinated by the vision of this New World, especially as we drove alongside the white sand of palm-covered beaches, and most of all by the beauty of the deep blue ocean and sky, the equal of which I would never find anywhere else.

The following three days, until the vessel called at the next port, had better not be remembered, for whenever I saw my mother and grandmother at meal time, they showed traces of prolonged weeping, while my father withdrew into total silence.

The city of São Paulo, located inland on a plateau, where we arrived after a two-hour train ride from the port of Santos, was a totally different world, which miraculously lifted the mantle of despair from the shoulders of my parents. The bustling center of the city was crowded with elegantly dressed people, its modern architecture a familiar and reassuring sight. My father commented that it was very much like Milano; many of its inhabitants who had emigrated from Italy called it La Piccola Italia (Little Italy), or the largest Ital-

ian city after Rome. And the air was cool, a temperate climate.

As we were driving along the fashionable residential districts with their luxurious houses, some like Mediterranean villas, on both sides of broad avenues, my father explained that São Paulo was the industrial center of the country, and those were the homes of the people who had made good. Brazil was after all a continent, with its accompanying diversity.

This diversity was once more evident when, after sailing overnight, the ship approached the bay of Rio de Janeiro at dawn. Apart from a few sailors totally oblivious to the unfolding spectacle, I was practically alone on the upper deck of the vessel when the sun rose over the horizon. It cast a shade of bluish-purple light over a series of sharp mountain peaks that seemed to emerge out of the ocean, separated only by a gently descending stretch of dark green vegetation, at whose feet stood rows of apartment buildings and houses. At its rim, glimmering like a diamond necklace, was the whiteness of its beaches, all enveloped by the deep blue of a firmament that had set my fantasy afire ever since crossing the equator.

It was a universe of lights and colors I would never have thought possible in the wildest flight of my imagination, however deeply rooted I was in generations conditioned by Mediterranean brilliance. It lacked one element, though: the gentleness of the sea of my ancestors. The intensity of its colors expressed a certain harshness. Mountains, forests, ocean, all in one sweep; my encounter with a tropical civilization. And the granite mass of the Sugar Loaf standing guard at the narrow entrance to Guanabara Bay cast a gigantic shadow, as if wishing to engulf us in its hospitable embrace.

Was this Paradise Regained? I asked myself, as we disembarked at the port impregnated with the scent of coffee, and drove along a broad avenue shaded by magnificent trees and lined with impressive buildings, and an Opera House very similar to the one in Paris, although on a smaller scale. As we drove through beautiful residential districts surrounded by luscious green vegetation and the exotic shape of mountains almost in their backyards, my parents visibly relaxed. When we entered the hotel suite equal to anything we had known in Nice or Cannes, and looked out onto the splendor of Copacabana beach, it was as if a weight had been lifted from my grandmother, who allowed in a rare expression of approval that her son-in-law might have been right after all in bringing us to that beautiful city.

It was not long before we moved into a lovely apartment facing

the beach, and were soon served by a maid and a cook who the ladies of the family agreed were good-natured and easy to get along with; better than our Armenian and Greek servants in Constantinople, not to speak of their Parisian counterparts.

My father soon found an office and set himself up in business; while my eldest brother would continue working with him, the youngest and I would enter University the following year in March, after the summer vacation. Meanwhile, we would take private lessons in Portuguese, where our Ladino proved to be of great help.

There was a large, dark cloud on the horizon, though—World War II had started. The explosion of the European conflict did not hit me with the force I had imagined. Whether it was the voyage across the Atlantic, or the new universe of bright colors and sharp forms under whose spell I had fallen, I had the sensation that the city of Rio de Janeiro was not part of the world I had left behind.

With hedonistic frenzy I threw myself into the embrace of sun and ocean as if my emaciated body, starved by years of Parisian greyness, could not absorb enough of it. From the start I set out to conquer the mysteries of this Garden of Eden.

In distinction to Paris, which to me stands as the greatest monument to the creativity of civilization, the city of Rio, despite the harmonious blending of its colonial past with modern architecture, was overshadowed by the splendor of nature. The climate, which according to its inhabitants consisted of only two seasons, nine months of spring and three months of hell, enabled me year round to jump out of bed at the first sign of dawn, to rush across the street to the wide stretch of soft, white sand for my daily ritual with the rising sun, the long walk along the beach climaxed by the embracing coolness of the Atlantic surf.

The months passed by as if in a dream, while Poland was overwhelmed by the Teutonic juggernaut and the Western front between France and Germany drifted into the lethargy of the phony war. I tried to volunteer at the French and British Consulates only to be told, not without a touch of irony, that they did not accept foreign volunteers, which only served to distance me further from the war and the old continent. With the increasing lure of the tropics and its people, who seemed very gentle and devoid of prejudice, I was beginning to wonder whether the mystique of Europe was not just rooted in pomp and arrogance. Maybe it was a confirmation of what my father had implied, the reason for coming to the New World.

Our newly found haven did have other dark clouds too. Due to

the war, my father's funds in France had been blocked and could not be released, which undermined his business plans. Merchandise had been purchased and was to be shipped on a British vessel, and there was disturbing news of the deadly activity of German submarines in the Atlantic. Besides, my father's health seemed to be deteriorating. Despite his incessant activity and self-assurance, which in my eyes made him look like a pillar of strength, he had the aspect of a frail man. For the first time I heard him complain about stomach pains; there were echoes of visits to the doctor and a special diet prepared for him. I did not really worry, though, as to me he was immortal.

As the end of the year approached and we entered summer, the three months of hell with temperatures reaching 115 degrees F, the heat became unbearable for the women of the family, and a bungalow was rented in the temperate mountain resort of Petropolis near Rio, where the upper-class Brazilians and well-off foreigners spent the summer, as well as some European refugees, among them Stephan Zweig.

For me life continued to unfold like a dream. I had refused to seek refuge in our mountain haven, for I could not get enough of the warmth of the sun and the touch of the ocean surf, and under their impact my body seemed to expand. Asthma was gradually becoming something of the past; I was beginning to free myself from its yoke.

Since my earliest memory of the house on the Hill of Pera, I had been conditioned to a universe reflected in a verbal projection of a structured mythological or real past, which set the course of my life. Now I was liberating myself from the forces that had always held me in their sway; was I casting off the burden of history, of tradition—all the elements that predetermine for a man the path of his existence?

In retrospect, it was not really a liberation, it was a process of metamorphosis which would enable me to function on a different level of human existence. Actually, I was escaping from one yoke into another. While the forces that had so far conditioned my life had been fashioned by man, this time I was being projected into a universe still under the control of nature, a part of creation not yet under the dominion of man.

Sun, water, and wind, three elements that seemed to encompass the entire structure of my newly found universe. I had never really been aware of them before. They had been part of the climate, the weather, not forces in their own right. They now gave me a feeling of well-being and bliss never experienced before, but also a sense of

power that reflected itself in an elementary form of dominion over myself, over my own body; an awareness of not being overwhelmed by nature and its splendor, but being in harmony with it.

All those years exploring the alleys and avenues of the city of Paris, trying to come to the core of the secret of its history, had only cast on me the shadow and the memory of its monuments of stone and gravel reflecting the genius and the labor of men. Those were the faces of history, but did they reflect its soul? The soul, the motivation for the building of all these symbols. Was I now putting my finger on its kernel, right in the midst of nature's creations?

For the first few months my body frantically set out to absorb every bit of nature's endowments, as if my very life depended on it not just for its survival, but for the quest as to man's destiny and purpose in this world. As time passed, I became more daring, setting out for one of the deserted beaches on the outskirts of Rio, and from sunrise to sunset I would trudge in rhythmic cadence along the endless stretches of shimmering white sand, with the immensity of the Atlantic ocean on one side and the boundless greens of the vegetation on the other, at the feet of mountain peaks so near the ocean as if they had sprung up overnight. During those years hardly a soul crossed my path; sometimes a random fishermen's village with emaciated men and women and undernourished, vermin-ridden children with swollen bellies, just a reminder that all was not well in paradise.

Claude Lévi-Strauss had written about the special relationship between men and nature in Brazil, which could not be compared with any other civilization. Given time, what actually would emerge might be just as sophisticated as anything the world had seen before. One phrase, however, had puzzled me when he referred to the land as *Les Tristes Tropiques* (The Sad Tropics). Faced with nature in all its beauty and glory, side by side with human beings in an utter state of dejection in which lived a large part of the population, I was beginning to grasp the significance of his characterization. There were the rich and the poor with nothing in between.

The lure of nature was not limited to the coast; the long range of mountains that ran almost parallel to the shore increasingly haunted my imagination, although it also presented a threat and fear of getting to know the other side of Brazil. The large cities of the country apparently were only connected by means of navigation along the coast. Its two largest cities, Rio de Janeiro, the capital, and São Paulo, its industrial center, were linked by a railroad—to travel on it could take on the proportion of a nightmare—and a single road,

which at that time was only partially paved. What lay inland, beyond the majestic mountain range destined to hide it from the eyes of the intruder?

Gradually I ventured to scale the heights, to reach the top of the peaks from where I would better be able to grasp the full scope of the land under whose spell I had fallen. A return to the womb, or the revelation of the beginning of all things?

Rio de Janeiro, dotted with pearls of baroque churches that blended with the countless skyscrapers beginning to mushroom throughout the city, created the feeling that an entire century had been thrust into oblivion. Here were the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, living memorial of a colonial past, side by side with the architecture of the future, as if the nineteenth century had not existed at all. Why had an entire century bypassed a continent striving to become a nation—was it the cause of its imbalance, or the source of its blessing?

The mountain range encircling the city like a necklace that protected it from the untamed jungle across the continent, is dominated by the gigantic Gavea Rock. The cloak-draped, awesomely majestic granite figure, from which protrudes a head that would have done justice to Rodin's bust of Dante Alighieri, is the symbol that gives the city an aura of beauty and mystery. The Head of the Emperor, as it is known, could have been carved out by the ancient Phoenicians at the time the hands of men were shaping the great pyramids of Egypt, or even by the inhabitants of the mythical continent of Atlantis before it was engulfed by the oceans, as some say. One thing is sure, its presence from time immemorial encompasses the entire city in its glance. No one can escape the embrace of its eternity.

One by one the peaks surrounding the city were scaled by the lonely wanderer I had become. In a very timid way at first, focusing on the smaller and less threatening of the rock formations, afraid that too daring an assault might bring about the revenge of the very forces I was attempting to conquer. Was there a correlation between the awesome products of nature and the invisible claw that had gripped my lungs to prevent the passage of the life flow? Can one challenge with impunity the forces one does not understand, even if the purpose in confronting them is to try to place them in the order of things? Could man be called God's greatest creation otherwise?

On narrow trails, machete in hand, often opening paths never trodden by man, and filled with the energy bestowed upon me by the grace of ocean, wind, and sun, I would reach the top of innumerable peaks, to stare in a state of exhausted exhilaration at the vastness

and glory with which nature had endowed the land.

Whatever beauty unfolded before my eyes upon reaching a summit, the urge at the bottom of my soul was always focused on another challenge: to conquer Gavea mountain. To stand on its crown, the Head of the Emperor, as if under the compulsion to extricate the mystery from its countenance. Whatever high peak I stood on was always overshadowed by the presence of what to me appeared the greatest work of nature's creation.

When I finally gathered the courage to challenge it and stood on its summit, I had reached the highest point where my feet could carry me. The sensation of awe that possessed me was manyfold. The realization that I had finally achieved my long-planned assault gave me a sense of comfort, but it was far more than that. It was a sense of communion, a climax of realizing my own place in the scheme of things. Nature had not been an obstacle—on the very contrary. By responding to my approach, it had given me the consciousness of a harmony that had been established between us. Man and nature were companions in whatever scheme the Creator had had in mind when He fashioned the earth. Countless times while scaling the slopes of granite the narrative of the Book of Genesis, so often read to me by my grandmother, had come to my mind from the earliest dawn of my memory.

At my feet, reduced to a more modest extension, lay the city of Rio de Janeiro, hemmed in on one side by the immense blue of the Atlantic Ocean and on the other by the lush green vegetation and distant mountain ranges that reached into a continent on whose soil much was virgin to the footprint of man. The harmony I felt was climaxed by the awareness of my solitude that put me beyond the reach of humanity, as if I were outside the grasp of its folly.

Why should works of stone fashioned by the hands of man, the monuments to its vanity, weigh more heavily in the scale of things than the handicraft of the Creator? This mountain top on which I was standing, its head thrust into the infinity of the cosmos, seemed to be telling me that I was not under its dominion, that I should be careful not to make an idol of it. Neither should I allow the monuments of stone to intimidate me, but only listen to their voices to learn the mistakes of the past and its achievements, to set the course of the future. Perhaps it was already too late for Europe, but on this new continent, who knows, if man has learned the lessons of the past. . . .

The climb had been an arduous one, but by then I was familiar to

the point of intimacy with the rather dense jungle that surrounded the narrow trail at its base and wound upwards along most of its slope to funnel into a long stretch of chimneys and crevasses until the top was reached. There was one element, however, of which I was and remain to this day in total dread: the creatures who by biblical injunction had been condemned to crawl on the ground until the end of time, namely the snake, of which the jungle abounds.

In retrospect, I often have the suspicion that rather than having been intimidated by the immensity and awesome quality of the nature I wanted to conquer, it was the fear of the snake that set me on my task in such a cautious way. Fear was the sign that all was not well in that Garden of Eden onto whose shores I had been cast, rejected by a war-torn continent.

Yes, I had come face to face with the crawling creatures and learned to come to terms with them. The visceral fear never left me, but the awesome quality, the metaphysical dimension transmitted to me by the generations, disappeared with time. Just as I had to learn the ways and moods of the ocean and its tide, the message of the winds, the voice of the jungle, and the wisdom of its creatures, I came to know the ways and habits of the accursed species. Snakes would never strike unless they felt threatened, more than one could say about man, so they kept away from the paths—sheer instinct of survival?

On that flat mountain top stretching toward the heavens, where I sat for many hours and which became a frequent place of refuge whenever I longed for an understanding that the company of men could not provide, started the process in which legend and myth gradually were transformed into a reality of history. The harmony that filled me when I reached the summit of Gavea Rock, and the sense of companionship with nature, that would only increase in scope as the decades unfolded, gave me the awareness of my physical place in the world, but it was the universe of legends that filled me with its life force.

The biblical narratives, family tales, festivals I had been exposed to from the beginning of my memory had created in me the consciousness of belonging to a very specific people, far more than a religion, that had provided the world with the basis of its ethical foundation. Having been imbued with the spirit of France's republican tradition rooted in its Revolution, I had the vision that these two historical currents would eventually bring about the redemption of man and society.

That we, the Jews, insisted on retaining the concept of a God, I had come to accept as an almost folkloric tradition, somewhat different from the gods of other nations. After all, He had been directly involved in the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery, while the church in Europe had always been allied with the absolute powers, the European monarchies, rather like the priestly class in Egypt.

The Bible was but the history of the Jewish people striving to build a nation under the yoke of the Commandments, whose aim was the freedom and dignity of man. Purely historical and sociological thrusts, in which the concept of a deity had to be introduced by the wise men who were the Prophets of Israel, the greatest being Moses, who in the context of their time could be considered as the forerunners of the French Encyclopedists, who had made the Revolution of 1789 possible. That there should have been any metaphysical foundation to these purely historical facts was something I could not accept.

As to the family kabbalist and the tales surrounding his peers of ancient Sefarad and of Safed, who had attempted to grasp the order of the cosmos established by an all-powerful God so as to better understand man's task on this planet, I was proud of them. Although I considered myself a rationalist steeped in the concepts of the French Enlightenment, I was also conditioned by the universe of my ancestors. Romanticism and tribal loyalty apart, there remained a part of my rational being that told me that the mystique surrounding the family kabbalist and what he stood for should not be dismissed; in some way and at some time, it all would fall into its proper place.

This was the period when, as if out of nowhere, I came upon a book by a German Jew, Gershom Scholem, a professor of mathematics turned professor of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which created in me an explosion just as powerful as the symbiosis between heaven and earth envisioned from the top of Gavea. The Kabbalah, so much part of the memory of Sefarad, burst forth into my rational universe amidst the contemplation and solitude of the ocean, the mountains, and tropical vegetation surrounding Rio.

My grandmother had been right. She was the embodiment of an oral tradition passed on from generation to generation. Everything around us did reflect the order of the universe established by an almighty Creator, the pattern on which man was attempting to build the world in accordance with the free will that had been bestowed upon him by God. Call it by that name, short of something that could express it better. And who, despite the limitation of the lan-

guage at their disposal, had best grasped this? The kabbalists of Provence, Gerona, and Safed. And the greatest among them, in accordance with Professor Scholem himself, was none else but the family kabbalist!

That was the setting where the foundation was established on which I would try to situate myself in the order of things as a human being. A symbiosis between the particular and the universal.

As far as the settling of our family into the new land was concerned, however, events took a catastrophic turn. All of my father's business plans collapsed at the time of the French debacle. He had known that a terrible war was inevitable, but had not lost confidence in the eventual defeat of Germany; that day came too late for him. We were left penniless from one moment to another, with my father falling prey to a vicious ailment that gripped his digestive system and rapidly took him to his grave after atrocious suffering.

My mother's British upbringing and education served her in good stead, for she made the decision to give English lessons to help support the family. My plans to enter the University to study history had to be forgotten in the face of the necessity to survive. I would go to work like my eldest brother, but the youngest would have to be put through University to study engineering in view of his great ability in mathematics, the right profession for a country that was beginning to industrialize.

What could a young man with no inclination toward business or mechanical aptitudes do in order to earn a living? I had one skill, though, which would open my way toward a career I never dreamt of: my knowledge of English. My father, although it was not part of the seven languages he spoke, had felt since the end of World War I that English would become the dominant language, substituting for French and German, and it was essential his sons became fluent in it.

French was the cultural language of the country, but not of much value in the industrial explosion that was occurring in Brazil. With my knowledge of Ladino I had soon become proficient in Portuguese, and to my surprise it was not long before I was employed as a bilingual correspondent at the Brazilian subsidiary of the largest British steel producers bearing a name I was familiar with and which greatly impressed my family: Balfour. The company was named after, and the property of, the family of the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs who in 1917 had signed the declaration committing Great Britain to establish a National Jewish Home in Palestine, once that province had been liberated from the Ottoman Empire.

Strange, the destiny of the Jew and the extent to which he is the product of the generations that preceded him, whatever the shores onto which destiny might cast him. To think that hardly a year earlier I had thought to be totally imbued with the spirit of Western culture, whose kernel was Paris, and convinced I would spend the rest of my days in the realm of history! Now I found myself on a still largely virgin continent, embarking on a career that would lead me in the footsteps of my father and grandfather, not to speak of my great-grandfather, Don Abraham Kisapshouglu, founder of the trading dynasty, which apparently in the Greek-Levantine jargon signified "King of the Metals." Just a coincidence, I sometimes wonder?

During that period, the generation of immigrants of which I was part had no options in the choice of a career. Survival was finding employment, without any regard as to whether it fitted one's background or previous aspirations. In a country in dire need of their skills, doctors would have to go back to medical school for at least five years to practice their profession, attorneys often became insurance brokers, ladies and *boulevardiers* opened boarding houses for their fellow refugees. The direst lot was that of intellectuals and writers, and their only hope was to obtain one of the coveted quotas for immigration to the United states, for which they often had to wait years. Some, not being able to come to terms with the New World, like Stefan Zweig, committed suicide, but that was rare.

Under the circumstances, I considered myself very lucky to have found such employment, although not for a moment did I believe I would ever have the qualifications to pursue a career in the steel industry. Being a correspondent would do for the time being, as the salary was quite decent in relation to the low cost of living and would contribute a good share to the expenses of the family. As to the future, I could only look at it with trepidation.

As a historian, either as a teacher or a writer, I had visualized following in the footsteps of generations of rabbis. However, to my surprise, my first job revealed that I had inherited from the traders among my forefathers some of their mercantile skills. After a brief period of apprenticeship, the Englishman in charge of the firm detected in the strange young Jew, whom he was at a loss to classify within any of the categories his upbringing had accustomed him to, elements of the trader essential toward maintaining for His Majesty's Steel Industry its God-given share of such a potential market, especially in the face of the aggressiveness of the German steel barons of the Ruhr; I was made a salesman.

Although heavily burdened with grief at the premature death of the head of the family, we all managed to rise to the occasion. The fame of my mother as an English teacher spread throughout the affluent neighborhoods, and soon she had more pupils than she could handle. Her earnings, added to those of my eldest brother and myself, were sufficient to retain the same flat rented by my father and an identical standard of living. Even my grandmother contributed her share by teaching our cook the intricacies of French/Sephardic cuisine, and often, when necessary, by standing at the stove herself.

Shortly after we arrived in Brazil, my father had sent for my mother's brother and younger sister, and we were also joined by one of my father's brothers. Although my grandmother could not come to terms with having had to leave Europe, at least her immediate family was reunited. Those who had remained in France either joined the underground Resistance movement or were exterminated in the Nazi concentration camps. The rest of our family, trapped at the start of the war in Bulgaria, later an ally of the Third Reich, managed to survive and emigrated to Israel.

Soon, however, an event occurred which brought my grandmother a great amount of pain. My mother, a women of beauty in the best tradition of many of the ladies of the *buenas familias*, was married again. To an Englishman, which was not surprising, but not a Jew. Although he was a good man of distinguished bearing and I did not share my grandmother's prejudice, I came to resent him profoundly; not only was there the pretense of filling the vacuum left by the premature death of a father, but also the introduction into our family of elements belonging to a universe of values and attitudes that radically broke a certain pattern of life taken for granted.

Being of Anglo-Saxon upbringing, my stepfather preserved a certain decorum in any situation, whatever his sentiments and emotions might be, to which my mother vainly attempted to adjust. As far back as I could remember, despite constant discussions and quarrels, our family was permeated with expressions of emotion and warmth, which obviously were not part of his world. In retrospect, it seems that the best definition was the phrase in which my grandmother ever so often would express her anguish: "Ils n'ont pas de coeur" (They have no heart). The plural of the phrase was due to the fact that soon after my mother, her younger sister also married an Englishman.

Whatever problems we might have had, and they were many, mainly due to the diverse forms of assimilation to which the family

fell victim, confirming the wisdom of our Sages that immigration brings dispersion, we considered ourselves extremely lucky. We had little to complain of in comparison to many of the Jewish immigrants who had reached the shores of the New World, not to speak of those who had stayed behind, now trapped in Nazi-dominated Europe.

The war years passed on, at first with the constant news of continuous disasters: the fall of France, the blockade of Britain, the onslaught on the Soviet Union, making it look as though a German victory was inevitable. However conscious I was of the unfolding of events and the anguish that possessed us, the atmosphere in which we lived gave the war an unreal quality, as if it were taking place on another planet. How could I juxtapose the world of beauty and harmony in which I lived with the news printed daily in black and white in the newspapers, or the reports on the BBC from London? Worst of all, with the kind of life I lived and the manner in which I discovered and affirmed myself in this New World of Brazil, those years were happy ones for me. How can a man who in the context of history came to see himself as a survivor, morally come to terms with such a contradiction?

At the risk of blatant ungratefulness toward the land in which we had found a haven, it is imperative to mention the kindness, gentleness, and humanity of the Brazilian people, or to be more precise in a country of such vastness with all its ethnic and racial variety, of the cariocas, the inhabitants of Rio and especially of its women. Its women! As one very wise rabbi, just arrived from Europe, ventured to say, "The greatest obstacle to the survival of Judaism in this country is the beauty and charm of the Brazilian woman." Could there be anything more perfect since the Garden of Eden, the Lost Paradise?

Looking back upon the fratricidal conflicts that had filled Europe with graves, the purges in the Soviet Union, the advent of the Nazis climaxing in the conflict in which my own people, the Jews, were being targeted as the main victims, I felt sure that Brazil had been blessed by the Creator himself, and that it would follow a course totally opposed to that of Europe, never falling prey to the harshness, cruelty, and intolerance resulting in the destruction Western civilization seemed to be headed for.

As the war spread across the whole world, however, not even the beauty of the land and its people could forever blind me to the undertones that were gradually reaching its shores. Initially, at the fall of Paris, we were greatly disturbed by the *pronunciamento* of the

autocratic President of the land that a New Order would prevail in the world and that Brazil would be part of it. Was it the result of political opportunism, or a clear attraction of a segment of the Brazilian power establishment to the concept of law and order, like trains running on time, or stopping the tide of Bolshevik barbarism threatening the values of Christian Western civilization?

Even in a country of such diverse ethnical backgrounds as Brazil, the concept of the purity of the race seemed to have a certain exotic appeal. In the early thirties, a local version of Italian Fascism had been organized under the name of Integralismo, and its members would parade in green shirts, usually surrounded by hostile crowds. The incongruity of such a philosophy transplanted to the new land could not be better expressed than in the oratory of one of its members, addressing an enthusiastic but rather perplexed group, "We Latins have to watch over the purity of our race." The speaker happened to be pitch black.

There also was the attitude of the large German colony in Brazil, which had been submitted to an intense barrage of propaganda. Many of its members assumed a very belligerent attitude and became highly organized, holding rallies and parades in brown shirts and with flying banners in the semi-privacy of their own large country clubs. It was a well known fact that their large private yachts resupplied German submarines along the extensive coast outside of Rio. Their bellicosity reached the point where open threats were made to Jews that their time of deportation would come soon.

When the tide of the war changed, especially after the entrance of the United States into the conflict, the same government changed its course drastically. An expeditionary force was sent to Italy to fight against the Germans alongside the allied armies; they performed gallantly despite the harsh winter that imposed a heavy toll on men raised in a tropical climate. The expeditionary force consisted of mixed units of men of all shades and colors; a cause for reflection on the part of its powerful ally from the North, whose units were segregated on the basis of color, that it might have a couple of things to learn from its underdeveloped ally from the South.

It was only some time after Pearl Harbor, after I had been accepted to work at one of the agencies of the United States government in Brazil, that I finally could say I was participating in the war effort. Although it did not in any manner change my private life style, it did open the door to a different world. A one-sided one, undoubtedly, for the men attached to the U.S. agencies did not represent all the

facets of its society, but nevertheless gave me a glimpse into another world.

These men carried with them a certain aura, for they were representatives of a nation on which all the countries fighting the powers of the Axis, as well as those under their domination, depended for bringing the conflict to a victorious end. This hope was also placed by some on the Soviet Union; of a different nature, though, for it was a nation struggling for its survival. There were those who looked upon its ideology as the way of the future, while others feared its ascendancy.

The quality of the men I worked with at the U.S. government agency for over a year, until the end of the war, came to eclipse my vision of France at a time when news began to reach us of the extensive collaboration with Germany by the Vichy government under Marshal Pétain.

In times of war, the opportunity arises for the best and the brightest in a nation to assume positions of leadership they would not have reached in normal times, either due to lack of formal education, or social and economic background. Many strata of society seemed to be represented by the men of the U.S. agency, from university professors, doctors, and business executives to factory workers and farmers. However, what impressed me most was their egalitarian and open attitude, not only in relation to their fellow countrymen but to those of other nationalities who worked with them, including the local population. There were also the most charming and good-looking secretaries, whom a number of my refugee friends married and followed to the "Promised Land," the United States, at the end of the war. I must admit that I narrowly escaped an identical fate.

During the war years the only one aware of the enormity of the fury being unleashed on the Jews of Europe was my grandmother. Although in remarkable physical health for her advanced age, she gradually withdrew within herself, and all that was left of her tales and narratives were reminiscences about the members of the family left behind on the old continent, intermingled with utterances like, "I know that something too dreadful for words is going on." The past, the present, and possibly the future appeared to be intermingled in the universe of her thoughts and feelings. Maybe some of those who are at the end of their journey on this earth, and are more attuned to the voices of their forefathers than to those of the world they are about to depart, are granted a glimpse into what is denied to us. One morning we found her dead in her bed; in her sleep she had peace-

fully rejoined her ancestors.

While the death of my father had hit me like an act of violence, as if part of my own life had been torn out and left an unhealed wound, when my grandmother, the one of the family closest to me, returned to her Creator, it was as if she had never departed. A presence remained, a gentle presence, like that of a witness to the unfolding of events she had always been so interested in.

Of my father a presence also remained, but of a different nature, as if he were watching over me and guiding my steps in times of crisis until I got married; then he departed. I will never forget his harrassed expression during the last years of his life, as if desperately longing to rest from a harsh world whose cruelty he had witnessed and that had imposed on him such agonizing physical pain. But he could not rest before his task for his three sons had been fulfilled.

The termination of the conflict with the Allied victory, and the end of the nightmarish vision of a thousand-year Reich, brought about a euphoria that was soon dampened by the news of the extent of the catastrophe that had befallen the Jews of Europe. It transformed into certitude the idea that had germinated in me during the war years: not to return to France but rather settle in Brazil, which was not only the land of the future but had remained unscathed by the demons that possessed Europe. It did not take me long to realize that the extent to which part of France had collaborated with the Germans had been blurred by the prominence given to the Resistance and the Free French movement in London. As the haze gradually cleared, the picture of a divided nation started to take shape, a reality I came to terms with only after a great emotional struggle.

As the gates of the death camps opened to reveal the ghastly spectacle of the mechanics with which six million Jews had been exterminated, not in the midst of the passions of war, but as part of a rational plan, the "Final Solution" of the Jewish Problem, the distant clamor of the survivors for a Jewish homeland in Palestine started to reach the shores of Brazil. A clamor that swelled in intensity as they were piled into resettlement camps established by the Allies mainly in Germany, waiting for those magic visas that would enable them to rebuild their shattered existence anywhere in the world—visas that granted life with a deadly slowness.

Nobody wanted the surviving Jews of Europe, with the exception of those who happened to have relatives. Worst of all, the gates of the Promised Land under the British Mandate were being closed. How could one live with the humiliating and painful pictures of ram-

shackle boats loaded with survivors, attempting to break the blockade imposed by His Majesty's navy, being turned back to the refugee camps in Europe, and eventually to the infamous camps established by the British on the island of Cyprus!

The Jews, who since the termination of World War I had answered the call to form a Jewish homeland under the protection of the mandate granted to Britain by the League of Nations, had by 1945 established in Palestine an infra-structure ready to receive all the surviving Jews of Europe; they were being stopped by those who had been their comrades-in-arms during the conflict. Personally, it was a blow that not only forced me to reappraise all the romantic concepts about the West I had formed during my years in Paris and throughout the war, when I had envisioned a world liberated from injustice and conflicts; it also introduced elements of profound dissension within my own family.

The almost daily conflicts in the struggle for a home for the Jewish people: British soldiers, by force of guns and truncheons taking the concentration camp survivors off the unseaworthy vessels as they were desperately trying to reach the land of salvation, and putting them behind barbed wire, brought the conflict within my own home. My stepfather, the Englishman, became in my eyes the symbol of British arrogance and intolerance, to the point where my poor mother, in her attempt to be fair toward the country of her husband but unable to silence the clamor of her Jewish heart, was emotionally torn apart.

The awareness of the tragedy that had engulfed the Jewish people of Europe, the struggle of the survivors to establish a home for themselves, marked the beginning of the long search for the roots and full significance of my Jewish identity. Parallel to it was my discovery of the Jews in no other place than Brazil, on whose shores had landed refugees in a continuous trickle both before and after the war. Though few in numbers, they seemed to represent a microcosm of the Jewish communities of Europe.

Many from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia had arrived before the war, because they had seen the writing on the wall and had rejected the illusion that the Nazis were just a passing phenomenon that would be wiped out by the common sense of the highly civilized German nation. Some even came from France and Italy, and they were mostly middle class, many having been part of the intelligentsia in their countries of origin.

As by some natural law that regulates Jewish existence, I gradually

drifted into their circle, realizing that I had much more in common with them than with the society around me, whether Brazilian or European hiking and sailing companions, not to speak of occasional forays with them into the luxurious *maisons closes* (whore houses) for which Rio was famous.

It was with my peers among the refugees that I once more recaptured the sense of identity I had enjoyed with my classmates at the Lycée whom I thought I had left behind forever. There was one disturbing element, though, in my relationship with the people with whom I shared the saga of immigration. Some, and they were not few in numbers, with whom I had established the closest links of friendship, had broken with the faith of their forefathers.

Many of the refugees from Germany, and especially Austria, had been able to obtain Brazilian immigration visas granted to the Vatican, whose distribution was in the hands of the "Opera de San Rafael," founded by the Roman Catholic Church. There was, however, a price to be paid: baptism. Upon arrival in Brazil, most forgot the episode as a mere compromise to escape from the Nazis, an act which many of my own ancestors from Sefarad were forced to commit in order to save their lives; the Jewish tradition recognized that not all have the strength to give up their lives for *Kiddush Hashem* (Sanctification of God's name).

There were others, however, already assimilated in their countries of origin who either out of a sense of gratitude toward a Church that had saved their lives, or as an opportunity to break away once and for all from what they considered the Jewish yoke, decided to lose themselves in the anonymity of the Brazilian melting pot. Only many years later I happened to discover that the funds for the salvage operations launched by the "Opera de San Rafael" had been contributed by Jews from the United States with the provision that the visas would be granted to Jews, baptized or not.

The irony of it all was that, in the midst of the very people with whom I believed I had found a common Jewish identity, were those who tried to break away from it, the family of my wife-to-be among them. It was not long before we were married at the liberal synagogue of Rio de Janeiro by an immigrant German rabbi.

Our marriage proved to be the turning point in the search for our Jewish identity, both historical and religious, which eventually would lead us to Israel in 1949, soon after the founding of the Jewish State. Initially, we were motivated by a sense of guilt; on my part, a revolt against the assimilationist trend in my family, resulting in my moth-

er's marriage to a non-Jew, an Englishman, whom I came to look upon as the symbol of his country's policy toward Palestine. My eldest brother followed an identical path.

As to my wife, who came from Vienna, there were the painful memories of the war years when part of her family and friends who had stayed behind were being sent to the death camps; the memory, also, of the time she spent at the convent school, belonging to an Order that had been founded by two converted Jews; apart from having to participate daily in prayers begging to forgive and save the Jews, she had ample opportunity to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the roots of the Spanish Inquisition and Germany's "Final Solution."

After we were married, my wife and I strove to give significance to our newly found Jewish identity. We could not relate to either the Orthodox Sephardi or Ashkenazi congregations which seemed to consist mostly of old people. However, as so often happens in Jewish life, our path gradually, and almost by chance, crossed that of other young couples, whose longings and anxieties were similar to ours.

There was the liberal German Jewish Congregation to which most of these young couples were attracted, especially by the personality of its German-born rabbi. A mixed lot we were, Ashkanezim and Sephardim, refugees from Europe or first-generation born in the country, mostly the sons and daughters of Polish and Russian Jews who had emigraged to Brazil when the doors of the United States were closed by the quota system. I wished my grandmother had come to know them, for these offspring of *polacos* she had always classified as primitive were a beautiful generation. We, the refugees of Western European cultural background, had to go to work to help support our families upon arrival, while our Brazilian-born peers had the benefit of a university education, for they were mostly professionals.

There was a certain resistance on the part of the older congregants of the liberal synagogue, who tried to keep their community the way it had been back in Germany, so we gathered at our homes, even on the beach, and talked and discussed in search of our post-Auschwitz Jewish roots. In retrospect, maybe the original *havuroth* (Friendship study groups) might not have been formed in the United States but in scattered homes in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and most likely throughout other cities in South America, as well as other far distant places in the so-called Third World, where Jews had found refuge from the Nazi onslaught and the Russian and Polish pogroms.

Aware of the struggle for the establishment of a Jewish State, it was natural that many of us came to identify our Judaism with Zionism. How else could one live a full Jewish life and vindicate our people who had perished in the "Final Solution"?

After leaving the U.S. government agency at the end of the war, I had been employed by a Swedish group to organize a company that would handle the products of a number of its country's steel mills, one of them famous for the steel produced for the manufacture of artillery it had judiciously provided to both the British and the Germans during the war. It was the time of Brazil's massive industrialization, which was to change the face of the nation.

A sad note, however, in this process of modernization: some of the capital was of German origin, and as I was to find out in the years to come, of a doubtful nature, to say the least. It originated from the funds the Nazi leadership had amassed in numbered accounts of neutral countries during the war. It was no coincidence that many of the members of the Gestapo and the SS who were channeled by Operation Odessa to the hospitable shores of Brazil and Argentina were to be found in the management teams of the newly created German industries. Thus it was not surprising that Eichmann was on the staff of Mercedes-Benz in Argentina, while the infamous Kommandant of Auschwitz was one of the directors of Volkswagen in Brazil.

I sometimes wonder, when I see so many of my fellow Jews in sunny California showing off their newly acquired wealth by driving a Mercedes-Benz, what their reaction would be if they became aware that their vehicles were manufactured, in however small a particle, with Jewish blood.

These financial post-war transactions even affected my own family, much to our embitterment. One of the closest friends of my mother from the days of Constantinople, whose family had also emigrated to Brazil, a distinguished and kind Armenian lady, informed us of a happy event. Her brother, who in his young days had gone to Vienna and from whom she had not heard since, had suddenly appeared in Brazil. He had installed himself in grand style, surrounded by works of art, as the representative of German financial groups keen to acquire a share in the Brazilian industrialization. The gentleman in question told his sister that he had spent the war years in neutral Spain.

It is still painful for me to recall the dismay of my poor mother when, in the brashness of my youth, I felt it my duty to tell her what

lay behind the wealth of her best friend's brother. The bonds of friendship remained, but a compromise was reached; my mother vehemently refused to meet the man, who was exercising great efforts to introduce himself into Jewish circles in search of talents to boost his adopted country's post-Auschwitz enterprises. There is also a personal note of melancholy, for the Armenian lady had a beautiful daughter who had been my first love.

The other sad incident was the telephone call we received one day from a gentleman who informed my mother in Spanish that he was her cousin. He was the one who, to the dismay of the whole family, had decided to return to Spain from Constantinople after five centuries of exile in search of greener pastures. Nothing had been heard from him since, until he broke his silence many years later to inform us that he was General Franco's personal emissary on a South American mission to strengthen commercial bonds between Spain and the countries that had once been her colonies. My mother's reaction was instantaneous; we would not see him. It was the last we ever heard from him.

During the years following the end of the war my career seemed to be leading me toward ever-increasing professional and material success. Through my work and initiative, a network of distribution centers was being organized for the first time, some in the most remote parts of the country, to supply the newly born industry with the steel products it required. I was helping to transform Brazil into a modern industrial country, to the benefit of its impoverished masses and thus repaying the debt to a country that had saved our lives.

However, after a prolonged struggle and a bloody war against seven Arab nations, the State of Israel had become a reality. Under the impulse of a combination of guilt for being survivors, a wish to return to the sources that would enable us to find our fulfillment as Jews, and to participate in the building of the new State, my wife and I came to a decision. We would make our *aliyah* ("Ascent" to the Holy Land); our children would be born in the Jewish State.

Israel

The long KLM flight from Brazil toward Zion via Rome was filled with expectation. In possession of those ephemeral Spanish passports with precious Israeli immigration visas, we landed at dawn of a spring day at the Rome airport. The airfield was still encircled with barbed wire, a reminder of the conflict on a continent of which we no longer wanted to be part. Our return to Zion was the symbol of what we felt to be our final break with Europe, the end of an era for the Jews.

The Carabinieri, whose sight took me all the way back to the early days of Constantinople, stared with incredulous admiration at my passport with the name of an ex-Marshal of the Duce's short-lived empire. Comments like, "What a beautiful name," gave me the courage to intercede on behalf of a German Jew I had befriended during the long plane trip. He had found refuge in Chile and was not being allowed to disembark in Rome on his way to Israel because he was the holder of a Hansen passport for stateless people. A request that was granted, undoubtedly, on behalf of one who bore a name that reminded them of their past glories.

Our Spanish passports had only been obtained after some tribulations. Although we had lived in Brazil for many years, the process of naturalization was an extremely complex and expensive one in those days.

Apart from the humiliation of being stared at by a huge portrait of the Generalissimo, Francisco de Belmondo Franco, enshrined under the coat of arms of Ferdinand and Isabella, my first attempt at the Spanish Consulate in Rio de Janeiro ended in the affront of being told by an indignant Consul that the edict signed by King Alphonso, last sovereign of Spain, was abolished forever—how could a Jew dare to claim Spanish citizenship?

Luckily, my second attempt at the Consulate of São Paulo was met with immediate success, and I was warmly told that my wife was also entitled to the honor of bearing a Spanish passport.

After two weeks of waiting in Rome, we finally boarded an old DC-3 of the Czechoslovak Airlines that was to take us to the Promised Land. The image of a Jewish State as projected in my dreams was never again as vivid as during the flight from Rome to Lod Airport. Not only did the gentle brilliance of the Mediterranean give me the feeling that I was returning to my sources; a certain intimacy developed between the passengers, whether old residents of the

Homeland, new immigrants, or tourists, a vision of unity, of *Am Yisrael* (Nation of Israel) that was not to repeat itself too often in later years. A harsh reminder not to take the survival of the newly born State for granted was the hardly concealed presence on the plane of crates containing weapons "Made in Czechoslovakia."

The excitement on the plane when the first signs of the coastline of Israel could be distinguished on the horizon, and the controlled urge not to kiss the ground upon landing! What of the links established during the voyage? The same faces were now closed, almost harsh, as if the dream had been left in the realm of the azure where the Mediterranean blended with the heavens.

A word of welcome? "Do you have any foreign currency to declare?" in a clipped British accent from the mouth of the passport controller in his crisp uniform, the legacy of British Mandatory power. For a moment I felt a cold in my spine while I handed over my dollars to be returned in the form of Israeli pounds. To my mind had come the words of Theodor Herzl, that the aim of Zionism was to establish a normal State, a nation like other nations.

This mood, however, was soon dissipated as we left the war-torn countryside and entered the suburbs of Tel Aviv, where we were engulfed by floods of lights and song. People were dancing in the streets, celebrating the first anniversary of the founding of the Jewish State.

My wife's relatives, at whose apartment we were staying, were oldtimers who had arrived before the war. In the midst of a hearty and genuine welcome, certain undertones of "Why did you come?" lingered. That was to be expected; but as a premonition of things to come, after an inquisitive glance I was asked whether I really was a Sephardi, as I did not look like one.

Undertones that I soon forgot when on that first night we walked the streets in the midst of the jubilant multitudes. The mild spring air, mixed with a fragrance that reminded me of my childhood, was nothing like the harsh, tropical beauty of Brazil. I was possessed by a feeling that I had finally come home.

That first night I stayed awake for hours. At repeated intervals came the sound of rolling vehicles and melancholy tunes, many of them songs that had originated in the swamps and forests of Poland and Russia among the partisans fighting the German invader. This time they were sung in Hebrew by soldiers moving to the front, the frail borders of the Jewish State after the last cease fire. The war was definitely not over yet; I had already heard talk that an offensive was

being planned to recapture the old city of Jerusalem from the British-led Jordanian Legion. There was also the territory known as the Triangle, that wedge on the West side of the Jordan aimed like a dagger at the heart of the Jewish State; the popular opinion was that the borders would have to be on the Jordan River if the new State was to survive.

The next morning, in an urge to touch the Mediterranean, symbol of my cradle, I walked a few blocks down Allenby Street, and there I was on the beach, face to face with it. What could go wrong in a setting such as unfolded in front of my eyes and enveloped my senses? The people, the sun, the wind, the ocean—all of it was good.

To crown it all, we watched from the balcony of another relative, on Ben Yehudah Street, the Israeli Army's parade to celebrate the first anniversary of the State. Scattered units had been brought up from different parts of the country in order not to weaken the borders, one big front line on which the conflict could be rekindled at any moment. An army showing off its signs of battle and obviously not drilled for a parade, a citizen's army molded in the furnace of war. At that moment it seemed the only adequate answer to Auschwitz and its survivors who had been left to rot in the sordid refugee camps of Germany by the callousness of the victorious powers.

In a kaleidoscope of uniforms, mostly originating from the depots left behind by the British Army and from U.S. surplus, bearing scanty weapons obtained from wherever and by whatever means, paraded the men and women of the first Jewish army in two millennia. Their faces reflected the journeys of the long exile.

The classical image of the Sabra, tall, blond, or ginger, the first generation born in Zion from the broken rejects of Central Europen Jewry, the product of the redemption. The descendants of Jews who throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule had come to the Holy Land either to finish their days or to study, already reflecting the long, aquiline features of the races molded by the Mediterranean sun and water. The still emaciated bodies of the survivors of the death camps and the British internment camps of Cyprus, who upon arrival on the shores of the embattled state had been thrown against the invading Arab armies after only a few hours of basic training. The proud bearing of North African Jews, many from the ranks of the recently extinguished Irgun and Stern groups, who had routed the ferocious Sudanese warriors of the Egyptian Army at the point of cold steel. The swagger of the American volunteers, followed by the French contingent still carrying the fanions of the Free French and

of the Resistance. The unmistakable men of the *Palmach* (Storm Troops) in their jeeps, almost a modern Jewish version of the medieval knights—the graves of their fallen comrades delineating the borders of the Jewish State.

In the house on the Hill of Pera I had lived a dream, a mythical dream of the exile of Sefarad, the land of memory. The years in Paris had been in search of the dream, ending in the debacle of the Place de la Concorde and the destruction of the Spanish Republic. In the warriors of the reborn Jewish State, I had a glimpse of the fulfillment of the dream.

These reflections were not without a certain tinge of melancholy, when I asked myself why destiny had not allowed me to be in their ranks, as it had prevented me from participating in the Spanish Civil War and in World War II. Always to be a witness to the unfolding of history?

When we made the decision to join our brothers in the Jewish State, my wife and I were conscious that we would have to leave behind many of the values that had been an intrinsic part of our past, not to speak of our lifestyle. This was to be an egalitarian society, the kibbutz representing the agricultural infra-structure of the State within an industrial framework, where most likely my professional experience in the establishment of the industrial park of Brazil might be useful. Although I was greatly attracted by what I had heard of the idealistic style of kibbutz life, I had no illusions regarding my inclination to transform myself into a farmer.

Tel Aviv was at the time a city of contrasts, especially the buildings, which in no way were in harmony with the brilliance of the sky and the azure of the Mediterranean. The waterfront of the city presented the greatest contrast of all, and it could not be blamed only on the war. The ramshackle food stands and kiosks, intermingled with a number of shabby, terraced cafés which bore little resemblance to those of Paris, were quite a shock to me.

I often wonder whether the neglect of the beauty with which nature had endowed the land of our forefathers, and which lasted more than two decades, was due to a lack of priority or to the fact that our Ashkenazi brethren, trapped for centuries in the dark ghettos of Eastern Europe, had lost the acumen for the beauty of form, added to the biblical prohibition of the graven image. Or was it just the dire poverty?

Neither did the people, at least those who walked in the streets of Tel Aviv, seem to have much in common with the land. I consoled

myself with the lingering image of those young men and women during that first parade of the modern Jewish Army; despite the different physical types, there had been a unity that was not reflected elsewhere. That is, until I visited my first kibbutz.

It seemed as if most of the people I met in Tel Aviv, and they were mostly oldtimers, clung desperately to the forms and habits of the societies they had left behind, of a world that no longer existed, shattered by the years of murderous conflict.

Maybe the time spent in Brazil had conditioned me in a different way toward the past and the future. The only people I seemed to have something in common with were Jews from South Africa, Australia, and America, those coming from the great open spaces who were not burdened with the weight of a heavy past, like the Europeans.

Looking back in time, I now realize how simplistic that approach was, especially when we moved to the United States and I began to understand how important was the maintenance of those links with the past; for it became obvious that those who no longer felt burdened by it had lost their historical memory, the clue to Jewish survival.

This was the ingathering of the exiles who were going to build a nation. Could it be done with a kaleidoscope of people who, although they were Jews, had been molded by and had acquired many of the characteristics of the nations where they had lived during almost two millennia? Was the mortar which we called the Jewish religion or civilization strong enough to mold the multitudes into a nation?

Under the impact of this multitude as diverse as the nations of the world, it was at first difficult to discern the Jewish element, and to imagine how I was going to find a niche for myself. What affected me most, however, was the dejected condition, both material and moral, of those members of my father's and mother's families from Bulgaria who had remained in Europe. They had been spared the Holocaust, and now found themselves on the shores of the new State as part of the ingathering of the exiles; uncles, aunts, cousins, including a sister of my maternal grandmother, whom I had never seen before, so similar in bearing, attitude, and mentality to my immediate family back in Brazil. Men and women who obviously had been part of the *buenas familias* of Balkanic Jewry, reduced to shadows of their selves, were dwelling in muddy tents of the *maabaroth* (transition tent camps), or in abandoned Arab houses whose furnishings mostly

consisted of matresses, an orange crate transformed into a table, a kerosine lamp, and a stove.

I was not so much shocked by the dejection of the members of my family and the lack of opportunity for using their skills toward building the State, as by the contrast of their situation to what I saw emerging in the fashionable neighborhoods of Tel Aviv and Haifa. Many of the oldtimers who still labeled themselves as pioneers were already becoming bourgeois. There were countless tales of how they were obtaining scholarships to send their children to Universities in the United States. Could they not send my cousin to the Technion for one year to finish his studies as an engineer? He had not graduated in order not to be prevented from immigrating to Israel. To make matters worse, the members of this new elite did not originate from a trading or industrial class as in Europe, but were members of a government whose prerequisite for serving in a professional capacity was not always aptitude, but being a member of one of the Labour parties that considered themselves guardians of the ideology of the Founding Fathers.

Had my illusion been so great to think that this kind of nepotism, so rampant in the Brazil I had left behind, was not to be found in the new Jewish State? The Israeli official whom I had often heard back in Rio expounding on the decadence of Jewish life in the Diaspora, and eloquently praising the virtues of Zionism, I recognized sitting in one of the cafés on Dizengoff Square clad in what looked like a Brooks Brothers suit, giving me a cold look of indifference while his eyes betrayed a glimpse of recognition.

Thus started my critical analysis of the society of which I so much wanted to be part. My problem was that I had a valid passport—how valid, I would find out later—an affluent family back in Brazil just waiting for me to come back, and the comfort of a bank account in the United States. Was I already looking for an excuse to throw in the towel and return to the land of plenty, just because my bridges were intact?

I soon realized that this was the basic difference in outlook between me and my relatives in Israel. Despite their state of dejection, they had no alternative but to build a new life for themselves, for upon leaving Bulgaria they had given up their nationality. This was made worse by the knowledge that some of their coreligionists who had chosen to stay behind seemed to be doing well.

The birth pangs of a nation! I witnessed the arrival of Theodore Herzl's body and the parade through the main streets of Tel Aviv

before it was enshrined in Jerusalem. An attempt at pomp and circumstance by the guard of honor, all commanders of the Israeli Army, Navy, and Air Force, obviously not very comfortable in their parade uniforms and showing off glittering new sabres, as is the custom of the nations. Was it necessary, I asked myself, bothered by the feeling that something was wrong; where was Judaism in all this? It looked as if they were trying to mold themselves by the very mystique of the weapons that had caused the world so much harm and filled the graves of Europe with almost one hundred million dead just in one century. I had come to Israel to find my Jewish roots, not a bad copy of what I had left behind.

Whenever I dared speak about religion, I was given a condescending glance, as if I were a man coming out of the Middle Ages impregnated by the decadence of *galuth* (Diaspora) mentality. This was usually followed by a long litany on the ideology of Zionism, which would create a new Jew devoid of the abominations acquired during the long night of the exile, religion being of course one of the worst. All I had to do was to go to Jerusalem and see for myself.

Whenever I mentioned that I had come to Israel to settle, the look of disdain for my naiveté would change to an expression of disbelief, usually followed by the question, "Why did you come?" Hardly an encouraging situation for someone who had made his *aliyah* out of his own accord.

My wife's relatives felt that the best way to help was to proudly introduce their relatives from Brazil to their circle of oldtimers. In the course of a conversation, a Brigadier General in the Israeli Army told me in a rather brusque manner, after inquiring into my background, "You are neither a millionnaire nor a worker, and I do not think you will adapt to kibbutz life, so there is no room for you in Israel. Go back and work for Israel in your country, where you will not only help us far more, but also avoid a lot of personal frustration. . . ."

A statement from a man at the top echelon of the establishment, which confirmed the message we had received from the lower strata of the bureaucracy, that actually we were not welcome. Our situation seemed to acquire Kafkaesque proportions when in the midst of the multitudes of the return, the other new immigrants, we attempted to get our documentation as new citizens of the State of Israel.

The long years spent in Brazil had exposed me to its all-embracing bureaucracy, but my status had allowed me to deal with it through intermediaries. In the Jewish State, however, personal contact could

not be avoided. Although our friends among the oldtimers told us not to take it too seriously, being an unavoidable part of a State in the making, it was extremely difficult for me to develop a thick skin toward these local specimens, mostly former functionaries of the British Mandatory Power who seemed to emulate their colonial masters in the methodology of how to treat the natives.

The end result was that as an individual who had never been prone to violence, even during the heated verbal duels at the Lycée, I found that I had to reach the shores of the Jewish State to realize my potential for physical violence, out of sheer rage brought on by accumulated frustration and humiliation.

I was not the only one to react in such a fashion. Hardly an occasion passed during those interminable hours spent in endless lines that, upon being told after a long wait that the specific Department had changed its work schedule or that we were in the wrong location, some new immigrant did not resort to violence, breaking furniture, pulling out a belt, and even sometimes a knife.

This was not exactly the red-carpet treatment extended to tourists from the United States and Europe, or those belonging to one of the VIP missions. Obviously, a mere immigrant who had come out of his free will and at his own expense could not expect identical treatment.

As the weeks passed in getting my documentation in order, I gradually came to realize that my wife and I were some sort of oddity among the mass of the ingathering of the exiles. The great majority of immigrants belonged to two categories of the Jewish people. The first, the most dejected and passive, were those originating from Central and Eastern Europe, the survivors of the death camps. The second were the Jews from Arab lands, or sometimes referred to as "Schwartze," usually in whispers by those who at my indignant reaction would retort that they never thought I was a Sephardi; I did not look like one.

The Oriental Jews, of course, were more prone to violence, and were the ones who occasionally would threaten their hosts with violence. Both groups had one thing in common, though; they were equally destitute and totally dependent on what the Jewish Agency could give them. Some had a totally unrealistic vision of what the State had the capacity to provide for them: a land of milk and honey. After all, it was a nation in formation, still at war with its neighbors.

An incident not without its humorous-tragic aspect that reflected these conditions, and of which I became the focus, occurred while I was standing in line at the Labour Exchange of the Histadrut, des-

perate to find work. Although I was dressed in the classic khaki shirt and shorts, one of my fellow applicants, a survivor from the camps, asked me where I came from. Upon hearing the word Brazil, his expression changed to one of total bewilderment. He asked me what I was doing in Israel, for I had to be crazy if I really came from there. Before I knew it, the astounding news had spread throughout the entire corridor and I was encircled by men almost in a state of frenzy, bombarding me with questions about Brazil and on how to get there, for they had heard that it was even better than the United States. The general conclusion was that I must be deranged.

We had already been labeled, both by my wife's and my own family, as "our rich relatives from Brazil." An identical reaction could be felt among the bureaucrats who initially always thought I was in the wrong Department; I did not seem to belong there. It was a reaction that worked to my detriment, for the Histadrut officials concluded that I was just an intruder attempting to take the livelihood away from lawful workers. On occasion, officials responded to what they considered to be my arrogance with verbal abuse, but soon apologized when they realized that the crazy South American immigrant reacted with a Sephardic temper, which they believed to be the exclusive characteristic of the primitive Orientals.

Almost a month had passed since our arrival and we seemed to be caught in a vicious circle of frustration, prejudice, and plain social snobbery. A feeling of pessimism and claustrophobia was beginning to weigh heavily on me, although my wife did not seem to be as affected as I was; her expectations had never been very high.

Only after some hesitation did I gather the courage to ascend to Jerusalem; I was afraid. What had brought us to the newly created Jewish State was the messianic vision of Jerusalem, the fulfillment of the promise; what would be the image of a war-torn, divided city? Could the Jerusalem of the Bible again become the epicenter radiating the mystique whose essence would be the mortar of the Jewish State, giving its inhabitants, who at the very genesis of the State seemed torn by internal strife, the element needed to fill it with content?

It was with a heavy heart that from the rickety Egged bus we watched the war-torn landscape stretching throughout the plain between Ramlah and Latrun, until it slowly started to climb the narrow, winding road that would lead us to Jerusalem.

Especially poignant, as the bus drove up the gentle slope, was the distant sight of the Monastery of Latrun, and nearby the blockhouse-

shaped Police Station. I remembered the hundreds of survivors of the death camps, hardly off the ships that had brought them to the Holy Land, thrown into bloody assaults to dislodge the British-trained, battle-hardened soldiers of the Jordanian Arab Legion entrenched within its thick walls; untrained soldiers who with their blood had soaked the path toward the deliverance of Jerusalem.

At that moment I felt I was not alone, not only because of my bus companions struggling under the weight of the uprooted, but of those who became my constant companions, the "presences" of the generations. All the generations from the city of David and their descendants, whether the remnants from the ghettos of Eastern Europe or the *mellahs* of North Africa, religious or secular, were ascending the Mountain of the Lord in search of the fulfillment of the Promise. I understood then that their visions were the mortar with which the Third Jewish Commonwealth would be built.

Suddenly I felt I was entering a different dimension of time and space. A lunar landscape dotted with delapidated Arab dwellings amidst patches of tall cypresses and, at regular intervals, carcasses of makeshift armored cars. Symbols of the inhumanity of war and a reminder of the heavy price for keeping Jerusalem, or at least part of it, as the capital of the Jewish State.

Despite the exhilarating briskness of the air, at the bus terminal we felt a sense of abandonment and neglect. It was a mood not just the outcome of a battle hardly terminated, as Jerusalem was mutilated and still besieged by the Bedouins of the Jordanian Legion; the little Hashemite monarch had hardly given up his dream of a united Jerusalem as the Crown Jewel of his kingdom.

As we entered the "new" city, it was as if I could feel the wounds inflicted on the city of David not only by its present besiegers but by all those who had preceded them, Canaanites, Jebusites, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arab Mameluks, Christian Crusaders, Ottoman Turks, the British Mandatory Power.

The traditional, "old" Jerusalem could only be glimpsed through its thick walls. Even the Western Temple Wall, symbol of Jewish continuity, was now out of reach. From the tower of a nearby monastery we could see the white and red *kheffiehs* of the Legionnaires of the Bedouin Sheik, to whom his Britannic Majesty had graciously granted sovereignty over a land that was originally part of the Mandate, received from the League of Nations to help build the Jewish National Home.

The vestiges of the British Mandatory Power were still very stark

throughout the land, dotted with their blockhouse-shaped Police Stations and military camps, which were handed over to Arab irregulars just before the partition, and certain hilltops entangled in meshes of barbed wire, the site of concentration camps. Not to speak of the gallows at the old prison of Akko.

As we walked along the clusters of the new city, around Ben Yehudah Street radiating outwards, with the King David Hotel and the Tower of the YMCA as its center, and the new residential quarters built by Jewish immigrants between the two World Wars, I wondered whether these disconnected parts could really serve as the capital of the State of Israel.

Gradually, however, my mood began to change and the deep melancholy that had possessed me almost since the day of my arrival lifted from my being to transform itself into a sense of peace. Peace in war-torn, divided Jerusalem? In the flicker of a moment I had grasped that it was not the monuments erected to the power of the different conquerors that mattered. I realized the veracity of the concept that in Jerusalem every stone had a story to tell, while the "presences" whispered in my ears the saying of the Safed Kabbalist, the Holy Ari, that even the stones have a soul.

Through the erection of their places of worship the stream of conquerors, throughout the two millennia since the destruction of the Temple by the Legions of Titus, had attempted to affirm their claim to the city of David. I now understood the full magnitude of the effort and sacrifice of the citizens of a Jewish State born out of the ashes of history in clinging to that little piece of ground, the new city of Jerusalem.

Its message was loud and clear, to project itself beyond the ramparts, not only to the enemy of the moment poised to destroy the dream, but to the whole world. "Despite the ravages you have sown upon it through the wind of your conquest, Jerusalem is the heart of Jewish civilization, and we the survivors of the Final Solution, whom you have attempted to wipe from the face of the earth, are here to claim it."

The "presences" of the generations, while recounting their saga, were pointing toward the future, the continuity of Judaism, and Jerusalem was its symbol. Their message was that Jerusalem was indivisible, and the survival of the Jewish State, the continuity of the Jewish people and its civilization, an ongoing process.

As we left Jerusalem, the land of the dream, on our way back to Tel Aviv, the land of reality, I was no longer in the state of depres-

sion that had possessed me before "ascending the Mountain of the Lord."

The emotional catharsis brought on by the encounter with the city of David, even if divested of the dream of redemption, had left me not only with the conviction, however subjective it still remained, that the creation of the Jewish State was an absolute necessity from the real-politik viewpoint, but with the certainty that it would survive—despite the memory of the flesh-pots of Egypt brought with them by the people—because it had a heart, Jerusalem.

Flashes of doubt perturbed my rationale, though. Would the vision of Jerusalem fit into the ideology of creating a nation like other nations, of transforming the People of the Book into a people that would find redemption through manual labor? And the Orthodox Jews, withdrawn in their enclaves, turning their backs on the pioneers, including that handful of ultras who even refused to recognize the Jewish State on the ground that the coming of the Messiah could not be hastened? And on the other hand the assertion that religion had no part to play in the formation of the Jewish State precisely because of the mentality of these traditionalist Jews?

Another thought gnawed at the back of my mind, which had been there ever since the end of the war when I had felt the objection of much of the world against the creation of a Jewish State. Would the nations, the descendants of those who throughout the centuries had attempted to claim the spirituality of Jerusalem as their own by conquering the land, come to terms with Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish State? At the very beginning of its creation there were already signs that the State of Israel was becoming the Jew of the nations.

Nevertheless, despite the dichotomy of concepts that kept me in a state of confusion, we had regained our hope in Jerusalem, exhilarated by its mystique and the hospitality of a people still under siege, the like of which we had not found in any other city on the long road of exile.

Most vivid also remained the memory of the Jerusalem nights, the brilliance of its star-lit sky. Maybe it was the knowledge that nowhere else had men reached higher in their urge to grasp the mysteries of the heavens. It was now time to explore the kibbutz society, the backbone of the newly founded State which would not have become a reality without it.

Traveling toward the newly established border of the State of Israel with Egypt, at first glance it seemed that hardly anything existed

between the beginning of the wasteland of the desert and Tel Aviv; the modern cities of Ashdod and Ashkelon were still dreams of the future. Our host pointed out the furthest northern point reached by the Egyptian Army during the War of Independence, a mere twenty miles from Tel Aviv, near where Ashdod stands today.

All the years of intimacy with the vast horizons of Brazil had attuned my being to the immensity of space, but nothing had ever come close to the sense of desolation that enveloped me. In Brazil the land had been left untouched, while here the imprints of men were everywhere, the ravages of war, the living symbols of the price the survivors of European Jewry had paid for the establishment of the Third Commonwealth.

Kibbutz Negba and the other tiny clusters of resistance against the invading armies, whose tenacity in the face of death had made the birth of the Jewish State possible, dotted the harsh, desolate wasteland. I had a vision of the drama of the Exodus, when the multitudes that would become the Jewish people set out to conquer the land. This time it was the reverse of the epic, a desperate attempt to salvage and rebuild on the ruins left by the Romans two millennia ago.

As I trudged along the harsh soil, observing the graves of the young men and women who had given their lives to transform the dream into reality, and staring at the rudimentary slabs to the memory of the fallen, something hit me. There were none of the religious symbols that I had seen engraved upon the tombstones of the countless graves in Jewish cemeteries throughout Europe and the New World.

Listening to our guides, veterans of the War of Independence, as they narrated the epic of the resistance and paid homage to their fallen comrades, I began to discern a thrust to emphasize that the future of the Jewish people lay in the civilization to be built on this parched desert wasteland, an attempt to break away from the historical and religious memory of the last two thousand years in the Diaspora. Nevertheless, had they not also sacrificed their lives for it, I reflected?

In the trenches and dug-outs, shell-holes spread throughout the newly born Jewish State, from kibbutz Dan in the extreme North, to Degania which had stopped the Syrian onslaught in the Jordan Valley; to the martyred Gush Etzion religious settlements, whose sacrifice had probably saved Jerusalem from being completely overwhelmed by the Jordanian Arab Legion; to Negba at the gate of the Negev desert, which for six months had withstood the onslaught of

the Egyptian Army—was there a new Judaism being established, directed toward the land, as if the saga of two thousand years of spirituality and creativity had never happened? Auschwitz, the pogroms of Eastern Europe, and the persecutions stretching back to the Spanish Inquisition had to be blotted out of their minds and souls, so as not to be part of the New Jew. As I continued my pilgrimage to the landmarks of heroism and sacrifice, and listened to those who had made the Jewish State a reality, bits and pieces gradually started falling into place, which together with the longings and aspirations of the new bourgeoisie I had already seen taking shape in Tel Aviv, filled me with a sense of frustration bordering on anxiety. This feeling reached its climax when the vision that had confronted me during my first walk to the Tel Aviv waterfront, that of the half-sunken hull of the ship *Altalena*, became for me the symbol of the malaise that seemed to engulf the land and its people.

While still in Brazil I had read briefly about the incident of the *Altalena*; loaded with weapons, ammunition and foreign volunteers destined for the Irgun, followers of Jabotinsky's Revisionists, it had been bombed and sunk by the Palmach on Ben Gurion's orders at a time when the creation of the Jewish State was still in the balance. These were volunteers from the Diaspora who had come to fight on behalf of the Jewish State, and weapons that were sorely needed at a time when Jerusalem was besieged and on the verge of falling into the hands of the Jordanian Legion—what was going on? At the time, I had pushed the question to the back of my mind, hoping that a rational answer would be found for an act that seemed to border on insanity.

Since my arrival in Israel, I had heard countless versions of what had happened. The bow of the dark hull sticking out of the Mediterranean, like a menacing finger into the sky, was a testimony to the division among the remnants of the decimated tribes of Israel, who having fought so hard for the creation of the State, did not see eye to eye the form the Jewish Nation-State should take, not to speak of its destiny.

One thing was not in dispute, though. The weapons that had ended up at the bottom of the sea had been desperately needed, and had they been put to proper use, Jerusalem would not have stood divided; seen from the vantage point of the 'eighties, the boundaries of the state might not have been the subject of so much controversy.

Labour Zionism, imbued with a messianic vision of Socialism, had been pitched in battle against the followers of Jabotinsky, steeped in

their nationalist vision of a Jewish State within its ancient biblical boundaries. In the zeal to impose their concept of destiny, brother could no longer recognize brother. As a result, Jerusalem was left divided and the seeds were sown for much of the dichotomy that exists in Israeli society to this date.

Whenever I returned to Tel Aviv, I could not avoid the almost daily confrontation with that dark symbol of fratricide, for in an endeavor to rid myself of the heavy atmosphere I used to walk along the waterfront from one end of the city to the other. One morning, after having been told in detail the battle of the *Altalena* by one of the eye witnesses, my vivid imagination unfolded before me the drama of hundreds of volunteers throwing themselves into the water not to be engulfed by the flames of the sinking vessel, only to be mowed down by the machine-gun fire coming from the beach. I seemed to be reliving the Battle of the Place de la Concorde, and the old familiar vise again pressed down on my lungs, trying to squeeze the life force out of me. On that evening of 1934 in Paris I had seen my image of France torn to shreds. Was I to be the witness of a repetition of the tragedy, this time among my brothers?

The open spaces of Brazil, the beauty of its scarcely populated land, the communion I had established with nature and the gentleness of its people had given me the certitude that I had left behind once and for all the rivalries and hatreds of Europe whose main victims had been my own people, climaxing in the universe of the death camps. In an attempt to grasp the essence of the land of my ancestors and the mood of the Jews of the Return, I gradually came to the conclusion that, however paradoxical it might appear, what oppressed me was not so much the awareness that this tiny piece of land was surrounded on all sides by enemies vowed to its destruction, but that it was a microcosm of everything I thought I had rejected forever, namely Europe.

What was my status here apart from the fact that the Law of the Return had given me the right to become a citizen the moment I stepped onto the land? A Sephardic Jew, born in Constantinople, educated in France, with a professional background in Brazil and holding a Spanish passport, I was to situate myself among the tightly knit cliques with their roots not only in their country but often their city of origin, not to speak of party affiliation.

I soon realized that political affiliation was the main key to integration into this society in formation; the battle of the *Altalena* was its metaphor. Where did an *oleh* (new immigrant) stand who had

made his *aliyah* purely on his credentials of being a Jew? Nowhere, it seemed, unless he saw his future in the allegiance to one of the political parties which were attempting to mold the Jewish State in their image of the world and their vision of history.

This blunt reality became very tangible when I tried to integrate myself professionally in its budding industry. Dismissing a certain lack of modesty permissible in an immigrant imbued with the pioneering spirit, I was convinced that I had a place in such a society and an important contribution to make. My professional experience in a country like Brazil, that was industrializing from scratch, gave me the vision of a State of Israel that would soon be establishing, in progressive stages, an industrial infra-structure to assure its economic independence.

In view of the immense problems faced by the Jewish State and the scarcity of its resources, I strongly felt at the time that all enterprises related to the building of the nation should be part of a planned, mixed economy. Personally speaking, I felt there was not enough room for the private entrepreneur whose goal would be the sole pursuit of profit. On that basis the State would not be able to spread, however thinly, whatever wealth it developed. On the other hand, there was a desperate need of enterprising people ready to dedicate their efforts toward the common good.

There were many individuals who, especially in the kibbutzim, had labored under the most primitive conditions to lay the economic foundation of the State, as well as those who had fought and shed their blood to make it possible. What struck me from the beginning, though, was their lack of technological, economic, and administrative skills necessary to establish this industrial framework. In my naiveté I believed that there was a place for newcomers.

My ignorance of Hebrew did not seem to present an obstacle, for at that time those who spoke the language were in the minority. I did have a fluent command of English, French, and Portuguese, the last enabling me to revive my native Ladino, still the mother tongue of most Sephardim, especially those originating from Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece. One of my cousins from Bulgaria had told me that upon being inducted into the Haganah, they had been integrated into units composed of volunteers from South America. Of course I wanted to become fluent in Hebrew, but I would master the language simultaneously with the great mass of immigrants in our common thrust toward total integration into Israeli society.

So off I was to blaze the virgin trail that would lead me to being

one of the new generation of pioneers helping to build modern industrial Israel. I was full of ideas and plans; after all, I had done it elsewhere, so why not accomplish the same in the land of the return?

From Department to Department I went, from one sullen bureaucrat to another who often did not even listen to me, shaking their heads as if they did not understand any of the languages I tried to communicate with. Walls, whose only glimpse of humanity conveyed a silent interrogation: who was I, and what did I want? Which prompted me at one occasion to blurt out, "You made an appeal for the Jews of the world to join you in building the Jewish State, and I have responded!" The sardonic look on the individual's face made me realize the naiveté of such emotional outbursts on my part; this kind of romanticism was out of place in a new nation carved out by blood and toil.

Mostly, however, I came across tired men whose long struggle had left them with little energy and few ideas on how to build over the ravages of war; men, often straight from their kibbutz, who had formed the backbone of the new Army, and, based on their record, had been placed in high positions at hastily improvised government Departments and industries essential for the creation of a socialist nation—for this was the goal at the time.

Obviously, many of the *kibbutzniks* sitting at the head of those Departments, who had been molded by the Mapai/Mapam ideology to whose purity they had attested by their personal saga, would look at me with suspicion. What did this young man, full of fire and brimstone as to the vision of the future of the State, stand for? He had worked for foreign steel producers, part of the capitalistic world they had learned to reject; what did he really want?

They must have seen me as a threat to the kind of society they wanted to build, a man who would open a breach in their fraternity of blood and toil. In retrospect, I am therefore not surprised when at times a look of sympathy and compassion would be followed by the question to what political party I had belonged before coming to Israel.

The question, of course, referred to the political factions in the local Jewish Zionist Federation, which were molded along party lines already within the Jewish Agency, in the days of the British Mandate, none of which I had ever joined. I often wonder whether I would have come out unscathed from one of those interviews had I belonged to the Revisionist Party in Brazil!

I had relegated my Sephardic background to the back of my mind,

notwithstanding the horror stories I had heard, especially from my relatives recently arrived from Bulgaria, as to organized discrimination against any *oleh* who was not an Ashkenazi. Having gone twice through the saga of immigration, although under deluxe conditions, I rationalized the sometimes bitter complaints as being the result of the economic and social trauma that every immigrant had to go through before integrating himself into a new society. My relatives and the entire Sephardic/Oriental community of the period were just passing through a transition identical to that of the immigration, whether Ashkenazi or Sephardi, that had preceded the establishment of the State. A broad generalization whose full implications I was to discover only later, and whose effects threatened to tear apart the very fabric of society.

After I completed the tour of all the institutions where I had hoped to find myself a professional niche, which ended in a state of frustration and disillusionment, my wife and I decided to take the only road that seemed open to us: join a kibbutz.

The image I had created in my mind of the kibbutz was an ambivalent one. On the one hand, it greatly appealed to me as the utopian ideal of living Socialism according to the romantic vision projected in Arthur Koestler's book, *Thieves in the Night*. On the other, although I had established a deep communion with nature during my years in Brazil, its agricultural aspect did not strike a cord in me. I could not visualize spending my life as a farmer, even within the most perfect utopian setting. I was an inveterate city dweller, though my being had to be nourished through constant contact with nature; I had had the best of two worlds. At the time, the industrial kibbutz was still a vision of the future.

My wife's attitude was totally different. She had witnessed the Anschluss as a young girl and the violence perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews in the streets of Vienna. Thus her decision to make *aliyah* was based on a sentiment of solidarity toward the survivors by sharing her life with them, not on the romantic vision of the return I was imbued with. Actually, after being exposed to the bourgeois lifestyle of her family in Tel Aviv, who attempted to emulate a world that for her had perished in the furnaces of Auschwitz, she saw kibbutz life as the embodiment of the right attitude of the post-Holocaust Jew toward a Europe that had attempted to wipe out the Jews from its midst.

The looks of bewilderment and disbelief on the part of her family when we hinted that we might join a kibbutz were not exactly en-

couraging. As we persisted, they decided to help us find a kibbutz most akin to what they rightly felt was our bourgeois upbringing; they hoped, however, that after a few months of experimentation we would come back to reality and do the only viable thing, go into business.

During our tour of the kibbutzim, both old and new, I must admit that one aspect considerably dampened whatever pioneering inclination I might have had; the fact that newcomers had to live in tents before being allocated one of the small bungalows, the privilege of the oldtimers, obviously a well-deserved reward.

Under the circumstances, when we were told by a friend of my wife's cousin, a supplier of kitchen equipment to the kibbutzim, that one of their affiliates would be willing to consider our application and give us a room with a shower, we did not hesitate.

The living accommodations proved to be adequate, even luxurious when compared to those of my recently arrived relatives in the *maabaroth*, and our commitment to turn over to the kibbutz all our foreign cash after a one year trial period was deemed acceptable by the Secretariat. I was rather surprised that for the first time the question of previous party affiliation or ideological purity was not brought up. Today I realize that this problem was not a serious obstacle to our admittance to the kibbutz because the cash they would receive was sufficient to enrich the barn with several of the finest milk-producing cows of Dutch origin.

Without fanfare, the farewell on the part of my wife's relatives, with strong undertones for a speedy return to civilization, and the incredulous reaction of my own relatives who could not come to terms with the insanity of their "rich" relatives from Brazil—chosing of their own free will a communal lifestyle which, in their eyes, was not too different from the *maabaroth*—we were off to a kibbutz some fifteen kilometers from Tel Aviv, a great distance within the territorial space of tiny Israel, to start our new lives.

Our reception committee was limited to the Secretary, who for the length of our stay in the kibbutz would remain our only link to its power establishment. As a matter of fact, it might have been that way with the entire kibbutz population, had my Sephardic gregariousness not eventually broken through what appeared a stone wall of indifference.

Many of the *vatikim* (oldtimers), employees of the Government agencies I had previously been exposed to, worked in Tel Aviv and commuted daily. The land to be toiled and the kitchen to be taken

care of was mostly in the hands of new immigrants, some recently here from the refugee camps in Europe, some others, survivors from Auschwitz, who had been interned by the British in Cyprus; and a number who had spent the war years fighting with the Russian Army, or had lived in Siberia where they had been evacuated by the Russians in retreat from the German onslaught.

My wife and I were the sole representatives of those who had answered Ben Gurion's appeal to the Jews of the world to join their brethren in the task of building Eretz Yisrael, and thus efface once and for all the decadence and servitude of *galuth* (Diaspora) life. Thus it was not surprising that during our first meal in the new communal dining hall we were the object of taciturn and inquisitive glances, as if we had come from another planet. The mood that enveloped us, however, did not distract me from the realization that the food we were being served was of greater abundance and variety than anything we had experienced in Israel so far, as this was still a time when almost everything but eggplant was severely rationed.

As to my chores in the kibbutz, I was informed by the Secretary that the labor committee, whom I never met face to face, had decided to allocate me to the chicken coop, which turned out to be a blessing in relation to other chores. My wife had to wake up at 4 a.m. once a week to help prepare breakfast and take-along meals for those who went out into the fields at 6 a.m., and work in the steaming laundry room the other days.

The individual who reigned supreme over the integrated universe of the chickens was a German Jew already in his forties, who had made his *aliyah* as a young man before Hitler came to power, who spent his entire time reminiscing about the bounties of his youth in the Weimar Republic. Although leaving me pretty much on my own as to the technical aspects of running a chicken coop, which enabled me after a while to adapt to the circumstances some processes akin to an industrial assembly line, gave me valuable insights into the Jewish bourgeois society of post-World War I; his narratives were to echo in the words and lives of Gershom Scholem and of Walter Benjamin, who would fascinate me in the decades to come.

After a couple of months my *haver* (companion), due to chronic ulcers resulting from two decades of hard toil, was substituted by a sabra born in a kibbutz and just demobilized from the army; I was initiated into another epic of Jewish history. While Joshua, true to the tradition of the Jewish narrator, filled my vision with the unfolding of the battles that had made the State of Israel a reality, he spent

much of his time under the shade of a beautiful eucalyptus tree near the coop. Whether or not the husky fellow was still enjoying the well deserved rest of an exhausted warrior, the commanding voice within the confines of the chicken coop became mine.

The tales of the *Yeke* (German Jew), as they called him, made me realize how similar his family background and aspirations had been to those of my youth, although he came from the other side of the Rhine. It confirmed what I already had felt in Brazil and would encounter throughout the next decades, that I had more in common with German Jews than with most of those originating from Eastern Europe, or than with as many of my own Sephardim.

On the other hand, watching and listening to Joshua, the sabra, I wondered at first about what I had in common with him as a Jew. With time, I was able to discern, through the nonchalance and heaviness that reminded me in many ways of some of the French peasant youth I had known in Pau, a certain trend of mind totally and intensely dedicated to the land he was born in, Eretz Yisrael.

The *halutz* (pioneer) from Germany and the sabra, archetypes that had made the state of Israel possible—did the future of the country depend on their view of the world? Throughout their long monologues, as I listened most of the time, I did not seem to discern any link with the Judaism I was so desperately seeking, and in the pursuit of which I had uprooted myself from what in the midst of the kibbutz drudgery almost took on the appearance of a lost Eden.

For a while I believed I had found a link in the chain of Jewish continuity in the strange land of the kibbutz. I had noticed from the first day in the dining hall an older man with the aquiline features that often mark those European Jews with deep roots in the Talmudic tradition and exposure to the best European culture had to offer, a Jewish patrician, who awoke in me memories of the house on the Hill of Pera.

We soon established the kind of human contact I had taken for granted among the Jews of the Diaspora, but which I did not seem to find among the new Jews, the Israelis in search of a new identity.

In the evenings, when the peace of the setting sun descended on the land, he would join my wife and me on long walks in the abandoned Arab fields and orchards that surrounded our kibbutz, and we opened up our hearts to each other. Despite a difference in age of more than a decade, our encounter was similar to that of reunited comrades who had been part of the same European saga, although in reality there was no basis for comparison.

His was that of a youth formed in a Polish *yeshivah* (talmudic school), abandoning religion for the pursuit of the messianic vision of social redemption, first as a combatant in the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, a stalwart in the Dutch Communist Party, and then on to armed struggle with the French Resistance in the Massif Central against the German invaders. After the war he had spent a few years in Paris, utterly disillusioned in the gods that had failed, and had married a much younger woman with whom he was rarely seen together in the kibbutz; they had a small son on whom he seemed to bestow all his love and whatever hope he had left.

Despite the nihilistic state of my newly found friend, whether the result of his disillusionment in the messianic vision of social justice or the last straw of hope in a half-hearted acceptance of the narrow nationalism of a Nation-State, his person projected an element of redemption.

The unequalled brilliance and coloring of the Mediterranean dusk reminded me of the rainbow after the flood, a sign of God's promise to Noah that the world would not be destroyed for the sake of the generations to spring forth from his seed. Maybe, I told my friend, the covenant that was first established between God and Abraham, and then with the Jewish people at Sinai, had to be reaffirmed by a covenant with the land of Israel.

Over the months that followed we poured out our expectations and doubts in the hope of hearing from that strange man words to confirm that our return to the land of our ancestors had not been in vain. Answers we did not receive, but in the best tradition of the Jewish storytellers, our friend, or rather our teacher as we realized in retrospect, unfolded for us a vision of his struggles for an ideal, the liberation of man from oppression, whether from the yoke of tyrants or pagan gods.

How similar was the thrust of his heart and mind to that of the rabbis who would later lead me to the path on which I would find my own answers to the Jewish destiny. His words and attitude seemed to mirror Israeli society; his entire personality reflected a profound religiosity, but the very word religion was anathema to him, a categorical denial that greatly disturbed us.

In our kibbutz, religion on Sabbath evenings was limited to white tablecloths on the dining hall tables, shirts and blouses of the same color worn by its members, and a certain festive air as well as a special quality to the meal.

But my wife and I were unexpectedly afforded a glimpse into the universe of traditional Judaism. Our day of rest was on Sabbath and, there being no transportation, we decided some time after joining the kibbutz that we would walk the fifteen kilometers separating us from Tel Aviv to visit our relatives.

Long hikes had always been the main fare of our days of rest, so we saw it as a good opportunity to get to know the narrow strip of territory that separated Tel Aviv from our kibbutz. It was situated almost at the foot of the dreaded range of hills of Judea and Samaria known in those days as the Triangle, part of Arab Palestine, whose inhabitants had sworn to throw the Jews into the sea.

The same stretch of land we had crossed by bus and truck, and which during the days of labor resembled a beehive of activity, was enveloped in a serenity that made us feel we really were in the Holy Land. A serenity that had little in common with the harmony among forest, mountain, beach, and ocean Brazil is endowed with, for a certain element of violence was intrinsically linked to it, still part of what God in Genesis had instructed man to subdue so as not to be engulfed by it. This was the serenity of a land where men and nature had come to terms with each other. On that day of peace and rest it seemed as if the Jews, however secular they might consider themselves to be, in their subconscious were being true to the legacy of their forefathers and were being granted the weekly blessing of the messianic promise.

As we walked toward the small town of Bnei Brak, part of our itinerary, for a moment it looked as if it had been totally abandoned. It was an illusory emptiness, as we felt an eeriness that conveys the forms of what cannot be seen. Inside the town the silence was broken, as we heard the chanting that emanated from the houses surrounding us. The Orthodox Jews of Bnei Brak were celebrating the Sabbath in accordance with the tradition and the commandment of our forefathers.

As we trudged along the main road we felt we were violating the sanctity of a world we were no longer entitled to. Through the open windows we were able to distinguish first the shadows and gradually the silhouettes of men praying, wrapped in their prayer shawls.

Whatever had conditioned me, perhaps an element of truth in my grandmother's constant reminder that we were the descendants of the great kabbalist of Safed whose spark would live on provided we remained faithful to Judaism, on that Sabbath morning, in the little town of Bnei Brak, the certitude was born in me that the answer to

the search that had made us reject Europe and had uprooted us from the hospitable shores of Brazil to the Land of Zion, lay in the Torah, in the words of those scrolls of parchment that had followed the children of Israel throughout the exile.

The answer I was seeking as to my place in the order of things lay with traditional Judaism that had its existence rooted in the Torah. Maybe the concept of Diaspora was just a figment of the imagination, and the newly founded Jewish state was still part of the exile.

A doubt still lingers on inside of me to this day. If on that Sabbath in Bnei Brak we had not continued on our way to Tel Aviv and instead entered one of the houses and said, "Here we are, we want to study with you," what course would our lives and that of our children have taken?

Actually, there was a deeply rooted explanation for both my wife and myself not having taken such a leap of faith, each one of us for different reasons based to a certain extent on prejudice.

As far as I was concerned, there was the dim memory of the two Russian rabbis in traditional, Eastern European garb who had come to ask my father for a contribution to their *yeshivah* while we still lived in Constantinople, and to the consternation of my grandmother had been against the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine before the coming of the Messiah. That event had been relegated to the past of a dead world. While visiting the Orthodox quarters of Jerusalem I had been deeply disturbed by the scenes I had witnessed, for they brought back to me the dimension of that dead world, all its undertones in regard to the prejudice of the Sephardic *buenas familias* toward the Ashkenazim in general, and especially the Polish Jews.

A prejudice, the cause of many heated quarrels with my grandmother, which I had been able to eliminate at least from my mind. It was easy to rationalize that their garments and habits were the product of the ghetto that had imprisoned them within the framework of the medieval world of Eastern Europe, and Yiddish was after all but an archaic version of German. They were the remnants of a world that had held them in tyranny for centuries, not allowing them to emancipate themselves and benefit from the mores and culture of Western civilization like the Jews of the West, which in our eyes included the Sephardim of the Balkans.

On the other hand, to integrate myself into their life-style, however great the spiritual dimension of their existence, would have been too heavy a price to pay. The outward trappings, and many of

the habits, were not part of my cultural make-up.

As to my wife, her attitude was basically not much different from mine. The descendant of Eastern European Orthodox Jews whose grandparents had found their way to Emancipation in the rarified atmosphere of Imperial Vienna, and whose parents had sought to cut the ties with their Jewish past after immigrating to Brazil, she was also finding her way back to the religion of her forefathers, but not at the price of returning to a social framework of the ghetto.

One of the topics I often discussed with my friend from Holland was the future of the kibbutz. Why did we not take in the people of the *maabaroth* (tent camps) as paid workers, rather than allow the land to lie idle and the equipment to rot, for although nobody went hungry in those days the shortage of food was serious. There was a large stretch of abandoned Arab land at the disposal of the kibbutz which was not being toiled. Not for lack of equipment, though, for near my coop I had noticed a hangar under which stood in idleness what appeared to be a modern plowing and harvesting combine. At several occasions when I tried to break through the barrier of silence that divided me from some of the *vatikim* (old timers) who spoke English, I was invariably met with the rhetorical answer that they had no people to work them. A startling reply, for from our kibbutz could be seen the patched roofs of the temporary shacks inhabited mainly by immigrants from North Africa who had no work.

Undoubtedly, an element of individualism was to be partly blamed for the situation; the idea of a collective existence was not attractive to most Oriental Jews. On the other hand, whether in the kibbutz or in Tel Aviv, I often heard that the Orientals were not good candidates for kibbutz life, sometimes followed by comments that it would be difficult to build a modern State with that kind of people, that what was needed were Jews from Russia who were like them. Considering the conditions of misery the North African Jews were living in, and the harshness of life in the border settlements, organized by the Government to populate the empty parts of the land and to which they were being moved—could not some of them have been given the opportunity to try living in a kibbutz?

Our kibbutz counted among its members a few East European families—prized elements for molding into kibbutzniks, I was told—who were new immigrants recruited from the same *maabara* across our field. They were Jews from the part of Poland annexed by Russia after the partition of the country, who had been evacuated under the onslaught of the Reichswehr and resettled in Siberia for the duration

of the war years; most of the men had fought in the ranks of the Soviet Army.

Contact with these men provided me with a cherished insight into what their lives had been like during those terrible years, as well as what had been the warmth and depth of the Jews of Eastern Europe.

On my second week at the kibbutz, without any previous warning I was awakened at 2 a.m., given an old Lee-Enfield rifle of World War I vintage, not being asked whether I could handle it or not, and by the gesture of an outstretched arm told to climb up to the watchtower of the kibbutz, where I found myself in the company of one of the new immigrants who I assumed was to share guard duty with me.

A great fear invaded me when I realized that in the tower I would have the awesome responsibility during two hours to defend the kibbutz against terrorists from those villages whose lights I saw glittering on the top of the hills, almost near enough to be touched, and whose purpose was to slit our throats, ritually gouge out our eyes and sew our testicles onto our lips, as had been the fate of one of the guards at a nearby kibbutz! I did relax somewhat when it turned out that my companion, who had fought the war in the Red Army, not only could handle the rifle but spoke Italian. All the members of his group, after having been released from Siberia, had spent the years between the end of the war and the establishment of the State of Israel in a refugee camp in Italy.

So twice a week for the next few months there were heated discussions on the part of two Jews who had come from what seemed different ends of the globe, one in his Italianized Portuguese and the other in his Yiddishized Italian. Those dialogues, usually under the glittering stars of a sky that must have imbued our Hebrew forefathers with the certitude that they were near to the invisible One who dwells in the heaven, could have taken on the proportion of a Kafkaesque existential experience had they not been impregnated with elements of humor. Here I was in the Promised Land, having to hear invariably from survivors of the European Holocaust about their greatest desire, their dream of reaching Brazil, the land I had come from.

During the years spent in Italy in the relative comfort of resettlement camps established by the Joint Committee, they must have been seduced not only by the charm and humanity of that country as compared to what they had been through, but obviously also been influenced by the mystique that permeated it, namely Brazil, their

promised land, for there is hardly an Italian who does not have a relative in Brazil. No wonder that the city of São Paulo was known as Piccola Italia, as it was then the second largest Italian city in the world.

There was also the United States, where many Jews from the European camps would eventually have liked to go; but my companions of the kibbutz tower felt that because of their knowledge of Italian it would just be a small step toward reaching the bounties of Brazil.

Despite the cold and a certain fear that never left me, I came to look upon our conversations on the watch tower as a diversion from the monotony of everyday kibbutz life. The only disturbing factor was that one of my faithful companions, who in great detail described to me his participation in the battle of Stalingrad and the capture of Berlin, had the habit of falling asleep, bringing about a sense of terror that a couple of times tempted me to fire my rifle toward the cowshed whenever I thought I heard strange noises. Imagine the tragedy had I killed one of the kibbutz cows, their most precious possession, rather than a *fedayin*, which would have spelled the end of my career as a kibbutznik.

Although I now realize that the months of physical labor in the chicken coop gave me the time to put my life into proper perspective, at the time it increased the sense of claustrophobia I had felt almost from the day I arrived, to the point that I had the impression of being trapped. As the days, weeks, and months slowly passed by, I looked up at the sky whenever I heard the roar of engines, and especially those Super-Constellations coming out of nearby Lod airport, symbols of a lost Eden. It was half-heartedly and with difficulty that I tried to convince my companions on the tower that all was not milk and honey in the vast continent across the Atlantic, and that they would be better off if they made their future in the land of Israel.

I came to see the kibbutz as a necessity during the pioneering days when the land in the possession of Jews was scarce and its collective life ideal as a defense strategy in the midst of a hostile environment, but not as an end in itself. Definitely, the kibbutz was not for me, as I could not visualize myself working with my hands as a farmer for the rest of my days, and especially in a communal structure.

A basic part of the philosophy of the founding fathers of the Jewish State was the return of the Jew to the land, not only as an economic necessity, but as an almost mystical facet of the concept of normalization. The fallacy of the religious idealization of kibbutz agriculture—so beautifully extolled in the Zionist rhetoric of the re-

cruiters—that it would make Israel an economically independent nation. My professional background had made me aware that this could only be achieved through industrialization of a specialized nature, something similar to a Switzerland of the Middle East, not based on heavy industry.

At the time the country had neither the resources nor the people, but I was sure they would eventually come from the Diaspora, where there was plenty of both. This was the vision that had brought me there, and I soon realized how much people with my background were needed. Needed but not wanted, was the sad conclusion I arrived at, for we had not shed our blood, and in the ultimate analysis, maybe they were right. So if the kibbutz was not for me, what was left but to return to where I had come from?

Other elements contributed to my moving in an almost inexorable fashion toward that conclusion, not really important within the context of the State but essential on an individual basis. The path I had set for myself, only interrupted by the vision of my participation in a redeemed Zion, was still out there in the great big world, in the tradition of my forefathers the merchants of Sefarad. My longing to be part of it, which I thought would eventually disappear were I to find fulfillment in my personal contribution toward building the Jewish state, flared up in full force.

There was another factor that greatly influenced me and which related to the cause for my claustrophobia. At the time there was a persistent rumor circulating in the country that new immigrants were not being allowed to leave the country, or only with great difficulty. This was an acknowledged fact affecting all immigrants whose trip had been financed by the Jewish Agency and who had received financial help for their absorption, which obviously was not my case. But I was highly disturbed by the information given by a government official that no stateless person without a valid passport was allowed to leave the country.

It seemed that the family saga was once more catching up with me, for my ephemeral Spanish passport would be expiring within a few months and could not be renewed in Israel, as the nearest Spanish Consulate was out of reach in the Arab-occupied part of Jerusalem.

The awareness that I might be stuck in that small piece of land for the rest of my days should I not be able to renew my passport, threw me into total disarray. A state of mind which reached that of sheer panic when a customs official refused to hand me the medication my

family in Brazil had sent me, as the old asthma demon of my youth had started once more clutching my lungs. The official claimed that adequate medication was being produced in the country and no imports of equivalents were permitted due to lack of foreign currency. My insistent pleas that none of the local medicines were of any help to me and that the medication in question had been sent to me as a gift, only seemed to harden the zealous bureaucrats sitting behind their desks, whether at the Customs or the Ministry of Health, in their interpretation on how to defend the interests of the State against would-be offenders.

These two regulations of the newly formed Jewish State in the process of becoming a nation like other nations and which affected my personal existence, the one preventing me from leaving the country if I wished to do so, and the other denying me the means of physical survival within its boundaries, prompted my decision to return to Brazil at any cost.

Not only was I hurt to the bottom of my soul, but I was also angry. Maybe it was the awakening in me of that Sephardic pride I had heard so much about from my family, not without resentment, for I could always detect in it a sense of superiority.

The vision of a world I had been accustomed to from my early days in the house on the Hill of Pera, the awareness of my rights in a free society I had been imbued with in France added to the last decade of my life spent in a land not yet molded by the limitations of a Nation-State which had conditioned me to its boundless possibilities, made me aware that many of the events taking place in the State of Israel, at least to my mind, ran contrary to what the main thrust of Judaism was supposed to be.

Apart from the difficulties I was to encounter in obtaining an exit permit, there was another obstacle: the resistance on the part of my wife to giving up the fight. She strongly felt that our departure would be premature. Others went as far as seeing it as sheer treason.

In my decision to leave there was a large amount of egotism that prevented me from seeing the overall trauma the State was going through, and made it impossible for me to compromise as far as my personal destiny was concerned. My wife, on the other hand, was solely motivated by her wish to share the destiny of the survivors, whatever the outcome of the Zionist vision might be. She had lived the Anschluss, while I had never set eyes on men garbed in the uniform of the Gestapo or the SS. The vicissitudes that threw me into a state of depression and disillusionment did not seem to affect her.

She had accepted her role in the life of the kibbutz, and was ready to raise our children and spend the rest of her life there. Maybe the notion that collective life was not made for Sephardim was correct. Too much individualism and dedication to abstract causes rather than the community, or plain Don Quixotism, as she accused me in her moments of anger.

Whatever the depth of her reluctance, when she did agree to our departure and I informed the *haver* (comrade) in charge, the kibbutz suddenly discovered our existence. For the first time after many months I came to see the members of the Secretariat face to face during the gruelling sessions in which all arguments were used to try and dissuade us from our decision. Why did we want to leave? It was for the entire Jewish people that they had struggled all these years and fought to create a Jewish State. We were among the few who had responded to the appeal for the return, and now we wanted to turn our backs on them. Did we not have everything we needed, a roof over our head, food?

In the end, they had to accept our resolve and like "thieves in the night," a metaphor from Koestler's book that had played no small part in my Zionist formation, we left the kibbutz and rented a small room in Tel Aviv, for my wife's relatives refused to see us; we had turned our back on the State, on everything they stood for. I immediately set out to obtain the official permit to depart from the country, which it was rumored would be granted only under special circumstances to a new immigrant, for in two months our Spanish passports would expire.

The weeks that followed proved to be one of the most harassing periods of my life, for one by one I had to eliminate the bureaucratic obstacles for which my exposure to its Brazilian counterpart had prepared me, never to accept a no or a stare of silent oblivion as an answer.

Up to this day it is not clear to me whether these obstacles had the purpose of impeding the transformation of immigrants into emigrants, or whether at their roots was the assimilation of the idiosyncracies of the bureacracy dating all the way back to Tsarist Russia, its offshoot, the Bolshevik Regime, and the British Imperial Mandatory Power, of which they themselves had been the victims. This experience also had its positive aspects, for it sharpened what some maintain is a natural propensity of Sephardim toward oratory, added to the dialectics of a French education which in the decades to come proved to be of great benefit during countless negotiations either to

obtain visas for Jews or finalize commercial ventures across three different continents.

Adding greatly to my ever-sinking morale was to come across many others in a similar situation, in the long corridors of the different ministeries where we had to obtain interminable permits. Some were among the best human beings I have ever met, at least in their idealism and motivation. Mostly American, Canadian, Australian, and South African Jews, they had left behind their comfortable homes to help build Eretz Yisrael, some to volunteer in the War of Independence. Invariably they had a story to tell of frustration and anger toward the bureaucracy similar in many ways to my personal experience. They were not turning away because of material hardship, but all shared the feeling that had been the main motivation of my decision, that they were not wanted.

To this day I wonder the extent to which the harsh path to nationhood might have been alleviated had the few among the best of the Jewish youth of the Diaspora, with their technical and professional qualifications, remained in the land of Israel.

A matter of reflection in retrospect is to compare this immigration from the West to that of the 'sixties, of the Jewish post-Vietnam generation from the United States who flocked to the already structured Jewish State in the hope of solving their own problems of frustration and alienation in relation to the society of their origin.

After weeks of running from one office to another to obtain our exit visa, and just two weeks before our passports would expire, in desperation I took a rash action which everybody advised me not to do, as they believed it would eliminate any possibility of leaving the country. I decided to personally confront in his own home a man, who today holds one of the top judiciary positions in Israel, and demand from him an explanation by what law, and based on what moral code, the Jewish State could prevent an immigrant who had come at his own expense from returning to his country of origin, whatever his motivation or reasons.

There still remains with me the painful memory of the profound sadness on the face of this man that only expressed nobility and kindness, when at his request I told him my saga. He had been one of the founders of the State, and I realized then that its creation had been possible only because there had been others of the same caliber. Unfortunately the price of being a nation like other nations was already exacting its toll through the action of men of lesser stature who had the responsibility for the daily routine of the State, and in

the process were acquiring a taste of power.

Within twenty-four hours our visas were made available, and in a matter of days, with tickets sent by my family in Brazil, we were on our flight to Zurich.

The image of our taxi drive from Tel Aviv to Lod airport through the war-torn landscape is still vivid in my mind, in contrast to the opulence of the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich. Could it be possible that this was still part of the same world, after an interval of a few hours?

The bitter taste of this dichotomy stayed with me for many years to come. Back in the luxury of Rio de Janeiro and in the same job that my employers had kept open in the hope that I would overcome my romantic phase and return, a profound sense of guilt would seize me whenever I sat down for a meal. Life would never be the same again; it was a different world.

Ten years had elapsed following our failed immigration, which in retrospect seems but a brief interlude, when I received an offer from a large U.S. steel producer to move to the United States and join their newly formed International Division. It was an offer which we accepted only after a great deal of soul-searching and misgivings, for meanwhile our two children had come into the world and I was in the midst of what appeared a brilliant business career, having acquired the reputation of being one of the top young executives in my field.

On the other hand, here was the opportunity of an international career, which would open the doors to that great big world I had always longed to get to know. An opportunity coupled with the mystique of a pioneering enterprise, which appealed especially to the romantic side of my nature, hardly dampened by our ill-fated journey to the land of Israel.

Besides, my wife and I harbored the hope that despite the failure of the search for our Jewish roots which had taken us to Israel, we might be more successful in that immense country of North America, not to speak of the hope of bringing up our children in a more meaningful Jewish environment. But we would be leaving a country almost totally devoid of antisemitism, which apparently was still rampant in American society. Could we be in for just another illusion?

Within a few months we found ourselves in a residential hotel in New York at the corner of Central Park West, near the Museum of Natural History. A few blocks away stood the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, a landmark of the city, not only a reminder of the glories of Sefarad but of the part played by Sephardic Jews in the

founding of New York.

Before long, I was invited by one of the Jewish organizations I had been involved with in Brazil to be part of its Foreign Affairs Committee; I became exposed to a dimension I would never have dreamed possible, encompassing the cultural and political facets of most Jewish communities around the world. It looked as if all the expectations of combining an international business career with the quest for my Jewish roots would be fulfilled, having as a base the great liberal society that not only had delivered the world from Nazism but would point the way to the future; a vision soon to be obscured by the other facet of the United States, namely the world of what Pittsburgh stood for.

During the previous years I had often traveled to America, sometimes in winter. Provided with a good overcoat and in a well-heated environment, snow-covered New York was a pleasant contrast to the lush, semi-tropical land I had come from.

As the limousine drove me from the Pittsburgh airport to the center of the city, I had the distinct impression that I was entering the land of the cold. A feeling that gripped at my insides and was not limited to the dark winter day, but would remain during the height of summer, my constant companion while traveling throughout the industrial centers of the United States.

Looking out from the window of my room at the Hilton at Four Gateway, the headquarters of many large corporations including my new employer, I felt the full significance of one of the passages in Henry Miller's "The Air-Conditioned Nightmare," when from an identical perspective he had his first glimpse of Pittsburgh after many years in Europe.

The massive blocks of glass-encrusted skyscrapers surrounding the large square, in whose center stood the Hilton, presented a desolate scene, for the broad avenue that cut across it was almost empty of pedestrians, more like the extension of a freeway planned to allow a continuous stream of fast-moving cars.

I felt the significance of the word *angst*, so widely used since the war. Even the grimness of the new industrial slums of Brazil did not project it, for they had developed amidst the green of nature and were thick with a swarming humanity. New York had been misleading, for the pedestrians that thronged its avenues gave the city a vibrancy and color hardly matched across the nation, more akin to a European capital, as I was to realize later.

Working in Pittsburgh projected me into a universe that gave liv-

ing dimension to Fritz Lang's cinematographic masterpiece, "Metropolis," which had profoundly marked my youthful imagination. There was a snowstorm outside and for a couple of days I had commuted between the office and the Hilton through a connecting underground passage without actually seeing the sky, until I was driven along the banks of the Allegheny River, where I visualized the power of America, the mammoth structures and smoke stacks of its steel mills stretching as far as the eyes could see.

The time I spent inside the plant, then one of the most modern in the world and whose products it would be my task to market around the globe, as well as the contact I established with my employers and colleagues, left me with a feeling of profound ambivalence.

Realizing that I was now at the kernel of a world that could lead to the culmination of my professional career filled me with a sense of power. But I was gripped by the fear of being drawn into a universe that, if I were to be consequential, would bring about a reversal of what had been my attitude toward life in general. I believed I had struck a balance so far, establishing a barrier between my private and professional lives. Would I be able to continue to do so?

Two elements in that newly discovered universe disturbed me profoundly. One was the fact that there seemed to be no Jews in the U.S. steel industry except in research laboratories, which confirmed the vox populi of the Jews of the country, for I was the object either of astonished glances or sheer disbelief whenever I mentioned that I had just been engaged by one of its largest producers. The realization that I was an exception to the rule left me in a state of bewilderment, pride mixed with anxiety. "Why me—was there no other choice in these big United States?"

An answer was soon provided. When invited to the home of one of the vice-presidents, inserted in his presentation as to the future goals of the company were the following words, "You see, my friend, when we came out of the last war as the most powerful nation, with new responsibilities for the rest of the world, the possibility presented itself for our industry to become truly international. For this we need people who know the world, like those of your race. This is actually why we hired you."

The rationale of this answer left me fully satisfied and very proud, for here from the mouth of a top executive of the U.S. corporate world was the confirmation of the role played by Jews in history, as a link between continents and nations. Later I was to remember the ambiguity of this role, for history had shown that when the Jew has

done his job, the Jew can go. It had happened to the Jews of Spain, and was to be repeated up to our time in Europe.

The other factor was what I came to coin as the "Pittsburgh mentality," the mentality predominant in the American corporate world, with its monolithic vision of the world and the role it fashioned for itself in it.

Although at times profoundly disturbed by certain comments in that corporate world, I started my new international career in the heyday of the Kennedy administration when it seemed that the phrase coined during the mystique of the Roosevelt era, that America had a rendezvous with destiny, was still a reality. At least I saw my professional role within that context, since I would be involved with the Marshall Plan in Europe, and there was to be its equivalent for South America, the Alliance for Progress.

Under the circumstances, I could afford to consider the corporate outlook on life as outside the mainstream of what the United States stood for. Luckily, contrary to what I had been advised, I had not eliminated from my hyphenated surname, in the tradition of the Sephardic *buenas familias*, my mother's distinctly Jewish maiden name following my father's—considered to be Italian by the non-initiated—which spared me from hearing about Jews the same aberrations voiced in relation to Roman Catholics. My identity as a Jew was accepted and outwardly respected.

To my utter surprise, a few days after my arrival in Pittsburgh, I was informed that a European international headquarters would be established in Paris and that I would be transferred there. It had not even dawned on my employers that there could be the slightest hesitation on my part, as a foreign assignment was the dream of almost everyone on the staff.

Initially my wife and I were in a state of shock. This change of plans had for us two harsh implications: first, that we would be returning to the land of no return, Europe, and second, that our dream of living the American experience would not materialize.

I remembered my grandmother's admonition that no Jew should ever return to live in Spain, even five centuries after the great Exodus. Could we re-establish residence in Europe, even if it were Paris, on a continent which to us was the Land of Ashes, where so many individuals still had the blood of my people fresh on their hands, which had been made *Judenrein* by Nazi Germany and its European collaborators?

This rationale on my part was undermined by subjective under-

tones which at the time I would not admit to: a deeply rooted nostalgia for France, especially Paris, and the opportunity I had never dreamt of to once again recapture and be part of that unique dimension of human existence. Just as important was a longing for what is termed in America as the opening of new frontiers, and in Europe, plain spirit of adventure, although I only recognized it in retrospect.

What tipped the balance were considerations of a professional nature. My assignment would provide me in the eyes of the U.S. corporate world with a real international experience, so far limited to the South American continent. After an intensive training period in the United States I would at first undertake a market study of the whole of Western Europe and the northern part of the Mediterranean basin, including Turkey and the State of Israel.

There would also be the possibility of trying to search for the roots that had made possible the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem by Nazi Germany and its accomplices, as well as my own.

A few months later, we found ourselves on the Queen Mary sailing toward the Lands of Ashes.

IV.

THE LANDS OF ASHES

France

Having tea with our two small children in the dining car of the boat-train from Calais to Paris, I felt as though I were in an identical setting surrounded by my parents, my grandmother, and my two brothers. The motion of the train, the harmonious countryside unfolding through the large glass windows, the glow of the summer sunset had projected me back to that moment in time when I had first headed toward the City of Lights.

The fear and uncertainty that had possessed me ever since accepting my European assignment and had marred my ocean crossing was suddenly lifted during that instant of eternity, as Bergson would have called it. From the pit of darkness I was lifted into the heights of exhilaration, which reached its peak as the taxi was driving us through the ocean of lights which is Paris at night. Was it the feeling of the voyager returning home?

Soon we were installed in a century-old building of a classy residential quarter, our children enrolled in a bilingual school, and my wife at the Sorbonne as a student of French Civilization; it seemed I was not the only one returning home.

My sense of euphoria did not last long, though; the dreaded day when I would have to stare into the other face of Europe became a reality when on an evening after work I decided to walk down the Champs Elysées and take the subway home at the Place de la Concorde.

The first signs of a long summer twilight were appearing over the city, and looking at the crowd strolling along the broad sidewalks and filling the countless cafés, I sensed that gentle mood which is the

Parisian farewell to the vanishing day, until I stood transfixed in front of a movie theater whose neon sign flashed the title, "The Time of the Ghetto" by Frédéric Rossif. I phoned my wife that I would be home late, and went in to see the movie.

The documentary projected me into the kingdom of the night in whose capitals, Auschwitz, Treblinka, Mauthausen, Sobibor, its all-powerful sovereign, the Angel of Death, had put on the mask of a god.

When I walked out, I hastened my pace toward the Place de la Concorde in an attempt to exorcise the vision of the last two hours, to erase from my memory the haunted eyes and emaciated bodies of the starving Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, herded like cattle into trains whose destination was the land of no return.

I was jolted out of that Dantesque vision by the beauty unfolding around me. The day was coming to an end as I stopped under its impact. The last glows of the summer sun cast a vast mantle of luminosity all the way from the Arch of Triumph to the Obélisque and the Jardins des Tuileries facing the majestic façades of the Louvre.

As my tension was abating, I felt compelled to walk on beyond the Place de la Concorde. Gradually I was again coming to terms with the city of Paris; all around me stood the maximum expression of European civilization and culture.

Suddenly a flood of lights enveloped me from all directions; night had fallen upon the city. It projected a glow of radiance on the Louvre, the abode of France's royalty; ahead toward the Ile de la Cité I could see the towers of the Notre Dame Cathedral. Through the cadence of my steps I was reliving the forays of my youth when walking through its streets I first attempted to penetrate into the life stream of the City of Lights.

Was I still blind to that other face of Paris, the tragic one, hidden behind her exquisite monuments? Was it not what had happened in Germany and most of Europe, hiding behind their monuments in order not to look into the face of the Final Solution, where the henchman was god? The henchman probably was a romantic who liked pomp and performed his task behind the glittering stone monuments of European civilization.

My reveries had taken me from the Jardins des Tuileries across the Pont Neuf into the Ile de la Cité, past the Conciergerie; I only came back to my senses when I found myself in the midst of a crowd slowly streaming into the fenced area of the large square facing the Notre Dame Cathedral. A large sign announced "The Mystery of the

Passion."

Under a compulsion I cannot rationalize, I bought a ticket and entered with thousands of spectators; in the midst of the square remained a large empty aisle leading directly to an enormous stage in front of the cathedral.

A great spectacle was about to begin. Countless projectors flooded the square with light, but the Cathedral stood like a great shadow in the darkness of the night. All of a sudden, amidst exclamations of wonder, the gigantic stained-glass windows were illuminated from within, as the sound of powerful organs in unison with a large choir standing between the stage and the cathedral proclaimed to the heavens its praises to the God who had sent his Son unto earth to save mankind.

The multitude was galvanized to attention. This was no ordinary medieval passion play; Paris was offering its best.

The beauty and the prevailing mood had drawn me in. I was sitting in the midst of young girls in white dresses, gloves, and elegant little straw hats, reminiscent of a painting by Monet, which filled me with expectation. The title of the play to be performed seemed totally irrelevant. What else could it be but a great expression of art?

Spell-bound I watched the first scene unravel, with an outburst of lights and color surpassing anything I was to witness in Hollywood. A wondrous vision of hell, a far cry from Dante's Inferno, with the prince of darkness standing by his throne in baroque splendor.

The voices of famous opera singers expressed horror as a messenger from planet Earth reported that God was sending his only Son to save the soul of man. "Do not fear," exclaimed Satan to his court of demons, "the earth will remain ours for eternity, it will not be saved, for are not the Jews, our trusted representatives, on that planet?"

That one short utterance by the seemingly harmless figure of the tenor-clown playing Satan, had destroyed in one stroke the mechanism of make-believe I was attempting to build so as to justify my return to Europe. This play was not taking place in Oberammergau, Bavaria, but in Paris, France, the country of the great Revolution which had broken the bonds of Feudalism and religious obscurantism. Yet, at that instant, I had just heard a phrase that was at the very root of the scenes that just an hour before I had seen unravel in Rossif's documentary.

You have sold your soul to the devil for a pittance of gold, I said to myself. Had I forgotten my grandmother's admonition never to return to the land of the expulsion? Even after centuries Jews should

not return to a land upon which the *herem* (anathema) had been imposed. I should have stayed in the United States.

Despite my reaction, I decided to stay and watch the play until the bitter end. It should immunize me against any further bouts of romanticism.

The classical scenes of the Last Supper, Judas' betrayal, Pontius Pilate's utterance, unfolded in dramatic cadence, reaching its climax when along the aisle dividing the audience, which had been transformed into the Via Dolorosa, the figure of Jesus under the burden of a heavy cross and constantly being flogged, slowly dragged his way to the center of the stage where the scene of the crucifixion was to be enacted. Throughout the seeming eternity of this scene, a change took place in the audience. While up to then the mood had been one of silent awe, the tension mounted as the figure of Jesus painfully trudged along the Via Dolorosa, until sounds of sobbing echoed all around me. At any moment I expected to hear the ancient cry of "Death to the Jews." The audience had been transformed from spectators into participants.

I held back the urge to run and throw up. No, I would stay until the nightmare ended. If my brethren had perished for *Kiddush Hashem* (Sanctification of God's name) and some had even survived the Final Solution, the least I could do was watch the enacting of the historical distortion which through almost two millennia of European "civilization" had made the Shoah possible.

No, I would not run away again, as I had done from the State of Israel. This time I would take full advantage of the opportunity which providence had put across my path to try and understand. I had had my first visual insight into what Spinoza would have classified as cause and effect, with all the veneer the culture of the West was capable of.

I was fully composed and determined when I walked away from the Notre Dame Cathedral; I knew my task. To the dying eyes of the children in "The Time of the Ghetto" still vivid in my mind, was now added the vision of that grotesque figure of the Son of God, crucified six million times in the gas chambers of the *univers concentrationnaire* (the universe of the concentration camp).

Pope John XXIII wrote on his death-bed the following message to be read throughout the Churches of Christendom:

> We acknowledge that many centuries of blindness have obscured our eyes so that we no longer see the beauty of Thy Chosen People and in

> His face no longer recognize the features of our firstborn brother. We acknowledge that the mark of Cain is upon our brows. For centuries Abel has lain in blood and tears because we forgot Thy love. Forgive us the curse which we unjustly pronounced upon the name of the Jews. Forgive us that we crucified Thee for the second time in cursing them. For we knew not what we did. . . .

The message was never read. In modern U.S. political terminology, it had been "leaked" out of the Vatican Curia.

Well installed in a plush office on Boulevard Victor Hugo, I pondered on what the future had in store for me. I had just had a glimpse into Europe's historical past through the grim documentary of Rossif and the macabre-glamorous spectacle in front of the Notre Dame Cathedral. I had a well defined professional assignment: Western Europe and the Mediterranean basin were to be my field of action. In my dark mood there was a glimmer of light; my secret aspiration to follow in the footsteps of the merchants of Sefarad to blaze the trails of discovery.

What did I really know of this European continent apart from its historical past and its smell of the graveyard? The memories of a romantic youth coupled with the myths of an oral tradition. Would my professional background, so far limited to Brazil and the family's mercantile tradition, be enough to assure the success of my assignment?

Meanwhile, what would be the Jewish education of my children? Between what was left of pre-war French Jewry, which at first glance seemed pretty demoralized, and the great masses of destitute Jewish immigrants from North Africa, where would they fit in? Although they spoke fluent English, their knowledge of French was elementary. Quite a predicament, especially when juxtaposed to the wealth and depth of Jewish community life in the United States, one of the basic reasons of our immigration.

Beyond anything we had imagined, our communal existential vacuum was filled in a manner that turned out to be our most rewarding Jewish experience in France, and was connected to a small number of U.S. Jewish families also at a loss in the exile of Paris. An unfolding of events my grandmother would have attributed to one of the family's kabbalistic ancestors.

This miracle came about through an advertisement in the European edition of the *Herald Tribune*, requesting that English-speaking Jews interested in a Jewish education for their children meet the next Sunday morning at the Liberal Synagogue on Copernic Street.

Among the two dozen couples who showed up, an American attorney with NATO, who had a New York *yeshivah* background, was unanimously approved as Hebrew teacher, and a professor, whose assignment was to write the history of the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II, was made the Jewish History and Bible teacher.

In retrospect, our first communal experience with those American families, which became our Paris *havurah* (study group), was as deep in human warmth and Jewish commitment as anything we encountered during the almost twenty years we came to live on the North American continent. For those of us who are still in this world, the bonds of friendship have survived despite the distances that separate us.

Sunday mornings were awaited with great expectation, to the point that eventually I was able to coordinate my business trips throughout Europe in a manner that I would be back on Friday night to spend the Sabbath with the family; and while the children spent the morning hours at the Copernic Synagogue, sometimes grudgingly attending their Jewish Sunday School classes, most of us parents looked upon the few hours we were together waiting at the nearby café on the Place Victor Hugo as one of the highlights of the week.

These English-speaking Jews so eager to provide their children with a Jewish education to the point of sacrificing their sacrosanct Sunday mornings to it, were a microcosm of upper middle-class America working for U.S. government agencies and corporations, members of the Armed Forces—those were the days when NATO Headquarters were located in France—entrepreneurs, a diplomat, a newspaper editor, a movie producer, as well as some genuine expatriates, and one English Jew. This diversity generated a tension and vitality which deeply affected all those who ever belonged to our *havurah*. The memory of a unique experience lingers on wherever we may be.

This is what the *havurah* of the Café on the Place Victor Hugo, as I came to remember it, was all about. American Jews, whether the descendants of the twenty-three Sephardim that came from Holland via Brazil three centuries ago, or from Germany as the result of the 1848 Revolution, and during the Bismarck era, the first and second generation of the great Eastern European exodus, refugees of the Hitler era, post-war European immigrants—all brought together by the hazards of their professions in a Paris Café through a notice in the *Herald Tribune*, in their common search for a religious education

of their children and to maintain alive their Jewish roots.

Whatever our personal motivations, we labored to rediscover our common heritage. To many of the group, who had led a safe but secluded existence in the United States, the exposure of post-Holocaust Europe was a trauma to which their Judaism had to be reconciled. Not only some of us who originally came from Europe had a story to tell, but many of the men, during their weekly travels throughout the continent, were confronted with the after-effects of the tragedy of the remnants of Jewish communities as well as the wealth of their historical past; it was not easy for them to live surrounded by ghosts.

Gradually we dropped our masks, and apart from immediate experiences and pains, joys and festivals were shared. The crowning event was our first Bar Mitzvah, that of the son of a U.S. Navy Commander, who drove every week-end hundreds of miles to prepare him for the event at the Copernic Synagogue. We all felt we had established a link in the chain of Jewish continuity on a continent Hitler had sworn to make *Judenrein*. Maybe we could claim in all humility to have contributed by our act of presence in an infinitesimal way to a Judaism coming out of the ashes.

Of all the memories around the *havurah* on the Place Victor Hugo, there is one whose presence still lingers on and always will. It is that of my friend the photographer, at the time on an assignment for one of the top U.S. magazines. I can still hear him saying, "Is it really photography, or is it the obsession I have to put on paper that spark in a person's eyes, or that simple gesture which conveys a moment in eternity? Some have been able to put it on canvas, others in words or music; the brush, the pen, the musical instrument are their tools, mine is the camera. But damn it, why do they have to send me to all those bloody wars, when there is so much beauty in life?"

I will never forget the Sunday morning when he unexpectedly returned from an assignment in Vietnam, where he had photographed the first landing of U.S. Marines in Da-Nang; it was the beginning of the escalation of the conflict into a large-scale war. His words still echo in my mind, "It is good to be back in Paris! Not that these Frenchmen aren't a bunch of bastards, but we could have learned a couple of things from them. They were up to their necks in Indo-China since the turn of the century, and what were the results? One hundred thousand of them buried out there, and the *grande finale* at Dien-Bien-Phu; and now we have allowed ourselves to fall into the same trap!"

At this moment I am sitting in a crowded sidewalk Café. The summer twilight has given way to darkness, and although it is still warm, a slight shiver runs through my body as I think of my friend the photographer; it seems as if the air is standing still and there is no one else around me but a presence.

The dark clouds of war are again gathering, this time in Central America. I have to remember my friend's words upon his return from Da-Nang. It seems as if America has learned nothing from it, and is about to repeat the same mistake.

At least my friend would be spared this assignment and what the unfolding of political events in the area still has in store. I remember our last meeting upon his return from covering the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic. In an emotional outburst he cried out, "If the State of Israel is to be at war again, this is where I want to die. I have had enough of being a survivor!"

On the first day of the Six Day War soon to follow, with the news of the Israeli advance into the Sinai, the death of the first war photographer was announced. My friend of our Paris *havurah* had died the way he wished to, as a Jew standing witness.

The children seemed to be adjusting well to their new environment, making progress in the French language at the bilingual school frequented by children of diplomats and foreign executives, and had found the element of Jewish continuity at Copernic Synagogue. My wife, who had been adamant about never wanting to return to Europe since as a young girl she had seen the German troops entering Vienna and Jews being forced to scrub the sidewalks or being carted away in trucks, seemed to have been overtaken by the beauty of Paris, the comfortable life we had made for ourselves, and the fact that she had already been accepted for an advanced course at the Sorbonne.

I had decided to start my market study in France before going on to Germany, Austria, and Italy. A second trip was to follow, covering Portugal, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and Israel. In between, Belgium and Holland would be visited and eventually the Scandinavian countries.

In reality I was to spend a good part of my time in Paris; when at a meeting with German executives one of them observed that our European headquarters should have been established in Dusseldorf for being more symptomatic of the European economic miracle than Paris, he was sarcastically interrupted by his superior. "Don't be silly, you know very well that no European executive likes to go to Dus-

seldorf. They are only too ready to find an excuse to come to Paris!"

The vision of Paris, of its avenues, monuments, buildings, and parks was that of the days of my youth when I roamed the streets of the city in search of the secrets that would be revealed in every corner, but something had changed, as if it all belonged to another world.

As time passed, I began to question every event, place, or person that came my way. An event—had it taken place before or after Auschwitz? A person—had he or she been old enough or too young to have been a member of the resistance or to have collaborated with the German occupants during World War II? When it applied to a man of my generation, the quest went further—where had he been and what had he done?

Years later I came across a book written by a well-known American Jewish writer who coined the expression, "the Tremendum," which best defines the division between a world that ended up in ashes at Auschwitz and the new genesis mankind is attempting to fashion. More so than a division; an abyss. My sojourn was constantly marred by the presence of that abyss, which slowly receded as I gradually began to discern the first signs of a Jewish Renaissance in Europe, that of the French Jewish community.

Our first Yom Kippur in Paris was an expression of this Renaissance. We attended services at the large concert hall of Salle Pleyel, which the Liberal Synagogue of Copernic Street had rented for their members and those Jews who remembered their Judaism by observing the High Holidays.

Many services were taking place in the city, and several seemed to be concentrated in an area all within walking distance of the Salle Pleyel. The visit, or more so the pilgrimage, that I made on that day to the different congregations of Paris not only provided me with a living experience of the commitment of its Jews; these worshipers, some assembled in large halls and others in areas hardly larger than a room, represented all the Jewish communities that had been spread across the map of Europe and of the Mediterranean basin before they had been swept away by the Shoah.

From the service at the Salle Pleyel in which worshiped the more affluent young Jews of the post-war generation, including some of the remnants of the older generation of the "Français de Confession Israelite" (French citizens of the Hebrew faith), I walked to the lower floor where in one of its smaller concert halls was gathered the congregation of Alexandria.

The Torah Scrolls from which they were reading were those they had brought with them from Alexandria in Egypt, where they had dwelled for many centuries. The Scrolls of the Law had stood witness to many generations of Jews who had read from the sacred texts. Had Philo been one of them? There was a mood in the service that seemed to have come from the beginning of time, at least the beginning of Jewish history. How different it was from the one taking place one flight of stairs above, among the Copernic Synagogue congregants. The two were linked, nevertheless, off-shoots of the same trunk.

Just a block away, in what must have been the second floor of a modest restaurant, I came face to face with a congregation of men all dressed in white from head to foot; an Orthodox community of Jews from Germany, the women segregated behind an enclosure totally out of sight. Among the Jews of Alexandria they were separated by a merely symbolic enclosure in a semi-circle behind the men.

Until the hour of the closing Yom Kippur Service, when I returned to my original site of worship, I seemed to have been, within an area of a few square miles, a witness to congregations from Eastern and Western Europe and the Mediterranean basin; remnants of all those Jewish communities obliterated by the Shoah, or uprooted as the result of the dismemberment of the European colonial empires. Lodz, Wilna, Frankfurt, across to Tunis, Morocco, Algeria, and all the way to Baghdad and Teheran. Constantinople, Salonika, Belgrade, Rome were not missing. And, of course, there were Rustchuk, Varna, and Sofia, for some of the 50,000 Bulgarians who had immigrated *en masse* to the State of Israel in 1949 had found their way to Paris.

On that day of Yom Kippur the representatives of a community that had been spared the catastrophes of our century, the greatest and most powerful on our globe, also stood witness. The small liberal synagogue on Copernic Street had been ceded to those American tourists and pro-consuls who happened to be in Paris on that Day of Awe. A source of frustration to some of my friends, though, for the vacationing elderly Reform Rabbi who performed the services quoted extensively during his sermon from American Christian writers to express Prophetic metaphors, and had the service duly terminated at 4 p.m.

On that day it dawned on me that France might be something more than just a place of refuge for Jews who had escaped from North Africa, or for survivors of the death camps of the East until

they found their way to the State of Israel or the New World, notwithstanding the fact that France was part of the Land of Ashes, still poor as a result of the war, and the political situation shaky.

Apart from the occasional explosion of dynamite sticks, not only was it difficult to grasp that less than two decades had gone by since the German occupation, but that the institutions of the Republic had been on the brink of collapse at the time of the Revolt of the Generals protesting General de Gaulle's decision to abandon Algeria. Peace had brought about the mass exodus into France of more than a million French citizens from Algeria, among them 200,000 Jews, who were joined by another 100,000 from Tunisia and Morocco. They were not descendants of immigrants from France; their ancestors had dwelled in North Africa for centuries, many since the destruction of the Second Temple and others since the Expulsion from Spain. They had been granted French citizenship as the result of a decree signed in 1870 by Adolph Crémieux, then Minister of Justice of France, a Jew deeply committed to granting full civic rights to all the Jews then part of the French colonial empire. Most of these Jews had never come to the mainland; many had been educated in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the French Lycée, whose purpose had been to fit an entire generation into the framework of the French nation, both culturally and nationally.

Although most of the repatriated French citizens had arrived destitute, the welfare system organized by the country to integrate them into French society was rather generous despite the poor economic situation. The Jewish immigrants also received substantial help from the community and American Jewish agencies, which apart from complementing the government's financial assistance, put at their disposal an elaborate religious framework, such as synagogues, religious schools, and kosher facilities, which provided these mostly traditional Jews with the element of continuity in a communal setting they had known in their country of origin and which enabled them to maintain the traditional family pattern intact.

Added to a liberal education system that made it possible for the children to continue their education in public highschools, and for the gifted ones to move on into the free University system, the North African Jews found at their disposal a socio-economic framework that would enable them to enter French society on an equal basis with other citizens.

As the months passed after our arrival in Paris, I could discern a similar pattern occurring with Jews of other origins. A substantial

number of Ashkenazi Jews, concentration camp survivors, seemed to have made their permanent home in France; the entire Mediterranean basin also was represented, among them many who had come via Israel.

France appeared to be the only country in Western Europe where Jews were settling again in great numbers, even though the nation itself, that is, the Fourth Republic, did not seem to have consolidated its basis. There were elements, especially among the military, who had not yet come to terms with what they considered De Gaulle's treason in having abandoned the last great symbol of the French colonial empire, Algeria.

All important buildings were guarded by armed gendarmes, machine-guns in hand; there were attempts against the life of the President of the Republic, and occasionally, the sound of explosives going off. I still remember the night when I was awakened by a loud explosion; the next day I found that half the building where the newspaper *Figaro* was located had been blown to pieces. Once I narrowly escaped myself, for one of the small bookstores on the left bank where I used to browse, one night had a few hand grenades thrown into it shortly after I had left, which killed several people.

Despite the political upheavals and the remnants of Vichy collaborators who surfaced ever so often, Paris was a vibrant, invigorating city to live in, once again turning into a city of light out of the ashes that had engulfed Europe.

What added considerable weight to this revival were the number and strength of Jewish lay organizations that provided the community with a solid infrastructure. There were the organizations of veterans who had fought with the French underground, the Maquis, or with De Gaulle's Free French Force, or those who had fought the Germans in the swamps and forests of Russia and Poland, with Tito's partisans or with the Greek guerrillas. All the death camps seemed to be represented by organizations of survivors.

The Alliance Israélite Universelle, which had done so much for Jewish education in pre-war days throughout the French-speaking world, had resumed its activities among the new immigrants. The number of cultural organizations and Jewish publications abounded; Bnei-Brith lodges were coming to life again.

Symptomatic of this rebirth was the CRIF, the French equivalent of the U.S. Jewish Federations, which had its genesis when scattered groups of Jewish underground fighters belonging to countless pre-war organizations decided to unite at the time they were fighting the

Germans in the Massif Central, the main area of the French Maquis during the war years.

As I began to put these elements together, a pattern seemed to emerge of the basic characteristics of this newly emerging community of France. It was a post-Auschwitz community, not only in the sense that they were survivors of the Shoah, but that they had a different way of seeing themselves as Jews, of which pride in the State of Israel was an important factor. Many of their pre-war illusions had also perished in Auschwitz.

Germany

The plane had just landed. Although its appearance was just like that of any other airport, as if the boundaries separating the nations were becoming something of the past, this one had to be different: it was Dusseldorf.

Dusseldorf, the heart of an industrial complex that included the cities of Duisburg, Krefeld, Essen, Solingen, the life-line of what was known all over the world as the German economic miracle, but which only two decades before had produced the instruments of death that transformed a great part of Europe into ashes; the smoke stacks of the industrial Rhineland. This is where I was starting my first professional assignment in Europe, at the very kernel of the land I had sworn never to set foot on again.

As the sleek Mercedes taxi drove me toward the city, I was again immersed in doubt and guilt, haunted by the eyes of the starving children of the Warsaw Ghetto.

I looked in vain for signs of the destruction wrought by the air bombardments of World War II, or for the bucolic post-card images of the traditional German villages. Neither were to be seen. Instead, both sides of the freeway seemed to be lined, in between well tilled fields, with clusters of houses of a type I had never seen before. They reflected none of the solidity the German countryside was famous for, but hastily assembled dwellings consisting of prefabricated cement sections. Hardly any resemblance with those ancient stone houses, symbol of the traditional village, which still abounded in the land of France across the Rhine I had just left behind.

There was a great similarity with the steel towns of America, for among the green fields and dull villages as well as across the horizon as far as the eyes could reach, stood the overwhelming presence of the nation's steel and heavy industry. Here, however, one element prevalent in most of the U.S. industrial areas was missing, that of

decay. Instead, intertwined were manicured pine forests in the midst of multicolored meadows. The irony of the contrast between victor and vanquished further increased the melancholy that had taken hold of me ever since the plane landed.

As we approached the city, the scenery gradually changed until for a moment I felt I was in downtown America; large glass-fronted buildings along broad avenues, with colored signs announcing to the incoming traveler that all the amenities of a cosmopolitan city were at his disposal.

The perplexity expressed on the faces of the police and customs officials at the airport when confronted with a middle-aged man with the bearing of an American executive and the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, presenting a passport issued by a South American country, added to the fact that their questions were answered in French, repeated itself at the reception desk of the hotel. This pattern was to follow me throughout the new Germany, usually accompanied by a teutonic courtesy, to my eyes nothing short of false humility, which varied according to the age, sex, and the degree to which the individual attempted to atone for past involvement in the crimes of the Third Reich.

A courtesy, I soon found out, that was part of a ritual preceding every action, however insignificant, and invariably followed by a verbal repertoire depending on the social and professional status of its performer. As to the person it was addressed to, the performance was considerably more complex, for not only was it focused on what they perceived to be the social and professional identity of the individual, but on the nationality and the religion, especially if the person in question happened to be Jewish.

With rare exceptions, whenever my identity as an executive of a U.S. corporation was determined and my name established my Jewish origin, I was bombarded with a tirade of personal innocence or justification for their role toward the children of Israel during the war.

After a second-rate meal at the plush restaurant of the hotel, surrounded by "Parisian" decor, I ventured out on my first walk in the streets of a city on German soil.

The illuminated signs I had seen from the taxi driving me into the city and which I had taken to be indicative of a cosmopolitan center, proved to be misleading. I found myself in an area resembling more the Pigalle district of Paris or New York's 42nd Street. A profound depression overcame me as I strolled among the aberrations, the end-result of the economic boom of a post-war society, by no means

a German monopoly. Allowances had to be made, for it was the heart of industrial Germany, although many of its inhabitants maintained that it was the real capital of the country. In the midst of the harsh revelry—it expressed a joyless element probably rooted in generations conditioned by blind discipline—I reflected on what my grandmother would be thinking at that moment, seeing her favorite grandson, the one who would fulfill all her aspirations as the heir to the traditions of a *buena familia*, strolling on a site reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorra, in the land of those who had endeavored to destroy the whole Jewish people. Worse than Spain, for at least there they had allowed those who had not accepted baptism to depart. On occasion, especially in moments of great doubt and anguish, I would feel the presence of the beloved departed one. Undoubtedly my grandmother would have attributed this to my kabbalistic ancestry, although she had never dwelled on the subject.

In my young days I had been interested in Alan Kardec's scientific spiritualism, in which men like Arthur Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells in Great Britain, and Upton Sinclair in the United States, had been great believers, and had also been fascinated by the countless voodoo cults rooted in Africa I had witnessed during my years in Brazil, whose beliefs were based on the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, and other metaphysical phenomena. In the house on the Hill of Pera, Kabbalah was part of the family legends and mentioned only in a hush, akin to the ineffable mysteries not to be unveiled. It remained a visceral part of me, a living presence. Thus, when referring to the departed ones, I always spoke of them in the present; they were still there.

Understandably, when walking through the gates of one of the huge plants, my being was heavy with the presence of past generations. The awareness that coming face to face with post-war Germany might unveil some of the underlaying phenomena that had made the Final Solution possible was of small consolation.

From the first day I was puzzled by the observation that most of the cities of the Ruhr seemed to have been rebuilt from scratch, while many of the plants were obviously of the pre-war era, not having been touched by the Allied air bombardments. Why?

The executives I came into contact with generally could be classified into two distinct categories: those of my own generation in their forties and fifties of which there did not seem to be too many, and those over sixty years of age. They had very distinct mentalities reflected in their professional as well as personal attitude toward me,

both as a fellow executive of another nationality and as a Jew.

There was another category of men in their twenties and early thirties with whom I hardly had any contact, and who were in a subordinate position; their attitude toward their elders bordered on being apologetic for their right to exist.

Not without arrogance, I was told that their equipment and the product it turned out was the best to be found anywhere. What remained unsaid but obviously implied was that, after all, it was German. It came from the lips of a man who had spent his entire professional life with that specific industry and had held an executive position throughout the war years.

Throughout the course of an elaborate and interminable meal, which in later days would be repeated with variations on the same theme, my host attempted to convey to me how European he was as the result of his numerous trips and the many friends he had made, as Western Europe was gradually becoming one through the Common Market. At the same time I was made to understand that, after all, European culture was mostly German if one took into account the legacy of Beethoven, Goethe, Kant, etc.

When coffee and brandy were being served, preceded by schnapps and white and red wine, the tongue of my host suddenly was set free. Having limited my intake of alcoholic beverages to a few sips of wine, my mood was not receptive, when from the narrow lips and flashing cold eyes set in a face old enough to be my father, the words hit me like a thunderbolt. "You must understand, young man, Germany had been right in attacking Russia. . . ."

What I had simultaneously most dreaded and desired was taking place during the first day of my professional activities. No chance of respite—the cat was out of the bag. Those were the days of the Korean War and the Berlin Wall, and probably after years of self-imposed silent indignation toward Germany's former enemies, the compulsion to unburden became irresistible. The words gradually lost their coherence.

". . . Now you are fighting the Russians, for they are behind the Koreans. . . . We Germans had seen the evil they represented to the world long ago. . . . Instead of fighting us you should have joined ranks with us in order to destroy them. . . . Before long you will have to do it yourselves. . . . The West is being corrupted by them . . . look at France and Italy . . . if not for the blindness of the British, the unification of Europe . . . this is why Hitler had the vision of a New Order. . . ."

The moment the word Hitler had been pronounced he came to an abrupt silence, his face enveloped in startled confusion. He obviously realized that the mere mention of the Führer would defeat the purpose of his catharsis. Too late, maybe; it had dawned on him that he was face to face with a Jew.

His silence did not last long, though; regaining his composure, the tirade resumed, taking on what he most likely believed to be a redeeming direction. He said that the biggest mistake Hitler made was persecuting the Jews; that Germany would probably have won the war and freed the world from the curse of Bolshevism if it were not for that mistake; that he had had many Jewish friends, and that he had protected his Jewish workers at the plant from the Gestapo and saved their lives; that what is being said about the extermination of six million Jews was grossly exaggerated, and that at the home front they were working for the war effort and did not know what was taking place in the East. . . .

My exposure to American executives in Pittsburgh after their tongues had been loosened by half a dozen or more drinks had conditioned me to keep my mouth shut over certain political diatribes if I intended to continue my career in the steel world. Provided, of course, the Jewish problem was not touched upon, it was a tacit understanding that was scrupulously abided by.

At that moment, though, I felt I would not be capable of living up to my resolution. Luckily, when I was about to verbalize my Sephardic temperament, most likely putting an end to my European career, my host, sensing the storm that was gathering, deflated it by brusquely getting up, politely pointing to the exit and thus terminating our luncheon on an amicable tone.

This pattern repeated itself a number of times when I was entertained by men of the pre-war generation. With the difference, however, that when the Third Reich catharsis was about to be unleashed toward the end of the cycle of alcoholic beverage consumption, I was usually able to divert the conversation to a more prosaic subject, like the beauty of Paris, and the charm of its women.

In the days of the house on the Hill of Pera and later on in Paris, when members of the family narrated their experiences upon returning from business trips throughout Europe and the former provinces of the Ottoman Empire, I learned the extent to which the success or failure of a business venture depended on preserving an enigmatic composure. The members of the *buenas familias*, proud descendants of countless generations of Sephardic traders, should be able to hold

their own in that convoluted post-World War I world, having survived in the past the Byzantine, Levantine, or Machiavellian ways of monarchs and princes of both Islam and Christendom.

This oral tradition to which my childish mind, however subconsciously, was exposed for years on end helped to mold my attitude and insured my survival and relative success, often as a lonely Jew among the nations in that jungle which society so prosaically labels the business and industrial world. An attitude, which in my father's last letter to his children before departing from this world, was summed up in the phrase, "one of the most important things in your life is to keep your *tête haute*. . . ."

There was one occasion in Germany when I lost this sacrosanct composure. Not surprisingly, it was among a group of executives of my own age group, men who had survived the war; a generation whose approach to a Jew they viewed as belonging to a certain professional or economic status was quite different from that of their elders.

After a round of the bars of the city for schnapps and beer, and an interminable dinner soaked with an enormous quantity of French wines, when totally exhausted I was ready to return to my hotel, I was told with great insistence that the party was just about to begin as reservations had been made at the most fashionable nightclub which put to shame their French and American equivalents.

On that particular day I had been accompanied by one of my colleagues from our Paris office, a gentleman of arrogant bearing who, although an American citizen and educated in France, still seemed to dwell in the rarified atmosphere of Tsarist Russia, where apparently his father had been governor of one of the provinces.

As he was constantly trying to impress me with his aristocratic pedigree it made me wonder at times whether he was not attempting to compete with me in this area, which left me profoundly disturbed lest he should have detected some similarity between his own cast and the aristocratic ascendancy claimed by many of the Sephardim of Europe.

Despite all the respect he demonstrated toward me, there was one characteristic he had in common with our German hosts, his capacity to absorb alcoholic beverages, which brought out another similar attitude of the soul—a visceral hatred of the Jews. To the point that the limp in his leg, which he stated was the result of a wound received during the war fighting the Germans in the French Maquis, seemed to me more likely to have been acquired while fighting mem-

bers of the Resistance as a member of Vichy's militia or, worse, fighting his fellow Russians as a member of the French Legion Charlemagne, which distinguished itself on the Eastern Front as part of the German Army.

How else could one interpret his frequent statement when attempting to describe the political situation in France at the time: "France's problems stem from corrupt Communist politicians like Léon Blum and Pierre Mendès-France, who should have been put against the wall and shot!"

Limiting myself to a lonely bottle of beer to accompany the countless glasses of whisky being absorbed by my companions at the famous nightspot, where glimmering enclosures surrounded the stage, each booth a luxurious copy of a well known American car model; every minute seemed an eternity. In deference to my person the conversation was carried out in English, for my colleague spoke perfect German, and had so far been limited to mundane matters, each participant attempting to outclass the other by the magnitude of their exploits, when for unknown reasons it took a drastic turn.

I must have been dozing off when suddenly I was brought back to my senses by a shouting voice to see my American/White Russian colleague standing like an avenging angel, face and eyes bloated as if about to explode, pointing a menacing finger at our two German hosts with words still ringing in my ears: "If you Germans had not been so stupid when you invaded Russia . . . the people were ready to receive you with open arms as liberators . . . but instead you killed right and left, treated them like slaves . . . you could have won the war. . . ."

"You don't understand," yelled one of the Germans, also jumping to his feet, "the Russian population did not receive us as liberators, they resisted us, sabotaged us, formed partisan groups when we did not massacre any civilians . . . the only ones we killed were the Jews . . . we were doing Russia a favor, ridding you of your Bolshevic vermin. . . ."

My presence during the last hour must have passed unobserved, since I had hardly opened my mouth, when I jumped to my feet in a state of equal fury. But before I had the chance to unleash it, my German hosts realized the gaffe committed in front of a Jew and, besides, the executive of a U.S. corporation with whom they expected to close a large contract.

In blabbering voices—for both Germans were speaking at the same time—incoherent phrases were hurled at me, which from an initial

tone of justification took on the tone of self-pity in a gradual crescendo.

They tried to apologize that they did not know what they had said as they had to much to drink. They had not killed any Jews as they belonged to the regular German Army. They had even tried to protect them from the SS. After all, some Jews were partisans, and this would not have been in accordance with the Geneva convention, although the Jews were doing the same with the Palestinians who belonged to El-Fath. I should try to understand their position, as they were also oppressed by the Nazis, just like an occupied country, like France for instance. Even in Russia the SS was all around them, watching them. They asked me to try to understand what this had done to them, the German people, the most civilized country in the world. . . .

As I listened to their repressed guilt and self pity, I gradually regained my composure. Actually, I realized that one of the Germans was holding his hands over his eyes as if he were crying. If there is such a thing as immortality, a puzzled Freud must have been watching this scene. Still standing with my head held high, pointing a finger as if addressing myself to the three, including my colleague, I just uttered a short sentence. "After the horrors you have committed you seem to expect the world to feel sorry for you; but before this happens, you better learn to feel sorry for your victims, they are the only ones who can forgive you." I calmly walked out.

Thus ended my trip to the Ruhr, the cradle of the German economic miracle. The next day, when the car drove me into the city of Hamburg, I seemed to visualize something else, traces of what the country must have been before Auschwitz.

Hamburg, the Hanseatic capital, was Germany's largest port city. Since childhood its name had conveyed a special meaning to me which even the war years had not totally eliminated. Would I find any remnant of that mystique, despite the brutalization of its population during the Nazi era and the destruction of the city by the Allied air bombardment?

When during the war I read of the systematic flattening of German cities by British and American bombers, my heart swelled with revenge, but when it came to Hamburg it was dampened by an element of sadness. My father, who had represented a trading company from Hamburg before the Nazi era and knew the city well, always spoke of it in glowing terms, of how different it was from the rest of Germany, almost like another country.

In the saga of the Sephardic merchants and traders, the cities of Constantinople, Salonika, Livorno, Genoa, Marseille, Bayonne, Bordeaux, London, and Hamburg formed gigantic semi-circles following the contours of the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Baltic. Many of the Jews who found their way out of Spain and Portugal after the expulsion settled in those port cities where they established the basis for opening the trade routes to the known and unknown world. Hamburg at the northern end of the spectrum and Constantinople at the southern end, the link to the area of the Fertile Crescent, were closely connected despite their distance, for they closed the circle that encompassed the trading areas of the European continent.

As far as I can remember, the men of the family and their numerous friends seemed to have a special relationship with the city of Hamburg. Besides, it was also often cited for being a city of great Jewish learning and piety, famous for its rabbis, especially the nearby city of Altona.

By the time I walked out of the taxi and entered the hotel I had sensed a certain mood, something in the air. Maybe it was the gigantic tower of the cathedral casting its shadow over the city.

I woke up early on Saturday morning and my first thought was to attend Sabbath services at a new synagogue, built with the so-called reparations money; a word that caused me revulsion, as if the destruction of European Jewry could be compensated by money. It was a subjective feeling that proved to be correct during my trips to Germany, for at several occasions it was mentioned to me *en passant* as proof that the country had already atoned.

Still under the impact of the depressing experience when attending a service at the rebuilt synagogue of Dusseldorf the previous week, I decided against going through the same experience. It had been nothing short of a trauma to be part of little more than a *minyan* consisting of a few old survivors from the camps who had stayed on for lack of strength to start a new life elsewhere, or those who had not left because of their lucrative involvement in the post-war black market, and together with some younger men, mostly emigrants from Israel, who were supposedly enriching themselves in the German underworld.

When at one occasion I was told by a German that the country's underworld was run by Jews, I retorted that only a small minority were Jews and in any case, as they represented the scum of the Jewish people, Germany was where they belonged.

So as not to increase the sense of depression that had not left me ever since entering Germany, I felt it would be better to canvass the streets and alleys of the city. Maybe through its buildings, the old and the new, and the countenance of its inhabitants I would detect a sign or a reflex that would get me one step nearer in my search for an answer.

Although most of the people seemed as taciturn as elsewhere in the country, with the exception of some rowdy groups of youths doing their best to emulate the mannerism and dress of what the world conveyed to them as being modern, I seemed to notice a more open expression on some of the passers-by. Could it be the reflection of that broader outlook characteristic of the inhabitants of cities facing the ocean, the door to the world; a mood I had often noticed on the expression of many of the citizens of Amsterdam, not to speak of the people of the Mediterranean?

A number of buildings seemed to have survived the destruction of the war, others actually had been rebuilt and were replicas of the old ones. There were enough of them to give me an idea of the splendor the city must have been, a mixture of Gothic and Baroque styles. Even the structures built after the war did not have the purely functional style I had found in other German cities, but blended in with those that had remained.

After walking through the old city for a number of hours, it dawned on me that the mood I had sensed from the moment I had arrived in Hamburg must have been the subconscious projection not only of the pre-war beauty of the city, the product of centuries of civilization, but of the destruction the nation as a whole had inflicted upon itself by allowing free reign to the demonic furies of Nazism. It made me wonder to what extent it had affected the German soul.

By chance I happened to pass by a recently built synagogue and an annex that had all the indications of a community center. When I inquired of the beadle who lived there about the community, he told me that there were about 1,500 Jews in the city, and as for remaining Jewish sites, I should visit the old cemetery in Altona, now a suburb of Hamburg.

Jewish cemeteries have always been an almost compulsive part of my itineraries throughout the cities of the exile. Mostly I have found them to be a source of serenity, for they reflect a sense of continuity that for brief moments transports me into the timeless quality of Jewish existence; as an Orthodox rabbi once explained to me, the feeling of eternity.

The cemetery of what had been the city of Altona, which had been part of Denmark until 1864, left a deep impression on me. There was no indication that it had been desecrated by the Germans, and the Sephardic section, the oldest part, filled me with a nostalgia for something I could not explain.

Here, almost at the northern tip of Europe, there seemed to be a quality in the atmosphere that made my soul freeze, a mood that had enveloped me during my frequent trips to Sweden, and which I had felt most acutely when at a later date I found myself in summertime at a Finnish steel town almost a thousand miles north of Helsinki.

Even in the eternity of death those familiar names of Spanish and Portuguese Jews engraved on the tombstones in the cemetery of Altona seemed isolated from the House of Sefarad, which I was conditioned to identify with the warm glow of the Mediterranean sun. Even the grim winter days of Paris and London conveyed a sense of warmth which was absent in the summer days of northern Europe. Actually a heaviness of mood and melancholy that manifested itself whenever I crossed the Rhine.

Later I found out that the importance and size of the Jewish cemetery of Altona was the result of an old prohibition which prevented the Jews of Hamburg from burying their dead in that city.

My next assignment was Munich. Whenever I mentioned my intended trip to that city while in the Rhineland or in Hamburg, faces had lit up with pride and I had been told that I was going to the center of German culture, one of the most important in Europe.

Munich, the capital of Bavaria, brought to my mind two instant recollections. First, that it had been the cradle of Nazism, and second, a far distant one from my school days in France, that the Bavarian soldiers who invaded France as the result of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 were often cited for their ferocity, which included the butchering of children. The performance of the German Army during World War II seemed to give veracity to what I had come to believe was a legend.

Also, there was the fact that Dachau, the first German concentration camp, was near Munich. Considering the heavy mood in which my trips to the Ruhr and Hamburg had left me, I decided against visiting the camp on that trip and, instead, dedicate whatever free time I had to concerts, for which the city was famous.

Munich was different from Hamburg in that a great part of the city had remained intact or that much had been rebuilt along the patterns of pre-war architecture. Whether it was due to being located

in the southern-most part of Germany or its proximity to Austria and Italy, there seemed to be a more cheerful mood in the city. There also were frequent reminders that it had been the capital of the Kings of Bavaria.

Its numerous buildings in the style of Italian and French rococo, containing many art galleries, and the Royal Palace, a miniature Versailles on the outskirts of the city, attested to its claim of being the cultural capital of post-war Germany.

Apart from its architecture and works of art, however, a couple of events confirmed my feeling that the brutalizing years of the Hitler era had left a deep mark on the people.

It was during a concert performed by the Bavarian Philharmonic in the imposing Ruhmshalle, or Hall of Fame, with its overpowering marble colon- nades. I was greatly impressed by the audience, which made me feel rather embarrassed in my business suit, for the attire was mostly formal, the gowns of the women conveying a distinct Parisian flavor. It was undeniable that the post-war generation and their elders among the upper classes were elegant. As to the performance itself, when the first part of the program was over among the delirious applause of the audience, I decided to leave.

Seeing the event now from an emotional distance, I believe that rather than the quality of the music, the reason for my leaving the concert during the intermission were the ghosts that the presence of the audience, amidst the cold, white marble of the Rhumshalle, had brought to life from the abyss of the Third Reich.

The formal attire of the men and the elegance of their women, an attempt to give continuity to pre-war etiquette, had recalled the panoply of form which had covered with a mantle of respectability the masters of a Europe they had transformed into a slaughter-house during the long night of Nazi Germany. Dress uniforms of the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe, the Kriegsmarine, the Waffen SS, the Gestapo, the Diplomatic Corps, and countless other organizations that formed the infra-structure of the Third Reich, had abounded at any formal occasion in a profusion that must have put to shame the court of Louis XIV at Versailles.

The German economic miracle and the attempt of the people to resurrect its culture engulfed in the Land of Ashes had not been able to exorcise the angel of death who hides behind pomp and power. Its shadow still lingered on.

The next day, confident that I would have a more elevating experience, I attended an all-Mozart chamber-music concert. It was with

sadness that I concluded they were not able to interpret the great master, for the musicians were of the post-war generation, quite different from the Philharmonic, and its members seemed to lack a certain sensitivity one usually finds on the faces and expressions of the musicians of Europe's great orchestras.

Before leaving, I decided to make the round of the bookstores of Munich. On their shelves were mostly translations of American, British, and French bestsellers, mystery novels, etc., with a sprinkling of titles by German authors, among them the proverbial Guenther Grass, one of the few to break through the thick wall behind which Germany tried to hide its past. But most of the German books had been written by Jews of the Weimar era; those who did not find a haven in the United States or Britain had ended up in the ovens of Auschwitz. Very much in evidence were the works of Walter Benjamin, representative of the School of Frankfurt, whose members had tried to formulate new social and political theories which could have deflected Europe from the path of impending catastrophe.

Was the new German generation, adrift in a cultural and intellectual vacuum, trying to discern in the concept of the men of the School of Frankfurt the elements that would permit them to break away from the yoke of their inheritance and set themselves on the path of repentance? Only the future will tell. I can see a trend taking shape, but the Wagnerian ghosts of the Nibelungen are still very much alive.

My German assignment terminated, I had to proceed to Linz in Austria. I decided to drive; would I find there a lighter atmosphere?

Austria

The city of Munich is located barely fourteen miles from the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, and although my destination was Linz, I decided to take a detour. The beauty of the countryside and the monumentality of the Alps made me forget where I was; I wanted to detach this setting from the Germany and its history in which I had spent the last fifteen days.

It was only when I reached the town of Seefeld in Austria, where I decided to spend the night, that I found out I had followed the same route as thousands of Jewish survivors from the concentration camps on their way to Italy. Seefeld is a summer and winter resort for the newly rich of Munich and although it was not yet winter, nowhere had I come across such a profusion of fur-clad ladies in its

numerous outdoor cafés.

One of the vacationers, who happened to be Jewish and lived in Munich—I had met him through a series of circumstances—recounted that he had witnessed their plight as they had slowly trudged on foot through this very town of Seefeld before streaming through the Brenner Pass into Italy, a few miles away, on their way to the resettlement camps; from there the lucky ones reached Palestine through clandestine routes established by the secret Jewish organization *Berihah* ("Escape"), while many others ended up in concentration camps in Cyprus before finally arriving in the newly founded State of Israel.

My willing guide, during a long walk we took through the beautiful countryside, took me up a small road to the top of a hill overlooking the town; we entered an enclosure hiding a small cemetery. My friend—for this is how I felt toward this man—pointed out a number of symmetrically aligned tombstones, the graves of the sons of Seefeld who fell in battle for the greater glory of the Third Reich. Then he almost pushed me to the other end, to a site covered by a small mound on which was a plaque engraved with a Star of David surrounded by Hebrew and German inscriptions.

"Here," he uttered almost in a whisper, "is the mass grave of 6,000 Jews, part of the great convoy on their way to Italy out of this accursed land. They died of sickness and hunger. Do you know what the good citizens of Seefeld did? They just watched, with the exception of one woman who brought them food and water to drink. . . . Her fellow villagers threw stones at her. . . ." With these words we parted our ways. I did not have the courage to ask him why he had remained in Germany.

Driving through Salzburg on my way to Linz to undertake a survey of its heavy industry, I wondered what ghosts awaited me in this cheerful land of Austria. I was to spend the following weekend in Vienna, where my wife came from and where my maternal grandfather was buried.

Despite what I had heard from the ghost of Seefeld, for this is how I remember him, it seemed inconceivable that anything evil could have occurred amidst this beauty of manicured, tilled land surrounded by hills encrusted with medieval castles or bordered by glittering lakes.

The landscape unfolded harmoniously before my eyes when, after a turn in the road leading to Linz, I was confronted with a small sign reading "Mauthausen." The significance of this name jolted me out of my reveries, back into reality. I instinctively changed direction

toward the destination pointed to by the sign.

It was late afternoon when I arrived at the small village of Mauthausen, a couple of miles from the camp, checked in at the local inn and phoned my business contact in Linz that I would postpone my visit by one day.

Early next morning I proceeded to the camp. As during the previous days, the glorious mood had not been broken. A vivid impression was left on me by the flowers, and especially the singing of the birds in the area.

Like a medieval castle perched on a hill was a huge grey stone structure with its elevated watch towers. In front of what must have been the main entrance to the camp, I gradually visualized strange shapes, like arms stretching toward heaven in supplication. They turned out to be monuments erected by the governments whose citizens had been martyred in that pit of hell, the very epitome of what the French call the "concentrationary world." I was to find out that it was more than a concentration camp or a death camp like Auschwitz; a collective memorial expressing the resistance to the Third Reich, a statement that there was something worse than death, namely Mauthausen.

All the nations which the German juggernaut had crushed stood witness in these stone memorials, like living bodies projecting themselves into eternity. I understood the significance of the words of Isaac Luria, the saintly Kabbalist from Safed, that even stones had souls; each stone seemed to reflect a message.

I spent a good part of the day surrounded by these stones, whether inside or outside the camp, and although both were connected to the dead, all within a short distance, each was part of a universe of its own.

Among the memorial monuments I felt in the world of the living, a feeling that had its roots in the kabbalistic oral tradition of my family. When I came face to face with the words inscribed on the stone plaque dedicated to those French men and women who had suffered martyrdom for the sake of freedom, the dignity of their death exploded in my face:

> Les morts ne dorment pas
> Ils n'ont que cette pierre
> Impuissante à porter la foule de leurs noms
> La mémoire du crime est la seule prière
> Passant, que nous te demandons.

(The dead do not sleep
They have but this stone
Powerless to carry the mass of their names.
The memory of the crime is the only prayer,
Passer-by, that we ask of you.)

This was a poetic epitaph by Louis Aragon, one of the leaders of the French Resistance, a man of the left and in no way a mystic.

The East German memorial was in the style of a Pietà, a mother sitting with her murdered son in her arms, and the inscription had been written by Bertold Brecht in 1933:

O Deutschland, bleiche Mutter
Wie haben deine Söhne dich zugerichtet
Dass Du unter den Völkern sitzest
Ein Gespött oder eine Furcht.

(O Germany, ash-pale mother,
What have your sons done to you
That you sit amongst the nations
A derision or a terror.)

A simple large slab found on the way to the quarry, as prescribed by tradition for those of the children of Israel who have given their lives in *Kiddush Hashem*, was inscribed in Hebrew:

And the Lord said: What hast thou done?
The voice of thy brother's blood
cries to me from the ground.
Genesis 4:10

The entangled mesh of steel wires covering the Jewish slab of remembrance stood as a reminder that man had not yet answered his Creator.

After a long hesitation I crossed the narrow stretch of land separating the two worlds and entered the portal into the house of death. My first reaction, when I walked into the inner courtyard, a conglomerate of symmetrical rows upon rows of wooden barracks fenced in with barbed wire, was that I found myself in an abandoned factory.

Except for its guardian, apparently an ex-inmate who lived in what must have been a guard house at the entrance of the camp, the Mauthausen death factory was completely empty but for the spirits who accompanied me throughout the site of their martyrdom.

Let Rabbi Kaplan, the Grand Rabbi of France who survived the occupation, speak for me to express my feelings at that moment; he

had headed a delegation of French Jews to Auschwitz to honor the dead at the site of their martyrdom and recounted the pilgrimage in the following words:

> . . . we left Paris during a beautiful day, but as we arrived in Auschwitz, the heavens darkened and under a heavy rain our little group slowly trudged, as if accompanying on their last journey the endless multitudes of our brothers and sisters exterminated in this accursed field still covered with their ashes. Thus we followed the path under the weight of an indescribable sadness surrounded by solitude and desolation. A solitude and desolation filled with Presences. The shadows of infinite love followed us; shadows of our relatives and friends, shadows of millions of men, women and children gone without a trace.
>
> . . . for us the living, the survivors, it was also solitude and desolation amidst the silence of the living world; silence of those who could have acted and did not; of those who knew and did not speak out, who allowed the Final Solution to follow its course night and day, here and in other camps.
>
> But those voices of the multitude of our dead which had not been heard, were not yet silent. We heard voices all around us; they spoke to us through the howling wind, through the grinding of the stones under our feet, through the merciless rain. A haunting appeal from the infinity of the heavens which marked us for life. For every time that in this world of ours, so fertile with countless crimes, other massacres are perpetrated, we feel with all our being that another genocide is in the making.

What could be said about the dead but to read aloud every single name which could still be detected in the barracks and among the bunkers; there were none to be found in the gas chambers, though. As if the Austrian government, in the process of transforming the camp into a museum, had gone out of its way to minimize its connection to the concept of death, not to speak of extermination. True, Mauthausen was not an extermination camp per se, but it is believed that of the estimated 200,000 prisoners that entered through its gate, officially 110,000 did not come out alive.

These numbers are given in a little booklet issued by the Austrian government and handed to me when entering the camp. Juxtaposed to what I was going to see during the hours to come, it contained certain undertones whose purpose was to play down the participation of Austria in the Final Solution.

The booklet, printed in several languages, starts in its English

version with "Dear Visitor, you are now on the grounds of the former **German** concentration camp of Mauthausen . . .," followed, after a few sentences describing the camp, by ". . . in order to remind future generations of what the National Socialist tyranny of Hitler Germany meant to **our people** and to all mankind, the Austrian Federal Government has erected a museum and has transformed the remains of this camp into a worthy memorial. . . ."

The mention of Mauthausen as a **German** concentration camp could be considered a slight slip of the tongue with the purpose of dissociating the Austria of 1938/45 from the *"concentrationary world."* However, the phrase, ". . . what the National Socialist tyranny of Hitler's Germany meant to **our people** . . ." filled me with disgust, for out of a cynicism bordering on perfidy it was counting on the naiveté of the visitor to the camp to believe that the main victim of Mauthausen had been Austria itself.

What I saw of the inner structure of Mauthausen presented the entire panoply of cruelty, sadism, and death that man could impose on man—gas chambers, torture instruments, gallows. However, one aspect which in my eyes represented a blatant indictment of what was then the Austrian province of the Third Reich (Ostmark) was the involvement of the nation and its citizens in the industrial universe of which Mauthausen was the center, with its satellites of more than fifty subcamps stretching out east from Linz to Wiener Neustadt in the outskirts of Vienna, through Steyer in the north and westward to Ebensee, a few miles away from Salzburg.

The indictment was the very museum established by the Austrian government, for the documentation on exhibit confirmed my initial feeling, when I entered the camp, that I found myself in the center of an abandoned industrial plant.

A plant indeed it had been. I could not blind myself to the tragic professional analogy that was gradually unfolding in front of my eyes as I read the correspondence between the administrative office of Mauthausen—or should we call it its Commercial Division?—and the industries located next to each of the satellite camps, producing mostly armament and related materials. Actually, these satellite camps were part of the industrial complex they were attached to.

The exchange of letters, invoices, bills of lading, packing lists, stock lists, etc., were just like those in the central office of a large industry, as I had seen on countless occasions. With one basic difference, however: instead of allocating raw material or industrial components to its different departments or subsidiaries, Mauthausen was

dealing with human beings. It served mainly as the central depot to which mostly political prisoners from all over Europe would be sent, including Italian anti-Fascists, French maquisards, Russian prisoners of war, classified according to their professional skills and then allocated to the different sub-camps.

An important regulation transpired from the correspondence: the prisoners were to be worked to death and then exterminated. At that point it was made very clear that in order to avoid costly diversification, they should be sent back to Mauthausen for the last standard procedure, namely passage through the gas chamber. Cost accounting seemed very efficient. Amounts corresponding to transport to subcamps, days of labor at satellite industries, etc., were detailed with precision in standard invoices. Likewise, the central office of Mauthausen was debited the cost of nourishment, lodging, etc.

There were three categories of prisoners who did not fit into the above standard procedures. The first were the Jews, who were not to be kept alive for more than three days. The second were the most notorious political prisoners for whom slow death was reserved in the Wienergraden, the granite quarry outside the camp. Up and down its uneven one hundred and eighty-six steps they carried loads way beyond the strength of an average man, to be crushed under their load or pushed down the steps by the SS. Thus, the resistance movements throughout Europe were aware of a destiny worse than death upon capture, the Wienergraden of Mauthausen.

As to the third category not included in the industrial universe of Mauthausen, it consisted of the common criminals and the kingdom within which they operated. Of course there was no documentation in the museum that would indicate the existence of that kingdom, much less of how it operated.

More than a decade after my visit to the camp, during a beautiful winter week that my wife and I spent at a resort-hotel in the Israeli city of Eilat, the narration of the saga of Mauthausen was passed on to me by one of its rare Jewish survivors, at the time a physician in a small French town.

During a walk we took into the high sand dunes of the Sinai peninsula, the mention of my trip to Mauthausen, or maybe the way I expressed it, brought out in this extraordinary man the biblical imperative to remember and to recount. He confessed to me later that it had been the first time he had felt ready to speak, although almost three decades had passed.

The saga of Mauthausen, as it was told to me, is now part of my



Don Abraham Levy (Kisapshouglu),
maternal great-grandfather.



Zimbul Miranda de Graziani,
paternal grandmother.



David Graziani de Miranda (left), author's father, with friends (Bulgaria).



Colonel Moreno Graziani (Bulgaria).



David Graziani de Miranda.



Isaac Hasson and his wife; great grandparents of author.

Don Abraham Levy
and his family (Constantinople).



Don Isaac Levy,
author's grandfather.



Doña Sarah Levy, author's grandmother.



Immigrating to Brazil on the *S. S. Asturías* (1938).





Don David Graziani de Miranda,
with infant Robert (Constantinople).

Doña Elda Hermosa Levy-Graziani,
author's mother.

Robert Graziani-Levy.

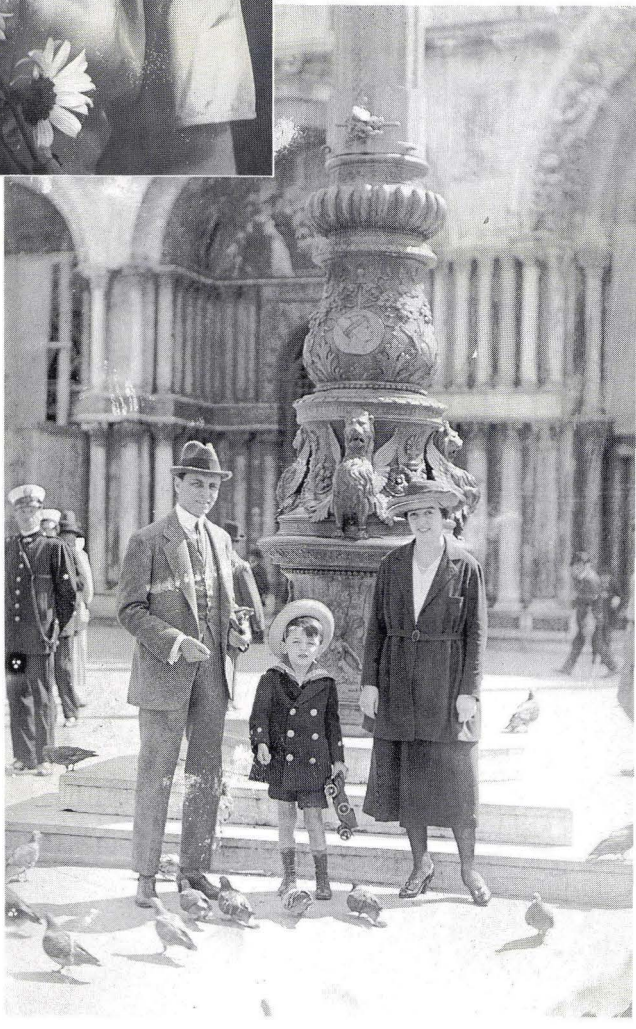




Robert's older brother, Maurice.



Anne Hellmann,
at her engagement
to Robert Graziani-Levy.



David and Elda Graziani-Levy
(Venice).



Robert Graziani-Levy
(Tel Aviv, 1949).



Robert and Anne Graziani-Levy
(Brazil).

The Graziani-Levy family at Evelyn's bat mizvah (Brazil).





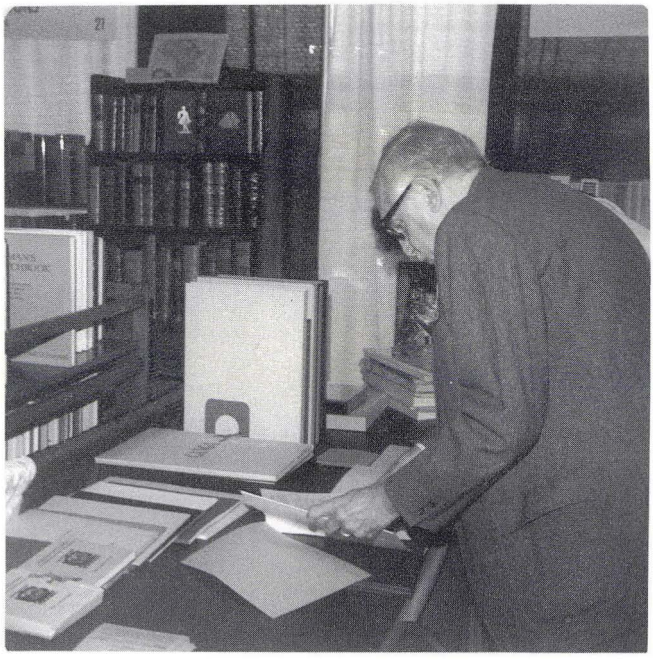
Anne and Robert, with Evelyn and David (Río de Janeiro).

Robert, Evelyn, Anne, and David (Los Angeles).





Robert Graziani-Levy (at lecturn), American
Jewish Committee Convention (New York, 1956).



Robert Graziani-Levy at a book fair.

oral tradition. Most of my observations and conclusions had been correct, and confirmed the total involvement of Austria in the Final Solution.

The kind of industrial infrastructure represented by the Mauthausen universe encompassed a great part of the country, and the local population knew what the final destination of the prisoners would be. Most of the SS guards were Austrians; many historians have concluded that percentage-wise the number of Austrians in that organization of death was much larger than that of Germans of other provinces. True, a few of the political prisoners were Austrians, but the brochure issued at the gate of Mauthausen could cite them in less than one paragraph.

As to the third category of prisoners cited above, the common criminals, most were Austrians. As told by my friend, the Jewish survivor, their treatment was very special; some even lived in luxury, for not only did they serve as *kapos* and often as executioners, but they also ran a black market and other activities in partnership with the SS.

How did my friend, the physician, survive? He was 18 years old at the time, a member of the French Resistance, and was a linguist, one of the very few in the camp who could communicate with the different nationalities, Russians included; he was also very skillful with his hands.

By the time I was able to tear myself away from the Mauthausen concentration camp, I had grasped the reality of what that grey stone enclosure stood for: the capital of an empire of death whose limits stretched way beyond the structure of its walls.

As I walked out through its gate, the impact of the beauty of nature in all its glory again threw me out of balance. Would I be capable of turning my back on that domain of death, lose myself in the grandeur of God's creation and pretend that the day had been but a nightmare?

No. The presences of the dead accompanied me through the gate, and would remain my constant companions throughout Austria. The universe of death and of nature had blended into one. The entire region of Linz and maybe the whole of Austria had Mauthausen as its capital.

Before walking down the aisle that led to the parking lot, feeling that there was a presence whose message I had not heard, I turned back toward the wall of the camp to stare at the inscription of an unobtrusive plaque next to its entrance. It was the memorial to the

ten thousand veterans of the Spanish Republican Army who, after having found refuge in France, were handed over to the Germans by the Vichy authorities or captured fighting with the French maquisards.

I could not help but reflect on the modesty of their memorial as compared to that of other nations, for these men, the veterans of the first battle of World War II, did not have the backing of a government that would honor their sacrifice. On the very contrary. Spain was then still under the yoke of the universe which had made Mauthausen a reality. The forces that had their roots in the *autos de fe* of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid and since the Civil War had dominated the Spanish people still reigned supreme, while Austria was a free nation. The irony of history.

A small detail. There were no birds in Mauthausen. They have never returned. Maybe they also felt that even stones have souls.

The next day I arrived in Linz. As I write these lines I remember Elias Canetti saying in one of his essays that Hitler, in order to punish Vienna for having rejected him as an artist, planned to turn his native city of Linz into a great capital.

Like other Austrian cities, Linz expressed its Italian connection through the Baroque charm of many of its buildings, and its Germanic soul through its Gothic cathedral. Being situated at an intersection of routes going in all directions was obviously one of the reasons that had made Linz a main industrial center of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

When I started my rounds of steel mills and other mostly heavy industries, I had regained my composure—a rather modest way of expressing my state at that moment—after my timeless pilgrimage through Mauthausen. As the years passed, I realized that I had developed a stoic attitude toward the industrial world I was involved in. Whether in the East or the West, in the so-called developed or under-developed nations, it functions in accordance with its own rules and ideology, its *real-politik* facet at times bordering on the realm of the absurd.

The Austrian executives were not much different from those I had come across in the Ruhr, with an important exception, that of their mannerism. The Germans had acted as I had expected they would. Here in Linz and later on in Vienna, I came to understand what they call their French vocation.

A mannerism of speech with certain sing-song intonations, accompanied by a supercilious attitude not devoid of a certain elegance,

obviously distinguished them from their Germanic brethren. It brought to mind the image of Herr Kurt Waldheim, to which we were so frequently exposed during his mandate as the august Secretary General of the United Nations and as President of the Austrian Republic.

Lately, the name of the gentleman in question has again been very much in evidence. It seems as if the mask of victim that the post-war Austrian Federal Republic has been attempting to wear, to a degree successfully, was finally dropped to reveal not only its participation in the Nazi onslaught that transformed much of Europe into ashes, but the extent to which it was the cause. Part of the answer lay in the city of Linz, and the other, as I was to find out, in the gay city of Vienna.

Walking through the yards, manufacturing lines, assembly lines, and offices of the industries of Linz, I was accompanied by the presences who had followed me from Mauthausen, for these grounds were an integral part of its universe of death.

In my bones I felt their presence, saw their curved shadows over the machines which gradually had drained them of their life essence. Maybe a gallows had been erected in the courtyard I was now crossing. Standard procedure by the SS was to hang any recalcitrant prisoner as an example to the others.

A victim of my imagination? These were industries, after all; how could they be compared to death camps? The stark reality was that the names of the industries I was visiting, as well as those on the bill-boards I had passed by, were the same, or just slightly changed, I had seen printed on the stationary of businesses exposed in the Museum of Mauthausen. The industry of Linz was its other facet.

As I drove into Vienna, my mood was anything but exhilarated. My Mauthausen-Linz revelation had not predisposed me for a confrontation with the traditional Viennese *Gemütlichkeit.*

Why was I coming to Vienna in the first place, I kept muttering to myself, as I attempted to reach my hotel in the old city through the gutted streets of its suburbs. My wife had not wanted to return to her native city; I was the one who had insisted. I had no assignment there, so I finally convinced her that it would be a good opportunity to take a week's vacation. She was coming in directly from Paris and we had arranged to meet at the hotel.

In this city of the Hapsburgs, I wondered in the midst of a struggle for survival in traffic which would do honor to Paris or even Rio de Janeiro, as my eyes simultaneously searched for some sign of past

glory. All around me was nothing but the grey shabbiness of pre-war buildings, the drabness of new constructions. Both reflected their era, for Vienna was hardly bombed during the war.

How I ever got to my hotel remains a mystery. Sheer instinct of survival, or the guiding hand of a presence? In any case, stepping into the hotel lobby I had the sensation of having been there before. Was it a glimpse of the real Vienna—the glittering crystal chandeliers, heavy red velvet curtains, Persian rugs, rococo furniture, and right in front of me behind the reception counter the dazzling painting of a beautiful lady, by her bearing an Empress.

I was shaken out of my romantic daydream by the slightly impatient tone of the formally attired receptionist who handed me a registration card. Of course! the Kaiserin Elisabeth Hotel—"Sissy"—wife of the Emperor Franz Joseph. I had to laugh. Had I become so Americanized that my historical memory reacted in terms of the imagery projected by Hollywood?

Imagery? As we were to find out during the week in Vienna, much of what the city projected seemed an attempt to give form to the glories of its Imperial past for the sake of tourism, with certain undertones that could only emanate from Hollywood.

It is said that since the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian empire after World War I, Vienna is a head without a body. Might not what is left of the body consist of the universe of Linz-Ebensee-Gusen-Steyr, with Mauthausen like an exhausted gold mine the source of its wealth? Of course there is Vienna, its palaces, monuments and museums, but to what extent are they not optical illusions?

It was late evening before my wife and I were ready for our first outing. The Kaiserin Elisabeth Hotel is only a block away from the Kaerntnerstrasse, the Vienna Faubourg St. Honoré where all the elegant shops are supposed to be. It connects the oldest part of the city and St. Stephen's Cathedral with the Ring and the Opera. Ready to be carried away by my imagination, I was enveloped by a flood of neon lights of the most garish colors. One sign in familiar blue seemed to focus on me: "American Express" it cried out.

Is this the heart of Vienna? Where are the beautiful ladies and elegant gentlemen one expected to see strolling along? One can still find them in Paris, in Rome, in Madrid, at this time of twilight. They are nowhere to be seen. Instead, hot dog and Coca Cola stands, kids in blue jeans chewing gum, staring at the main attraction—tourists. I console myself with the thought that maybe this is a proof that the

social anachronism of the old Vienna has disappeared. Obviously something of the beauty is also gone with it.

It is already night; we must reach the Ring quickly where we might have a glimpse of the real Vienna. Is this dark building the famous Opera? It looks more like the Châtelet in Paris, with only a few dim lights indicating that a performance is taking place. It is quite dark all around it, but we notice that toward the Hotel Intercontinental the Ring, the tree-lined broad avenue where once stood the city walls that stopped the Turkish advance, is brightly lit. After walking along some empty blocks, we realize that the glittering is not the expression of past glory but that of an affluent industrial society. Mercedes-Benz, Ford, the luminous signs outside brightly lit stores announce, Air France, Pan Am.

My wife wants to walk to the other side of the Ring, the Schottenring where it ends at the Donaukanal, for that is where she used to live before the Anschluss. I hesitate, for it is very dark in that direction, nobody seems to be walking on the Ring, and there are few cars passing by. Is it fear? For countless hours I have roamed the streets of the capitals of Western Europe at night, and never felt this kind of anxiety before. It is more than physical fear, it is something I do not want to face. Not fear of ghosts either, for by now I have been in Europe long enough to have come to live with their constant presence, which is not frightening, on the contrary. As in Mauthausen, it is as if they had some message to deliver, intending to talk to you. In any case, this is not a pleasure trip, it is a quest.

We have had enough for one day, and decide to return to our hotel. Even the Kaerntnerstrasse is almost empty by now. There is something here that reminds me of Spain. Certainly not the night life, for Madrid and Barcelona come alive after sunset, but an atmosphere of past glory, of decay. But although Spain might have lost its soul, it maintained a splendid form which not even the Inquisition or Franco were able to destroy. Vienna seems to have neither form nor soul. Maybe the whole thing went up in smoke in Mauthausen.

Next day we would canvass Vienna. In the United States, cities are often called asphalt jungles. In retrospect, I believe that jungle also applies to the old cities of Europe, especially Vienna. Its palaces, monuments, cathedrals, and museums are like the vegetation of the jungle, they tend to engulf you, blind your vision to the true face of the city, the tragic one. Although standing witness to history, the monuments are like gods of space behind whom man attempts to hide in order not to look into its face, to protect himself from reality.

Years later, when I learned the full significance of the Hebrew concept of *zakhor*—to remember—I came to understand Hitler's words when he said, "I will overcome history by destroying it." No wonder, for in Vienna I became aware of the extent to which we Jews are conditioned to carry our historical memory with us wherever we go.

Speaking of memory, from the moment we arrived my wife kept telling me that she would take me to the beautiful part of the city, the one that contained good memories of her youth.

So there we were in front of the Hofburg, sitting like a crown on what was the heart of Imperial Vienna, on what is left of the glory of the Hapsburgs. Despite the beauty of its structures, unlike the Louvre which reflects in its architecture the continuous evolution of centuries, the imperial palace of the Hapsburg dynasty is the embodiment of the dreams and fantasies of its rulers, an agglomeration of palaces and monuments whose styles do not seem to blend. Actually, its latest addition was built during the nineteenth century opposite the House of Parliament erected during the same period in the image of the Parthenon, with a colossal statue of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of Wisdom, in front of it.

The profusion of neo-classic architecture, of which the temple in the midst of the Volksgarten is another example, testifies to the attempt by the Hapsburg rulers of the Holy Roman Empire to emulate at least in form one of the aspects of ancient Greek civilization. It might have embodied their dream to see the empire as the heir to Byzantium, with its roots in Greek culture, the epitome of Western civilization.

These were the thoughts that ran through my mind while we walked for hours on end through labyrinths of endless corridors, portals, rooms, chambers of the conglomerate of buildings that form the Hofburg. Their dream was shattered by Bismarck at the battle of Sadowa in 1864, when it was made clear to the Hapsburgs that the hegemony over all the German-speaking principalities from that time on belonged to the new German Empire under the yoke of Prussia, with strong hints that the destiny of Austria would eventually revert to its original role, that of the Ostmark.

In the family's oral tradition Vienna had a special place; the city's beauty and cultural life was praised in glowing terms in the house on the Hill of Pera, some arguing that it was even superior to that of Paris.

Despite conflicting opinions, especially my mother's, who never missed an occasion to assert with profound conviction that no capital

was superior to London, it was unanimously agreed that Vienna was superior to all in the area of medicine, due to the skill of its Jewish doctors. No member of the *buenas familias*, when afflicted by any serious illness, considered being treated anywhere else but in Vienna. Not surprisingly my maternal grandfather, Don Isaac, was hospitalized in Vienna's famous Loew Sanatorium when he was taken seriously ill, and there surrendered his soul to the Creator.

Since childhood in Constantinople, my imagination had been imbued with the mystique of Vienna and its French vocation, influenced by the glowing tales recounted by my grandmother about the city where she had lived for several years, when Don Isaac had been the representative of his father's trading firm. Its culture was supposed to be French, as was the language of the aristocracy and the upper classes.

It was only in 1934 after the advent of Nazism in Germany, when the Social Democrats were crushed in a most brutal fashion by Chancellor Dollfuss of Austria, with the backing of the army and its own version of Stormtroopers, the Heimwehr, that I realized the country of the waltz had more of a German than a French vocation. That date remained vivid in my mind, for two years later the Spanish Civil War started, as if the advance of Fascism in Europe had taken on an inexorable momentum.

As we entered the Redoutensaal, the huge ballroom, I felt permeated by the tension between Vienna's French affinity and its Germanic-Catholic soul, with all the implications for the historical development of Europe until its climax during the Nazi era. Here I was, in the very room where the famous Congress of Vienna had taken place under the aegis of Metternich, better known nowadays in the United States as the Kissinger of his period, with the purpose of reorganizing the map of post-Waterloo Europe, as if Napoleon and the French Revolution had never happened, and to make sure that such a phenomenon would never occur again.

The mystique enveloping my image of Napoleon since my childhood had been shattered long ago, for I had realized the extent to which the crowned heads of Europe had endeavored to make the Emperor one of their own. They had even given him in marriage the hand of a Hapsburg Princess, and were willing to accept him into their illustrious company, provided he limit his territorial ambitions and, most important of all, obliterate all the absurd reforms on behalf of the populace which his armies had brought to the lands they conquered, including the elimination of the Jewish ghettos.

What the royal houses of Europe really feared was not Napoleon himself but the contamination of their feudal realms by the virus of the French Revolution, for they knew well that the armies of the former little corporal, despite the Imperial eagles on their fanions, were still possessed by the elan of the Republic. Contrary to Napoleon's illusion that every soldier of his *Grande Armée* carried in his knapsack the baton of a Marshal of France, in reality they carried a declaration of "Les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen" (Human and Civil Rights). Among Hassidic communities in Eastern Europe, the arrival of Napoleon's army was heralded as a sign of the impending coming of the Messiah.

Petrified, I stood in the midst of the Redoutensaal surrounded by presences, multitudes of them. What were they trying to tell me, a vision of the reshaping of history? Bonaparte the victor at Waterloo, the kings and emperors with their necks under the blade of the guillotine, the road to Auschwitz side-tracked. . . . The Soviet Union an open, free society integrated with Western Europe rather than hanging over it like a sword of Damocles. . . .

Whether it was *zakhor* unleashing the chain of memory in my mind, or the presences whispering into my ears, I saw the link between the political decisions reached at the Congress of Vienna and the emergence on the soil of Europe scarcely a century after Bonaparte of another corporal, although not of the same vintage, for that one mistook himself for god, the god of darkness. He also set out to change the face of the world, not in the image of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, but by the fire and sword of the Wagnerian mythology of the superman. It could not have been just a coincidence that part of the great saga of the Nibelungen took place at Vindobona, the original site of Vienna, where Attila and Kriemhilde celebrated their wedlock. The new gods the world would have to worship were in the likeness of Siegfried, Brunhilde, and Wotan. . . .

As I felt the brisk wind hit my face, I realized we were once more in the large square facing the Hofburg. My wife, who feeling that I had become oblivious to my surroundings had not said a word since the Redoutensaal, suggested that we visit the Capuchin crypt to see what the Hapsburgs were all about.

No wonder. Twelve Emperors, sixteen Empresses, one hundred archdukes and archduchesses are preserved there. Marie Therese lies in a magnificent tomb next to her spouse, her spirit overshadowing all the other tombs as she had dominated the Europe of her time. An extraordinary woman, a great diplomat, the peaceful architect of

the Austro-Hungarian Empire who had her four daughters married to the most powerful crowned heads of Europe. *Bella gerunt alii, tu, felix Austria, nube.* . . . ("Let others wage war; you, happy Austria, marry.")

It did not quite turn out the way she had planned it, though. I had to think of the outcome of Marie Therese's ambitious dreams, the sense of tragedy permeating the end of the Hapsburg dynasty to which the tombs in the crypt testify. Maximilian, briefly emperor of Mexico by the grace of Napoleon III, executed by the revolutionary army of Juarez; Rudolph, only son of Emperor Franz Joseph, committing suicide at Mayerling with his mistress in a setting worthy of a Greek tragedy; and last but not least, Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, whose assassination at Sarajevo in 1914 triggered—or was just an excuse to trigger?—World War I.

I stared again at the memorials surrounding me, and in my mind addressed myself to those mute stones: Is this your final resting place, you and your descendants, who believed you were ordained by God to rule the world? In what order do you stand among the heavenly hosts, considering the harm you have done to this world?

At that time there was a rumor afoot that ex-Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, remembered as the malignant little dwarf by some and as a saint by others, would be canonized by the Vatican. I had been been told that his remnants now lie in a crypt at the Capuchin church in Jerusalem; as if the State of Israel did not have enough problems! In this respect, it appears that one of the reasons for his coup in 1934 was to topple the Republic and reinstate on the throne of Austria one of the descendants of the Hapsburgs. It was a scheme that never materialized, as it was not part of the destiny the Third Reich had in store for what was to become again the province of Ostmark.

Not even the Hapsburgs could escape the French connection. As I stared at the tomb of Princess Marie-Louise, Empress of France, my mind wandered back to the Invalides in Paris, the resting place of Napoleon I, Emperor of France, her husband, who had abandoned his plebeian wife to marry a grand-daughter of Empress Marie Therese. There is an empty tomb in the crypt where once lay the remnants of their son, the Duke of Reichstadt to the Austrians but known as L'Aiglon, the Little Eagle, to the French. In 1940 the Germans had his body transfered to the Invalides to rest alongside his father, as a gesture toward the New Europe they were battling to create.

Napoleon had but followed in the footsteps of Louis XVI, the last

King of France before the Great Revolution, who married one of the four daughters of Marie Therese, the famous Marie Antoinette, who eventually lost her head. Her statement that the people of Paris should eat cake if they had no bread seems to reflect the traditional supercilious Viennese attitude toward matters of importance, especially problems of State.

Walking along the manicured lawns and multicolored flower beds of the Heldenplatz, the Square of the Heroes, it occurred to me that Vienna apart from its French, German, and Italian affinities, also had a Sephardic one, or rather a connection, although one the Austrians would never admit to. To us Jews of the Spanish exile it was of utmost importance, especially in our oral tradition, for it was directly linked to the country's Catholic vocation; on three continents I had often heard Austria referred to as a suburb of the Vatican.

On the Heldenplatz I was struck by the bearing of the statue of a seventeenth-century nobleman which seemed to belong to Versailles rather than in the setting of Imperial Vienna. My wife translated the German inscription and gave me some of the background on the gentleman in question, for I was face to face with none other than Prinz Eugen, Der Edle Ritter, the noble knight, born a Frenchman, Prince François Eugène de Savoie, a military legend in Austria's Imperial history.

I had learned in my student days in France that Prince Eugène, having been refused a commission in the army of Louis XIV, due to his mother's having fallen into disfavor at the court of Versailles, had offered his services to Leopold I of Austria. He thus embarked on a career on behalf of the Austrian Monarchy in the course of which he became one of Europe's greatest military leaders, not only for having defeated the Turks at the gates of Vienna but for being one of the main architects of the central powers' victory against France during the Thirty Years War.

What could possibly link Prinz Eugen, the symbol of Austria's French affinity, to the Sephardic connection? The siege of Vienna by the Turks!

Back in the days when the family lived in Constantinople I had often heard of the contribution made by the Sephardic exiles of 1492 to the aggrandizement of the Ottoman Empire in retribution for the haven granted to us and the freedom in which we had lived ever since. Not only as financial advisers to the Great Porte, the court, as diplomats and physicians, but as traders who had opened the mercantile routes of the Empire and had introduced firearms, including

artillery, into the Turkish Army.

This notion had inflamed my childish pride, for not only did it confirm the military tradition of the Jews dwelling in the Iberian peninsula but our skills had helped to defeat at numerous occasions the armies of the Holy Roman Catholic Empire, the Turkish armies having reached the walls of its capital, Vienna.

It was in a way a retribution for the suffering and humiliation inflicted on my forefathers by the Catholic Kings of Aragon and Castile and its Inquisition, a concept which, however childish it might have appeared, proved to be true when I came to the realization that one of the strongest elements of the Hapsburg Empire was its Spanish connection, for that is where its Catholic roots lay. They were the real heirs of Hispanidad, apart from the traditional South American military juntas that have kept its spirit very much alive to the present days, despite the severe setback they seem to have suffered during the last few years.

Just a few more words about Prince Eugène de Savoie. Herr Kurt Waldheim, now President of the Federal Republic of Austria, served during World War II on the staff of the Special Section of the Prinz Eugen Elite Division of the Wehrmacht, whose task was the deportation of the Jews of Salonika and the savage repression of the Yugoslav partisans, among others.

Not too distant from Prinz Eugen stands the recently erected statue of Sigmund Freud. Speaking of Freud, the scenario I was attempting to put together about Vienna and its history, as I was wandering through its streets and palaces, is undoubtedly a confusing one in a city that has made an art of avoiding historical reality by covering it with a veil of triviality. Just as in the days of the Hapsburgs it had covered the remnants of European feudalism with a shining Imperial mantle of respectability, since the war it has not only done its utmost to deny having engendered the very monster and much of the philosophy which made possible the Final Solution, but instead has created for itself the image of another victim of Nazism. The sickness in the soul of this city is a deep one, and it is not surprising that after four decades it can produce a schizophrenic product such as Herr Waldheim.

On the other hand, while my wife was reminiscing about the Freud family, whose grandchildren had been her friends and neighbors, I had to think of the extent to which his concepts and those of the numerous Jews of the intelligentsia were also part of Vienna. But they represented the other face of Vienna, in direct opposition to

everything the Imperial Vienna of the Hapsburgs symbolized. No remnants of that other face of Vienna are to be found in the city today, my wife pondered, although its legacy is present throughout the modern world. I agreed that this point should be elaborated in depth, for Vienna cannot be understood without it.

The other face of Vienna! We did find its strongest expressions at the Belvedere Palace. A palace with a distinct French flavor, its long, manicured lawns reminiscent of the gardens at Versailles; it had been the official residence of The Noble Knight, Prince Eugène de Savoie, and now houses the gallery of twentieth-century Austrian paintings.

The vision these paintings convey is in drastic contrast to the baroque beauty of Vienna's monuments and palaces; the spiritual vacuum emanating from Kokoschka's paintings, faces and hands that express terror in the presence of reality; Egon Schiele's rendering of human suffering and degradation.

Under the visual impact of the canvasses hanging in those galleries, soon after our passage through the Hofburg, the two faces of Vienna were taking shape. One, that of the city of dreams, of artificiality and pretense, where appearance and adornment reigned supreme; the other, "the proving ground for world destruction," in the words of Karl Kraus, its harshest social critic. It took on the dimension of prophecy in Kafka's writings: through the metaphor of tales he projected men slowly drowning in a seemingly orderly and stable society of which they have lost control, engulfing them inexorably in a cycle of destruction and death.

This dichotomy of the two Viennas, as Freud referred to the two Romes, was projected in the paintings of Klimt, Schiele, and Kokoschka, as testified by the latter's own words:

> My early black portraits arise in Vienna before the Great War; the people lived in security, yet they were all afraid. I felt this through their cultivated form of living, which was still derived from the baroque. I painted them in their anxiety and pain.

Freud, Kafka, Kokoschka, and many others, through their own vision of a society in the process of crumbling, were attempting not only to diagnose the pattern they saw unfolding, but also to create those elements that would prevent its final collapse or, at worst, enable a new world to be born out of its ashes.

To this day I remember Max Ophuls' classic movie, "La Ronde," with a sense of nostalgia for the Vienna of the waltz, however irra-

tional it might be. Arthur Schnitzler, on whose play "Reigen" the movie was based, had been a practicing physician. A friend of Freud, he had also been deeply involved with psychotherapy, which must have added to his masterful capacity of diagnosing in his plays the ills of the society in which he lived—wrapped in whipped cream, and dancing to their doom to the music of the waltz.

Having lived for many years in Brazil where sex reigns supreme, I could understand that Schnitzler introduced it in his plays as one of the main elements. However, contrary to that beautiful tropical land where it is one with love and romanticism, Viennese society had reduced the concept of sex either to triviality or to a trade, prostitution, which being rampant in all social strata, was covered with a veneer of respectability in a world of myth. In Schnitzler's eyes eroticism had become a motive of social dynamics, and sexuality the only kind of human contact his characters were capable of. Within this framework he viewed Viennese antisemitism with profound alarm, for rather than having its roots only in social and religious prejudice or political expediency, he saw it as a profound paranoia of the human soul.

One must not forget that it was the period when it took eight years to sell the 600 copies of Freud's classic, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, printed in 1899.

It did not take long for the prophets of doom to be vindicated, as Barbara Tuchman so well summed up in her book, *The Proud Tower*:

> The Great War of 1914-18 lies like a band of scorched earth dividing that time from ours. In wiping out so many lives which would have been operative in the years that followed, in destroying beliefs, changing ideas, and leaving incurable wounds of disillusion, it created a physical as well as psychological gulf between two epochs.

The conflict that started in 1914 and only ended—hopefully—in 1945, had greater dramatic consequences for Austria, whether Empire or Republic, than for the other European countries. In 1918 France and Britain were—however illusory—victorious and Germany felt betrayed but not defeated; Austria disintegrated.

For the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and especially Vienna, it was the end of the dream and the beginning of the nightmare. The Vienna of the Hapsburgs, with its population of one and a half million, the heart of the largest territorial empire in Europe outside of Russia, suddenly was transformed into the capital of the newly founded Austrian Federal Republic with a total of six and a half million in-

habitants and a territory no larger than Virginia. Hungary, its traditional bread basket, and Bohemia, its industrial center, were now independent countries; Vienna had become a head without a body.

Much of Vienna, the Imperial city, died in the process. Despite all the economic and political upheavals, however, the suppressed energies and ideas accumulated during the previous decades suddenly burst forth in an attempt to mold Vienna in their image during the twilight period between the proclamation of the Republic and the Anschluss in 1938. Although Vienna rejected them totally, their impact on the Western world was of tremendous magnitude, providing much of the basis for its scientific and cultural development, principally in the United States, since the end of World War II.

That other face of Vienna, that of its creativity, which had emerged from the crumbling edifice of the Austria of the Hapsburgs, its Jewish face, was molded, before Freud, by men like Max Wertheimer, the founder of Gestalt Psychology, which, developing alongside psychoanalysis, also led to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl; by poets and writers like Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hoffmansthal; by musicians like Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg; by Adolph Loos in architecture and many, many others. The pillar of the logical positivists was the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, under whose name that period of Vienna is often referred.

Each of these schools—for this is what they were, in their own right—achieved major break-throughs in music and psychoanalysis; but of fundamental importance was the fact that this was occurring simultaneously and in one city. This resulted in the urge for a symbiosis where each of the autonomous and self-contained disciplines would become interdependent and interrelated, thus creating the foundation for a new and harmonious society. These mostly Jewish Viennese circles were not only a century ahead of their time, but were born in the capital of a region barely emerging from feudalism.

Whether under the Hapsburgs or the Republic, this dichotomy was still discernible in the Vienna of 1971 where, thirty three years after Freud's hurried escape from a certain doom, the 27th International Psychoanalytical Congress was held. Of the three thousand participants, only thirty-one were Austrians. The Viennese ignored the analysts just as they had ignored Freud, for the same conservatism and antisemitism hostile to his ideas and to any intellectual innovation was still rampant, despite the material comfort and social benefits brought to the city in great part through the labor of Jews, whether baptised or not, under the banner of Social Democracy by men like

Victor Adler, its founder, and Chancellor Bruno Kreisky.

Walking back to town from the Belvedere Palace, we found ourselves face to face with the brutal sight of what is probably one of the most incongruous and significant monuments of post-war Vienna: the monument to the Russian Soldier. Built by the USSR, upon the termination of World War II, to the memory of its soldiers who perished during the advance of the Russian Army toward Germany, the enormous mass of granite lacks the rococo or baroque beauty as well as the charm of most of Vienna's monuments, but it has a rare ingredient not present in the others, namely strength and dignity.

A dignity that conveys the martyrdom of twenty million men, women, and children butchered under the onslaught of the Teutonic "Drang nach Osten." With its back to the great plains of Russia the huge marble infantryman, standing like a guardian angel over a group of war-destitute women and children, was a reminder that the dreams of Ostmark will never again become a reality.

One of the highlights of our visit came about quite unexpectedly. The night before we had attended a concert of the Vienna Philharmonic. The music had been heavenly, all Mozart, which evidently represented a tradition that had not crumbled. The pompous crowds at the concert were dressed to the hilt and carried themselves as if each was wearing Mozart as a crown of glory over their heads. I could not help telling my wife that if each of those individuals thought that Mozart was his own personal achievement, they should feel the same about Hitler; he also was Austrian.

Despite the excellence of the orchestra it was an experience we could not face again, so my wife came up with the idea of going to the Kunsthistorische Museum, which happened to be open that evening. What a wonderful relief from the spectres of the Hofburg and the Capuchin crypt; if the Fine Arts Museum evokes ghosts, they are those of real beauty and splendor.

The art treasures represented the accumulation of the right of conquest of centuries of Hapsburg domination, gathered—or looted—from the four corners of Europe. Did not the *condottieri* of Renaissance Italy acquire their mantle of respectability by outdoing each other as protectors of the arts? And what about the art works at the Louvre—Napoleon himself also had a hand in collecting them. The only museum devoid of such innuendos was the Jeu de Paume of the French Impressionists, not counting of course those of contemporary art.

Before walking into the Kunsthistorische Museum, the only Span-

ish dogma I had unequivocally accepted was considering the Prado the best museum in the world, surpassing much of what the Louvre, the National Gallery, or the Metropolitan Museum had to offer in those days.

Strolling along the endless galleries, we were enveloped with the most beautiful expressions of European art: Italian, Flemish, Spanish —what does the national label or period matter when one is exposed to the timeless vision of such creativity?

Ever since visiting Versailles one night with my children, when the dimly lit gallery of mirrors was almost empty but for a few visitors, and my small son whispered to me, "Daddy, do you see all these gentlemen and ladies in beautiful costumes walking all around us?" I often wonder whether museums, like cemeteries and the jungle, come into the possession of their rightful owners as soon as the sun sets behind the horizon.

Many have had the experience of being subjected to the spell of the Gioconda's gaze. As I was floating around the Spanish aisle that night, I sensed a somewhat hostile glance from a presence behind me. Turning rapidly around, almost fearing the encounter, I was face to face with the most exquisite Renaissance bust, a queen most likely, with a touch of familiar arrogance to her features. The eyes were not gentle. "Isabella the Catholic, Queen of Aragon and Castile," read the label. Since my childhood these encounters with the sovereign of the reconquista had been part of my mental landscape. Was it another ghost I had conjured up, or just the fact that Marie Therese of Hapsburg was one of her descendants?

With a great sense of melancholy we went to visit the graves of our respective grandfathers on our last day in Vienna. I wished with all my heart that the Kaballah had been correct in hinting that a burial ground is not simply one's final resting place but a point of continuity.

We walked with emotion along rows and rows of tombs in the Jewish cemetery, part of the Zentralfriedhof, where lay buried those of Am Yisrael for whom Vienna had been a city of passage, until we reached the large plot where lay the remnants of the Sephardic Jews.

As I stood in front of the tomb of Don Isaac and was projected back in time to the house on the Hill of Pera where his spirit had reigned supreme, despite the fact that I had never known him in the flesh, for he was called by his Creator the same year I came into this world, I heard my wife calling in a tone akin to awe, "Look!"

I turned around to see her standing across the aisle, pointing at a

grave almost opposite that of Don Isaac, and gasp, "This is the grave of my grandfather!" Facing each other were the graves of two Jews who had been born the same year, one in Constantinople and the other in a small town in the Carpathians, whose respective grandchildren, both refugees from Hitler's Europe, had met and married in the distant land of Brazil.

A coincidence in Vienna, the city of passage, or the fulfillment of one of the texts in the *Zohar* (Book of Splendor) where it is recounted that when a soul is ready to be sent or return to earth, the Creator himself separates the masculine from the feminine and blesses it with the words, "Go, my child, and be reunited."

Was it another coincidence to find, next to the grave of my grandfather, that of Elias Canetti's mother and other relatives, for his family came from the same small city of Rustchuk in Bulgaria as my father? That same evening we stood in front of the window of one of Vienna's bookstores to stare open-mouthed upon rows and rows of one book: Elias Canetti's autobiography, *Die Gerettete Zunge* (The Tongue Set Free) was being launched. The first part of the book described his youth in Rustchuk and in Manchester, where his father represented the family's business.

Vienna, where the paths of so many Jews crossed each other! How else could one interpret a passage in the same book by Elias Canetti and of another writer, Manès Sperber, who also had a great influence on me. Canetti described how as a young boy in Vienna during World War I, after seeing trains loaded with war refugees from the East, asked his mother who those poor people were. When he was told they were poor Jews, he was shocked by the awareness that also such Jews existed. Manès Sperber describes in his autobiography how he arrived in one of those trains. Just a coincidence?

A few weeks ago I saw unfolding on my television screen images that made me doubt as to whether I was seeing the re-enactment of an ancient European pageant or a historical reality. Had it not been part of the daily news, I could have believed it was a scene from a new movie version of "La Ronde." Actually, it was the funeral procession of Zita of Hapsburg, the last Empress of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

On the reviewing stand stood rows upon rows of persons garbed in the darkness of profound mourning paying their last respects to the deceased, who reminded me of the spectres of Italian aristocracy in Fellini's movie, "Rome." Reigning crowned heads of Europe, deposed monarchs, and pretenders to ephemeral thrones? The broad-

caster commented that it was the largest gathering of nobility Europe had seen in a long time.

The reconstituted multicolored imperial liveries, the resplendent presence of the Hussars and other guard regiments, the traditional costumes of the nobility representing all the ancient provinces; a surge of nostalgia attempting to give form and bring to life once more all the panoply, pomp, and circumstance that symbolized the glory that had been the Holy Germanic Roman Empire.

Was the imperial ritual of accompanying the mortal remains of the last empress to the Capuchin crypt, to be buried at the feet of her august ancestor by marriage, the Empress Marie Therese, the projection of a delusion; that nothing had changed in time and history since Vienna had ruled over a third of Europe, until it had become a head without a body?

Not visible in this imagery of phantasmagorical splendor was that of a presence hovering over it, symbol of its delusion, his excellency Kurt Waldheim, President of Austria.

The unfolding of this psychodrama, if one may call it that, made me reflect that on the present European political scene the mystique of Central Europe is again very much in fashion, and Kurt Waldheim's Austrian Republic is at its center; a reminiscence linked to my first trip to that country many years ago.

Italy

It took a great struggle of conscience to include Italy among the Lands of Ashes. Undoubtedly, at the end of World War II a great part of the country was in ruins, as it had been one of its main battle fields, but Rome, the papal city, was barely touched.

The cradle of European Fascism had been, however half-heartedly, the ally of the Third Reich; part of the Axis, also known as the Pact of Steel, that had devastated Europe. On the other hand, I was faced with one of the great paradoxes of the last war. Fascist Italy had done more to save the Jews from its ally than probably any other country in Europe. True, a hard core of Fascists had rallied around Mussolini even after the Badoglio Armistice and zealously cooperated with the Germans in rounding up the Jews trapped in Rome and in northern Italy, while the allied armies were being held up by the Germans in the Appenine Mountains cutting across central Italy. But within the context of European collaboration with Nazi Germany in the Final Solution, this could be considered an exception.

Apart from my professional assignment, how was I to approach

this land of Italy—try to clarify its role toward the Jews during the war, or search for my family roots? As often happens in my life, destiny made the choice for me, and I pursued it. The Italian Fascist Regime's efforts to prevent its Jews from falling into the hands of the Third Reich soon became clear enough, at least until the Badoglio Armistice. As to the search for my Italian roots, events developed beyond expectation.

Milano was enveloped in fog as the airport bus entered the city. Brand-new skyscrapers everywhere, reminiscent of Pittsburgh, or maybe São Paulo, the industrial center of Brazil; but the Latin touch was there. Despite the greyness of the atmosphere, I could distinguish on the ground floor of the modern buildings fashionable shops, restaurants, countless cafés with people sitting at small tables, elegant confectioners and teashops—but where were the remnants of the city of the Sforzas?

Checking into my hotel, I sensed something familiar, a mood not quite like that of Paris, rather more like Vienna. I remembered having been told that on a clear day, which happened less than a dozen times a year, one could see the Alps some sixty miles away; beyond them lay Austria. Northern Italy had been under the rule of the Hapsburgs for longer than the Italians like to recall.

I sighed with relief. Two whole days to myself before starting on my business assignment. While still in the hotel lobby I began to feel good, perhaps because it was Friday evening. In Germany and Austria, the land of the ghosts, a deep gloom would invade me during Sabbath. Was it because the *Shekhinah*, the Queen of Sabbath, could not come to meet its Jews at the site of the crime?

Just beyond the horizon was the Brenner Pass leading into the accursed land, through which thousands of survivors of the Shoah had streamed on their way to what was then Palestine under British Mandate. Throughout the decades I came across many of them, who without exception praised the warmth of the Italian people. After crossing the Alps, it had felt like entering the Promised Land itself.

Like my forefathers among the kabbalists of Safed, who at sunset would walk out into its green slopes to welcome the Queen of Sabbath, I started my Italian sojourn moving in a state of exhilaration toward what the concierge had indicated was the center of the city, despite the thick fog. Familiar, too familiar, as if I were returning home.

From my hotel in the Piazza della Repubblica, which is a sort of landmark where the new commercial center of Milano with its sky-

scrapers ends and the old part of the city starts, I walked into the Vialle Vittorio Veneto adjacent to what seemed a large public garden.

As I walked along the mansions bordering the park and turned into Via Manzoni leading to the old city, I was faced with massive buildings projecting centuries of architectural styles, including those inherited from the Spanish, French, and Austrian occupations. Here I was, enveloped in fog and surrounded by stone buildings and monuments, of which other European cities had conditioned me to be suspicious. Was it fair to absolve modern glass and steel structures from what I imputed to the cities of stone built throughout the centuries? At least man has an affinity with history; according to Emil Durkheim's prophetic vision, modern cities would alienate their inhabitants and fill them with terror.

As if to fulfill a secret wish, all of a sudden a strong Alpine wind swept over the city to liberate it from the thick mantle of fog, uncovering the evening twilight to celebrate the peaceful arrival of the Sabbath. It brought life to what so far had appeared dead memorials of stone, revealing the unfolding history of the most ancient living civilization of Europe.

Standing witness to Imperial Rome were the remnants of the old aqueduct at the entrance to the Piazza Cavour, named after the man who symbolized the unification of the Italian nation-state hardly more than a century ago. The name evoked the countless Jews who had fought for the Risorgimento of Italy. Legends of the young Jew who had led the revolt of the Milanese against the Austrian yoke in 1848 had echoed all the way to the house on the Hill of Pera.

Milan, capital of Lombardy, had been ruled for centuries by Archbishops under the tutelage of its princes and *condottieri*, part of Rome Triumphant risen out of the remnants of the pagan empire, followed in the sixteenth century by almost two hundred years of Spanish yoke and the domination of the Hapsburgs until 1859, when it finally became part of the Kingdom of Italy. In between was its periodic link with France, mostly under the aegis of a Napoleon, first as Consul of the Republic, then as Emperor of France, and finally Napoleon III, to whom it owed its liberation.

Roman ruins in marble and stone, beautifully preserved statues, palaces, churches, all the symbols of Italian history followed me along Via Manzoni, until at its end rose a massive dark building in the midst of a large square.

It was a structure which at first I could not place within any archi-

tectural style or historical period; in contrast to the monuments I had just walked past, it lacked beauty. I was standing in front of what for many is the symbol of Milan, La Scala. That ugly building has given more joy to the world through the spirit that emanates from it than all the other façades of beauty, which often conceal centuries of domination, oppression, and cruelty.

Across the square stood the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, immersed in an explosion of lights which puts to shame the Parisian galleries. The vast glass enclosure is lined on both sides by fashionable restaurants and countless cafés, the central gathering point of the Milanese elite and, of course, tourists. As I was to find out, it was the best place for a rendezvous with members of the Jewish community, who seem to gather in different cafés by groups of origin.

After walking through the Galleria, I finally found myself in the large square of the Duomo, which like all cathedrals took centuries to build and was only finished on the orders of Napoleon.

The mood of entering a memory of endless time that had possessed me the previous evening was still with me the next morning in the newly built synagogue; the old one had been destroyed by the Germans during the war. The liturgy, a blend of the Romaniot tradition—dating back to ancient Rome—and the Sephardic ritual, combined in its chants the flavor of two worlds.

When I had arrived in France a few months before I had felt that I was returning home, but it had been different, a return to the land that had given me my formation. Now, I was projected into a different dimension of time—it was to repeat itself later on in Spain—as if the structures of the Via Manzoni had spoken to me. The memory of the generations or my own? I do not know, and will not attempt to find out. One thing I felt certain of, I had dwelled there before, and for a long time.

Was Italy, at least Milan, part of the Land of Ashes? During the week I spent in the area carrying out my business, I did not find any indication of it. Maybe from the moment I stepped out of the plane at the airport, I became so engrossed in the family saga that I was incapable of seeing any vestiges or capturing any mood that the angel of death of Auschwitz had swept its wings over the land.

In Germany, as soon as I had crossed the Rhine I felt an atmosphere so thick it could have been cut with a knife, but it was not fog as in Milan. Did it emanate from Wotan and his hordes of the dark pit of the Black Forest, through the Pomeranian marshes of Bismarck, to culminate in Hitler's Third Reich? Or was it the pres-

ence of their victims, not only to stand witness to the past but to perturb the serenity the Germans expected to find as the result of their economic miracle? Most likely a combination of both. To my eyes Germany is an ugly country, and not even the beauty of its countryside can hide the fact that it serves as a camouflage to the engines of ultimate destruction poised toward the East, just as those from the East stand as a constant threat to their survival.

Austria is beautiful, especially Vienna, but beneath its layer of glamor, more so than in Germany, there is a smell of death—and for good reason. Simon Wiesenthal, the famous Nazi hunter and head of the Jewish Documentation Center in Vienna, has revealed that although the Austrians represented merely 8 percent of the population of the Third Reich, they were responsible for the death of at least half the Jews martyred in the Holocaust.

Were it not for a certain element of comedy in the universe of the absurd created by Pirandello and Ionesco, the contrast between the two lands that had formed the Axis would fit into it. Kafka, and to an extent Canetti, tried to give form to those forces which, from beneath the glittering surface of the Hapsburg Empire and Wilhelm's Germany, would eventually burst forth to transform the European continent into ashes, and in the process engulf most of its Jews.

During my numerous business trips to Italy—for years I was in Milan at least once a month—I hardly came across a man of my generation who did not tell me sooner or later that during the war he had worn a black shirt, symbol of Italian Fascism; while in Germany even men who had stamped on their features the hardness of those who had worn the uniform of the SA, the Waffen SS, or even the Wehrmacht, did not lose an opportunity to emphasize their role as victim, during the war; each one of them assured me that he had had at least one Jewish friend, or had saved one.

How can one reconcile the paradox of the Italian regime and its army? A regime that provided the world with the spectacle of thousands of Italians crammed into the Piazza Veneza to cheer the Duce, perched like a crow on his balcony, inciting them to revive the Roman Empire at the point of eight million bayonets, and which upon the collapse of France under the German onslaught did not hesitate to stab in the back the very nation that a century before had been fundamental in its struggle for independence; an army which did everything to save the Jews who fell under its jurisdiction, in defiance of its German ally.

An army which, upon the Allied landing in North Africa that

prompted the German invasion of the unoccupied part of France and caused thousands of Jews to stream into the French Riviera under Italian occupation, refused to hand them over to the Germans and declared them to be under their protection! To the point, it is alleged, of contacting and informing the Allied authorities that the Italian Army would concentrate in Nice thousands of these Jews—some 30,000 are mentioned—load them into transatlantic vessels available at the time and request free passage for them through the Allied-dominated Mediterranean.

It was a plan apparently devised by the Italian Army shortly before the surrender of Italy, for all were well aware of the tragic destiny reserved for the Jews if they fell into the hands of the Nazis. Fortunately the plan was not implemented before the Badoglio Armistice was declared, when the Italian Army was still in control of the Côte d'Azur. When their ex-Allies swarmed over the area, the Jews were trapped.

What was the reason for the delay, when thousands of Jews could have been saved? There is a version I would hope to be untrue, but which makes sense in the light of Britain's policy toward the Jewish National Home in Palestine: that permission for the free passage of the Italian liners was refused, as the Jews were to be taken to North Africa—then already under the control of the Allies—and obviously thereafter to Palestine. At times an anguished doubt possesses me. Can it be that Fascist Italy did more to save the Jews under its jurisdiction in occupied Europe than Great Britain could have done?

Throughout the years during weekends and vacations, as I traveled from Rome to Ascoli, Florence, Modena, Pisa, Siena, Ferrara, Mantua, Venice, like the weaving of a tapestry which initially projects dispersed patches of color and gradually develops into a vision of harmony, the memory of the family's oral tradition of the generations that had dwelled across the land came to life.

My father's forefathers were said to have found refuge in Italy after the expulsion from Spain, which apparently was confirmed by the family name. Even my birth certificate is a document in Italian, under the printed heading of "Foreign Jewish Community of Constantinople under Italian Protection." Did it mean that my father had proven he was of Italian descent, or that my maternal grandfather was from Livorno? Did it entitle me to Italian citizenship?

In the town of Rustchuk on the Danube, my father's birthplace, the first synagogue was founded in the year 1815 and its rabbi was my father's great-grandfather, who bore the same name as a well

known rabbi in the northern Italian city of Modena in the seventeenth century. Was it mere coincidence?

The year 1815 was also that of the famous Congress of Vienna following the defeat of Napoleon, where in the Redoutensaal of the Hofburg the Restoration was born. Idealized by Metternich to make sure that a phenomenon like the French Revolution and its offshoot, the Napoleonic era, would never occur again, it had as one of its practical results the re-establishment of the ghettos as a means for Emperor and Pope to teach the Jews their place once and for all.

The walls of the ghetto had been broken down in 1796 by the armies of Revolutionary France when, under the command of Napoleon, its First Consul, they burst into northern Italy and liberated it from the Hapsburgs. The Jews found themselves as free citizens, a condition they had not known since Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. They took full advantage of their newly found liberty to achieve positions of prominence in all strata of Italian society during almost twenty years in the areas liberated by the French armies.

After the defeat of Napoleon, the Church decided to institute even harsher measures than before against the Jews, due to their disproportionate involvement in the struggle for independence of the whole nation. While before they had only been the living witness to the punishment that would befall the people of the deicide, now they had also become a threat to the traditional order.

Combining the oral tradition with the coincidence of some historical elements, I became convinced that rather than remain under the yoke of the Hapsburgs and the Church, a number of Jews set sail along the banks of the Danube in search of their lost liberties, for tales abounded about the condition under which their brethren from Sefarad lived in the Ottoman Empire. Where the Danube flows through the region under the domain of the Sultan, which later was to become Bulgaria, some of the Jews of northern Italy, my father's ancestors among them, found such a refuge.

The undulating political patterns from the days of the collapse of the Roman Empire until the unification of the country in the nineteenth century made it extremely difficult to trace the Italian lineage of my ancestry. Initially, the name of an individual here or a town there that seemed to blend with one of the narratives of the oral tradition led me to believe that I was on the right course, often to end in disappointment. Like putting together the most intricate of puzzles, with time a strange pattern seemed to emerge which led me

to believe that I had traced my ancestry all the way back to thirteenth-century Provence, in the south of France.

Provence, the roots of my Italian ancestry—was it not Spain? How had I reached its kernel through the web of principalities, duchies, papal cities, regions constantly changing hands from one occupier to another—Spaniards, Austrians, French, even Germans, those hordes from the Black Forest that had swept over the land after the collapse of the Roman Empire—until Italy finally acquired the semblance of a united country in 1859, and Rome was snatched from the sovereignty of the Pope only a decade later?

If I were to believe Yehudah Halevi, who sees the hand of God functioning through time and history, not to speak of the *Zohar*, I guess it was correct to assume that Provence, the Langedoc of ancient lore, was the cradle of the family's kabbalistic tradition. There the Kabbalah was born, the foundation on which, decades later in Spain, the *Zohar* was written, the "Book of Splendor"; it was to become as important as the Talmud for most Jews, and reached its maximum expression in the schools of Safed after the expulsion from Spain.

The point of departure in the search for roots can only be the present, or the not-too-distant past. To reach into its origins is the task of historiography, and the Kabbalah does not lend itself to this field of scholarly investigation.

As to the not-too-distant past, I learned from the lips of my mother, usually very sober on these matters, that her own grandfather started delving into the mysteries of the Kabbalah during the last years of his life, as the result of which he attempted to leave his death bed to surrender his soul in the Holy Land. Not a word about this had ever been mentioned by my grandmother, prompted by her feeling that it was too serious a matter to be revealed even to her favorite grandson, whom she deemed not to have reached the maturity necessary to defy the prohibition.

There was a reticence on the part of my mother to dwell on the subject of her allegedly kabbalistic ancestor. When I had mentioned to her my growing interest in the family's tradition in this area, she withdrew in silence. At one occasion, as I kept insisting, she limited herself to uttering, "No, no, you must not have anything to do with it."

It was during my first foray into Spain, the Land of no Return, when I stood on top of Montjuich face to face with the name of Solomon Ben Moses Graziani engraved on one of the tombstones in

the old Jewish cemetery that the link in the chain of the family's kabbalistic tradition fell into place.

Solomon Ben Moses Graziani, a thirteenth-century rabbi and kabbalist who had sat on Salomon ben Adret's Beth-Din ("Religious Tribunal"), was the son of a rabbi from Gerona in whose generation the *Zohar* had been written and who was known as Gallico, the Jew from Gallia, after he had crossed the Pyrénées from Provence. Had the forefather from Gallia been one of the companions of that circle, from which emerged the "Book of Splendor" written by Moses de Leon? The quest is not yet over.

The hand of destiny—or coincidence in the eyes of some—willed it that the pattern should unfold via the land of Israel. In the annals of the little town of Cori, a few miles from Rome, it is stated that during the sixteenth century its entire Jewish community, under the leadership of its physician and rabbi, had immigrated to the land of Israel, settling in the city of Tiberias. The rabbi bore the name of Gallico.

Elisha Gallico, the son of the Rabbi of Cori, is alleged to have moved to Safed where he studied Kabbalah with none else than Isaac Luria's master, Moses Cordovero, my grandmother's famous ancestor.

Another generation elapsed and the grandson of the Rabbi of Cori, Samuel Gallico, returned to Italy at the beginning of the seventeenth century, where in Venice he published Moses Cordovero's works, the basis from which the Kabbalah spread throughout Italy to reach as far as the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe.

Names, places, dates, almost impossible to mesh into a whole. How does a Jew determine his ancestry, apart from the certitude of being of the seed of Abraham, and having stood witness at Sinai? This is how I reacted when I reached a crossroads, or a deadlock, as far as my paternal Italian lineage was concerned; or to be more exact, I was perplexed.

Do Jews need another guide to their perplexity as far as their ancestry is concerned, other than *zakhor*, our ancestral memory? Relevant to this question was a discussion I participated in around the table of a popular Parisian restaurant among an English-speaking crowd, when every subject under the sun was aired, minus the Jewish problem. Upon leaving, an elderly gentleman, obviously a Jew who throughout the meal had stared at me with a certain intensity indicating a flight into distant memory, took me aside and asked me in a

rather familiar tone, "I am sure we have met before—do you remember when and where?" Seeing my perplexed expression, he added, "I am sure we were together at Sinai. Remember when we sealed the covenant? From your remarks, it could not have been otherwise." He was not a rabbi but a mining engineer.

Can *zakhor* reach that far—an ancient memory, however subconscious—the oral tradition which would enable every generation of Jews to grasp the essence of Torah within the context of its time?

By the same token, what are the origins of one's family name? Gallico and Graziani, or Graciano as the Spanish still insist on spelling it, whether they appear in France, Spain, Italy, the land of Israel, or throughout the Balkans since the thirteenth century are so interwoven that I have been at a loss to trace them.

As to the origins of the name Graziani in Italy, I can only assume that it originated with Rabbi Solomon Ben Moses Graziani whose descendants, following the Spanish expulsion of 1492, found their way into Italy. I was able to trace scholars and rabbis bearing that name from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century throughout the cities of Mantua, Siena, and Modena. Their Gallico or Gallichi ancestry seems to be confirmed, for many of those who bore that name added to it the Gallo, which in Italian either signifies the cock, ancient symbol of France, or the land of Gallia. I have come across an illuminated manuscript, actually a Passover *Haggadah* of the Gallico family, with a crest in whose center were engraved two figures, a lion and a cock.

I had traced the Italian cycle of my paternal ancestry to Rabbi Abraham Joseph Solomon Graziani, head of the Jewish community of Modena at the end of the seventeenth century, and those of his descendants who after Waterloo sailed down the Danube in search of freedom all the way to Bulgaria. However, amidst the splendor of the city of Florence I came across the sad reality that the line of my paternal ancestors who had remained in Italy probably ended at Auschwitz. On the memorial plaque of its synagogue dedicated to those of the community who delivered their souls in the death camps are inscribed the names of an entire Graziani family.

There was another reason that made me depart with a heavy heart from Florence, despite the beauty of its art. Through galleries upon galleries I came face to face with the most exquisite paintings, products of centuries reflecting the evolution of Italian art. As the hours passed and in rhythmic sequence those countless images grafted themselves onto my being, a form gradually came to life, that of the

idol. Most of the paintings seemed to be based upon one central theme: the martyred likeness of the Jew of Nazareth, the one popes and princes saw as their Saviour, and the universe they had erected around him. Once again I was confronted with the graven image of a church that had created a god to glorify their history of power and conquest.

Depart from Florence with a heavy heart? It was not only the names engraved on the memorial plaque, or the memory of the numerous Jews burned in *autos de fe* on the Piazza della Repubblica, or the street named after Nathan Cassuto, physician and rabbi.

Nathan Cassuto was a young Jew from one of the traditional families whose ancestry could be traced to the Middle Ages; after graduating as a medical student, he attended the Rabbinical Seminary of Padua where he was ordained as rabbi. Cassuto, his wife, and his children were deported to Auschwitz. His wife survived to find her way to Palestine. As a scholar at the Hebrew University she was one of the victims of the Mount Scopus convoy ambushed by Arabs. Most of the other faculty members among the dead were refugees from Hitler's Europe. In the State of Israel their memory is still alive, as well as that of the British military outpost not far from the site. The post was asked to come to its relief, but there was no response. Strange, how in post-war Italy many of the memories lead to the role the British played during those tragic years, to prevent in one way or another the creation of the Jewish state. All of the countries occupied by Germany during the war have to live with the guilt that part of its population collaborated with the Third Reich in the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem. The Italian Fascist State not only protected its Jews, but refused to hand over those in the areas its armies occupied. The British, fighting the Axis with all their might, were silent witnesses. I attempt to wipe out the memory, but it is difficult, for even now not only the most vicious condemnations of the State of Israel in relation to the Palestinian Arabs emanate from Whitehall, but are usually accompanied by moral sermonizing.

Whether remnants of the communities of the Roman Empire or descendants of the communities of Gallia and Sefarad, the Jews were spread throughout the Italian peninsula in about three hundred localities, mainly from Rome all the way north to the foot of the Alps. These communities lived under conditions varying from relative tolerance to extreme harshness. They depended on the whim of their masters, which often reflected the economic state of their domain, their lust for conquest and wealth, and their need for court Jews as

financial or diplomatic counselors, not to speak of the irreplaceable Jewish physicians.

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, Italy had been a kaleidoscope of shifting power, which gave every piece of land its distinct and unique characteristic. Expelled from one principality or other only to be received back a few years later, or to find refuge in another where the process would repeat itself over the centuries, the Jews of the land of Italy survived and, in comparison with their brethren throughout Europe, prospered.

Often popes would open the gates of Rome to Jews who were being hounded out of adjacent principalities, while simultaneously issuing encyclicals whose purpose was to increase the yoke of the communities throughout the land. This duality seemed to be part of a tradition running through the centuries, to find its climax during World War II in the attitude of Pope Pius XII, who refused to intervene with Hitler or even speak up to stop the Final Solution, while the Italian people exercised every effort to protect its Jews from the tentacles of the Third Reich.

There were periods, however, when in certain provinces Jews lived in complete liberty by the grace of their rulers, actually enjoying greater freedom than the rest of the population. The most outstanding example was the port city of Livorno, the Jewish Republic, a rival to Salonika as the New Jerusalem in Sephardic lore. Although Livorno was part of the Duchy of Tuscany under the Medicis, whose capital was Florence, it had greater links to Salonika and Constantinople than with the rest of the peninsula, whether independent principalities or papal domains.

It was only upon my encounter with the generations that had for centuries dwelled in what is today the Italian nation, that I understood the importance the city of Livorno played in the lore of the house on the Hill of Pera. It transcended the fact that Don Isaac Levi had been born in that city.

The cities of birth of the family and its extended members could be identified with a map encompassing almost the whole territory of the Balkans. Constantinople, now Istanbul, Salonika, Athens, Sofia, Rustchuk, Varna, Sarajevo, Belgrade, etc., but no one seemed to have the nationality of his country of origin. We were all Spanish Jews, Sephardim, an identity in its own right that seemed to defy what most of the world classifies as a nationality. There were exceptions, of course, as I came to realize when we moved to France. Those relatives who had been born in Venice, London, Manchester,

or Paris proudly bore their Italian, British, or French nationalities. Thus the Italian roots of the family were part of its heritage, although enveloped in a haze of mythology. The nearest to the reach of memory was the city of Livorno.

On the train to Livorno an Italian executive, upon hearing that I was not on a business trip, had asked me in a surprised tone what I was going to do there, unless I took a ferry to Sardinia. The city of Livorno, which had competed with Salonika as the Jerusalem of the Exile, did not even have a three-star hotel now, unheard of in touristic Italy.

As the taxi drove along the main avenue stretching in a straight line from the railroad station to the port, I had the distinct feeling that I was not in the usual Italian city. Where were the palazzi, the churches, the clusters of narrow alleys of the Middle Ages? Of course, the cathedral stood in the center of the Piazza de la Repubblica, a few monuments here and there, but none of the splendor that distinguishes the other cities of the domain of the Medicis.

Actually, Livorno is just a port, a port-city like Rotterdam in an Italian context, for it has a charm that its sister cities in the Atlantic do not seem to possess. Even Athens is divided by an invisible line from its port, Piraeus.

After checking in at my hotel, rather than going to the synagogue as I had intended, I walked to the port where endless lines of cars were awaiting their turn to embark on ferry-boats that would take them to countless destinations throughout the Mediterranean. At that moment, the tapestry of ancestral memory, of legends, fell into place. Livorno had been a Jewish city, the only Italian city without a ghetto.

A Jewish city in the real sense of the word, linked only politically, and to a certain extent economically, to the Tuscany of the Medicis. The Free Port of Livorno for two centuries had been the center from where flowed the trade routes to the Atlantic and North Sea ports, in one direction, and throughout the Mediterranean basin, the Fertile Crescent, and as far as the Orient in the other.

In the tradition of the merchants of Sefarad, who as far back as the eclipse of the Roman Empire had opened the trade routes of the world, it will remain in the annals of history as one of the great international centers, or even a "nation," for this is how its Jews saw themselves.

In 1675 the Medicis had extended their invitation to open the free port to the members of the Jewish Nation, the scattered children of

Israel, after the expulsion from Spain. It had been especially addressed to the Jews of the Levant, where many of the Jews of Sefarad had found refuge, including the "Marranos" (Crypto-Jews) who had gone underground in Iberia. No wonder the language spoken by all the inhabitants of Livorno was Spanish and Portuguese; up to our time the Italian jargon of the city appears to have its roots in those languages.

Now I could better understand how in a medieval Italy torn by the greed of princes and popes, a phenomenon like the Jewish city of Livorno could arise. The saying that Italy does not exist apart from its geographical reality still holds true today.

Livorno gave me a grasp of my family legacy and tradition as international traders, which from the generations of Sefarad was passed on to the community of Livorno and spread throughout the port cities of Marseille, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and others. The paths of Don Abraham and his son, Don Isaac, became my own.

Had it been only for its traders, Livorno, or Leghorn, would not have merited the title of Jerusalem of the Exile. Its institutions of learning were many, but it was most renowned for its organization to ransom Jews wherever they were held hostage, a sacred endeavor of Jewish merchants throughout the ages. Is it a coincidence that the legendary Sir Moses Montefiore came from Livorno?

The image of liberal Rabbi Elijah Benamozegh, philosopher and kabbalist, and considered one of the great Jewish scholars at the turn of the century, is still vivid in my memory. During the days of my adolescence, in an indirect manner, he greatly influenced me in regard to the spirit of the Jewish religion, through the book *The Unknown Sanctuary*, by Aimé Pallière, writer and theologian. It had created a strong impact on both Jewish and Catholic Europe of his days and is still referred to up to our time.

Pallière, the offspring of a traditional French Catholic family, decided to convert to Judaism after attending a Yom Kippur service. He turned to Rabbi Benamozegh as his spiritual mentor, who convinced him to accept the commandments given to Noah without full conversion. He nevertheless lived as a pious and dedicated Jew for the rest of his days, and by his writings and lectures extolled the spirituality of the Jewish religion throughout society at large.

I do not consider it a coincidence that the openness of Livorno toward the lands beyond the great oceans created a vocation for religious liberalism. Sabato de Morais, founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, also was a native of the city.

The Livorno of today is a sad place with only a few hundred Jews, mostly new arrivals from Lybia. On the site of its ancient synagogue, which had been known as the most beautiful in Italy and was destroyed during the war, now stands a glass and concrete structure probably built with Claims Conference funds. It would do more honor to an affluent suburb of New York or Los Angeles than to the city that once proudly held the title of Jerusalem of the Exile. What a contrast to Pisa, basking in all its glory hardly fifteen miles away! The weight of centuries engulfed me as I walked across the Arno River into the ancient city. The extreme narrowness of the passage through which I had to find my way to the synagogue was like wading through the darkness of centuries. The synagogue itself, encapsulated within the high ghetto walls, was diminutive in size, as if reflecting the state of dejection to which medieval Christianity had attempted to reduce the Jewish presence by the power of its splendor.

Few remnants of medieval Italy have retained the magnificence of the Cathedral square. The Piazza del Duomo or Piazza dei Miracoli, as it is also called, reflects the miracle of man's potential for the creation of form, with the Cathedral, the Baptistry, the Campanelli, or the famous Leaning Tower, the Churchyard, the Cemetery with its sarcophagos and frescoes. The white marble and the manicured lawn that surround this complex of beauty stand like a wall to obfuscate the sight and memory of a civilization that had been an intrinsic part of the people of Italy: the compound at the far end of the Piazza, the Cimiterio Hebreo. The Jewish cemetery of time immemorial, of which one can see only the huge stone wall, contrasts drastically with the magnificence of the structures erected to the glory of prince and church; the symbol of a presence in that ancient land before the cross cast its shadow over it.

The massive ruggedness, the height and thickness of the stone wall, its entrance barred by an iron gate reinforced by a huge padlock worthy of the darkest medieval dungeon, seem to indicate that their purpose is to imprison within its womb a force that would shatter in its path the monuments Rome and its princes had erected as the symbol of their immortal power, should it break through the barrier of stone and iron.

Unless I climbed over those high walls, there was no way I could get into the cemetery. When I asked some of the numerous vendors about the possibility of entering the compound, I was faced either with mute silence or was informed that it had been closed for years, and I would have to address myself to the municipality.

Through a narrow gap between the wall and the gate, I was able to get a glimpse and feel the dignity of eternal life that enveloped the old tombstones, some of which date back to the twelfth century. Why are our dead, that other facet of Italy, maintained in isolation even after their departure? It is said that our forefathers, due to their mobility in a land divided by fratricidal conflicts, were the only real Italians.

It brings to mind the convent of the Carmelites recently established by the Church on the site of the death camp of Auschwitz. To pray for the salavation of the souls of the Jews, or to christianize its resting ground? I wonder.

On that day the presence of the generations was more real than the multitude of tourists and vendors that surrounded me. How many of the American tourists who flock to Pisa are Jews? Will the gate to the cemetery on the Piazza dei Miracoli one day be unlocked for them?

The destiny of the Jews of Ancona, a papal city at the time, was very different from that of Livorno across the peninsula. It also was declared a Free Port in order to develop trade with the Levant, as the result of which Jews expelled from the south of Italy, which had become part of the Spanish domain, were invited to settle in the city, including many Marranos. Soon, however, they fell into the clutches of the Inquisition and in the year 1555, twenty-four Marranos surrendered their souls on the pyres of the *auto de fe* rather than abjure their faith.

The city of Ancona obviously never had a chance to develop into a Free Port, but it had its place in the family tales concerning none else but Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, as well as Count Abraham Camondo.

The name of Camondo was legendary in the house on the Hill of Pera for Don Abraham Camondo, known as the Rothschild of the East, had apparently not only been a partner of Don Abraham Levy Kisapshouglu, but had been the head of the Jewish community when my illustrious forefather was one of its elders; another myth turned into reality when I verified its authenticity in records of the community.

As to Benjamin Disraeli, better known among the Jews of the Mediterranean as the Son of Israel, no such direct *yichus* ("noble ancestry") could be claimed by the family; the fact that Abraham Camondo had sent a Jew from Ancona to be his representative in England, whose grandson was to become Prime Minister to Queen

Victoria, was enough of a connection for him to be incorporated into the family legends.

Relegated to oblivion was the memory of how the initial impact of the news that the grandson of a small Jewish merchant from Ancona suddenly had in his hands the power to mold the destiny of the greatest empire of the world threw the Jews of the Levant into a state of panic, lest he should fail in his task and the wrath of the Queen fall upon the heads of the Jews.

I saw another face of Italy in Siena, built on three hills. It stands like a crown on the verdant plateau of Tuscany, with its fascinating Piazza del Campo set like a Roman amphitheater at the very center of the city, as if it were at the bottom of a cup surrounded on all sides by the structures of medieval Italy.

Siena is famous for its yearly pageantry re-enacting the medieval past in a most resplendent manner, the Pallio delle Confrade. Garbed in their ancient, multi-colored costumes and waving numerous banners, the citizens of the seventeen wards of Siena compete in demonstrating their distinct skills. A modern expression of Italy's immemorial rivalries?

It was a Sunday afternoon and the whole city seemed enveloped in a radiance of sound and beauty. The different regional participants in their traditional costumes with matching banners, through the skillful movements of their bearers, seemed to engulf each group in an ocean of color that blended with the harmony emanating from their respective music bands. The sound of drums, fifes, and an assortment of ageless musical instruments projected me into a dimension of total unreality—that fraction of a moment when the mind allows the imagination to pierce through space. It brought to life the image of an Italy that, except for its modern garb, had not changed much from the depth of its history.

This was just a rehearsal, as the parade was to take place a month hence, which gave the different groups the liberty to march at will in criss-cross directions throughout the narrow streets of the city; they were surrounded by the admiration of the citizenry in their Sunday best.

Apart from the color of their costumes and banners reflecting the coat of arms and the power of their ancient feudal princes and *condottieri*, or the intensity of the music, especially the martial resonance of the drums, one group differed little from the other. With the exception of one.

Not that it captured my imagination because of the splendor of its

garb or colors. On the very contrary, it projected a soberness and dignity of bearing which, rather than re-enacting the pageantry of a distant past, stood witness to a more recent period in Italy's history—that of the armed resistance of its people against the German invader and the Fascist militias.

Even their music was distinct from that of their rivals, with its medieval roots. They were singing the song of the Italian *partigiani*, a formation of men, scarves tied around their necks, marching in slow, almost military cadence. The veterans of the brigades who had fought for their liberty shoulder to shoulder with their sons, in that part of the world where sons still fight the battles of their fathers.

As impressive, or even more so, was the formation that followed. Women, arm in arm, the wives and daughters of the veterans of the long night, were equal to their men in dignity and pride, but with none of their martial bearing. Different too seemed their song, the melody of those who aspire to a future of peace rather than words of remembrance of the harsh reality of war.

The parade of the *partigiani*—I can only call it that, for it obviously represented a certain region of Tuscany which I do not recall—closed with a group that at first glance seemed out of place, for they had not been witness to an epic. The most moving, however, for it reflected the humanity of the Italian man and woman: a multitude of young mothers, either holding their children by the hand or pushing baby prams.

Three to four generations, rooted in a small parcel of the beautiful land, affirming their right to live in freedom and dignity, parading as part of a pageantry reminiscent of a civilization that has given so much to the world, but simultaneously drenched it in the blood shed by princes and popes during the centuries of struggle for wealth and power.

The parade of the groups of the Pallio delle Confrade also stood as a symbol of the saga of the Jews of Italy. On the one hand medieval Italy, whose Jews, fluctuating between the humiliation of ghetto life and the splendor of the courts, contributed so much to the Italian Renaissance, and on the other, the *partigiani*, who in my eyes stood as a witness to the thousands of Jews who, totally out of proportion to the rest of the population, fought and died in their ranks —not to speak of the predominantly Jewish participation in the resistance to Mussolini's Fascism of pre-war Italy.

Wherever my business itinerary or the hand of destiny in searching for roots took me throughout Italy, especially in the north, there

were elements in its cities and monuments that seemed familiar, projecting me into a dimension of time and history that I would find in the land of Iberia. However, when I was faced with Rome, I was suddenly confronted with a barrier. Since my first encounter with that city I had been left with the impression that it was distinct from the rest of Italy, despite the profusion of churches and monuments.

Two distinct lands? Or did the city of Rome wear different masks behind which it hides its real face? For Freud, it seems to have been mainly the city of Michelangelo, the very kernel of Western civilization. An attitude not devoid of ambivalence, which clearly transpires in a letter he wrote to his friend Fliess in 1901 after his first visit:

> . . . But, while I contemplated ancient Rome undisturbed, I could not freely enjoy the second Rome, medieval Rome; I was disturbed by its meaning and, being incapable of putting out of my mind my own misery and all the other misery which I know to exist, I found almost intolerable the lie of the salvation of mankind which rears its head so proudly to heaven. . . ."

Ancient Rome—how do I relate to it? Engraved in my memory remains the Rome of 1949, in the midst of a people on whose faces were stamped the suffering and deprivations of World War II, whose bearing reflected the degradation of decades of Fascist yoke and the humiliation of military defeat. When I came face to face with the Triumphal Arch of Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem, in which is embedded the huge Menorah, symbol of the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, of a vanquished Judea, I felt vindicated at least as far as the Roman Empire was concerned.

At that time of my life I was returning to the land of my ancestors to participate in the rebuilding of a Jewish State coming out of the ashes, and the city of Rome was to me but the remaining ruins of the greatest empire the world had ever seen; the real face of Rome. I was imbued with the concept that the return to the land of Israel after almost two millennia stood for the eradication of *galuth*. Jewish history would be recreated from that point in time engraved upon the Arch of Titus, the memory of the centuries of European exile relegated to oblivion.

This naive vision of Rome on the part of a romantic youth endured for a long time before I was able to see through this mask. Rome wears many, and I only gradually began to see its real face, the one that has survived all-powerful. I also came to contemplate ancient Rome undisturbed and with joy, but not the medieval one.

Trying to master the city through the cadence of my feet I was projected into a realm where avenues, streets, dark alleys, even buildings and monuments lost their static dimension to situate themselves in the flow of time, as witnesses to history.

This is what Walter Benjamin called the art of the stroller, the *flâneur*, through which he grasped the essence of the city of Paris. There is to my mind no better city to stroll in than Rome, even more receptive than Paris—with one basic difference, though. In Paris I can always feel the identity of the masses of humanity streaming through its boulevards and streets with that of the buildings and monuments surrounding them. There is an element of unity and continuity, which seems lacking in Rome. What is the relationship of the people to the remnants of stone and mortar that was Imperial Rome?

Medieval Rome, the one Freud calls the second Rome, has taken on a very personal dimension for me, that of the Church Triumphant. The beauty of the ruins of the Roman Empire, the splendor of its past, had blinded me for a long time as to the center of its power. I finally looked into the real face of Rome, a living monument to the glory of the Princes of the Church and the integrated universe which is the Vatican, on whose throne for almost two thousand years have sat those who arrogated to themselves the title of Rulers of the New Jerusalem.

From the days in the house on the Hill of Pera when first the memory of my forefathers of Sefarad, who had died in the *autos de fe* of the Inquisition, had been grafted unto my being, through the tales of eternal damnation from the mouths of our different Mademoiselles, through Franco's crusade in the name of Cristo Rey that threw Spain back into half a century of obscurantism, through its continuity in Vichy France whose main supporter, the Catholic Church, closed its eyes to the deportation of the Jews of France; to Pope Pius XII who had the power to stop the flow of the children of Israel toward the death camps but remained impassive, I saw the Church Triumphant with the crucifix in one hand and the sword in the other, striving diligently throughout the centuries to eradicate the Jewish people from the face of the earth.

As this vision of history took shape in my mental landscape, I could not help juxtaposing the fate of the children of Israel under the yoke of medieval Rome and the power it irradiated, to that under the domain of Imperial Rome and its provinces.

With few intervals, Jews had lived in Rome and its provinces since the second century BCE, mostly as free citizens. Even during the two

terrible periods when our Judaic forefathers found themselves at war against the power of Rome, initially when the Temple was destroyed under Titus Vespasian and later when Hadrian's legions razed Judea to the ground and much of its population was massacred, no retribution was imposed on the Jews of Rome, where they went on living as free citizens. Those brought back as captives by the triumphant legions were granted their liberty after a few years of servitude.

In "The Representative" (*Der Stellvertreter*), a play of great historical authenticity written by Rolf Hochhut in 1963 and at whose first performance in Paris I was witness to a near riot inside the theater, it is clearly stated that Pope Pius XII saw in the Third Reich's Final Solution of the Jewish Problem the hand of divine providence, an end the people of the deicide had brought unto themselves by rejecting the Saviour.

As Cardinal Pacelli, Pius XII had been Nuncio Apostolico to Germany, where he signed a Concordat between the Nazi regime and the Vatican. As to its importance, it is enough to quote Hitler's words at a session of the Reich's Cabinet on July 14, 1933:

> This Concordat, whose contents do not interest me in the least, creates for us an aura of confidence which is very useful to us in our uncompromising struggle against international Jewry. . . .

Could the Vicar of Christ, had he raised his voice, been strong enough to prevent the Holocaust? The reality is that during the nine months Rome was under German occupation, Pius XII had looked the other way while, in the shadow of St. Peter's Cathedral, the Jews of Rome were being rounded up to be taken to their death.

Where is the genesis of the Final Solution to be found? Was Nazi Germany the sole executioner?

During the struggle for independence and the period of the Risorgimento, until the city of Rome ceased to be a papal domain and was finally integrated into the rest of the country, the small Jewish community played an important role, which explains their disproportionate participation in the destiny of Italy until the curtain fell over Europe. Not only did they provide the country with a prime minister at the turn of the century and a large share of its scientific and cultural establishment, but proportionately speaking, the Italian Armed Forces had more Jewish officers than any other army in Europe until the days of the Duce.

Their tradition of devotion to Italy's democratic aspirations continued after the advent of Fascism and throughout the war. Many

around Matteoti, the symbol of underground resistance against Mussolini, were Jewish as well as those in the ranks of the partisans who fought against the Black Shirts and the Germans in northern Italy.

Reflecting on the history of the Jews of Italy, who notably were no more than 40,000, a number almost identical to those of Imperial Rome, and their involvement in the formation of the nation-state, is there an answer to Italy's split personality during the war—an ally of Germany while simultaneously, by comparison, a protector of the Jews?

The people of Italy for almost two thousand years endured the yoke of popes and princes, and their civil wars, as well as foreign occupations, without losing their humanity. A history not too different from that of the Jews who, compressed inside the four walls of the ghetto, not only preserved but managed to expand the scope of the Torah for generations, while also excelling in secular pursuits. At a specific moment the explosion that was the French Revolution not only liberated the Jew but also the Italian. The two became brothers in the struggle for emancipation and unification, and brother does not kill brother. An Italian, when face to face with a Jew, did not obey orders.

The different attitudes of the Italian and the German toward the war, when they had been allies *de jure* but not *de facto*, first found expression in my eyes at the occasion of a company management seminar, the participants being American, British, German, and Scandinavian in full force, while the mixed multitudes were represented by an Italian, a Frenchman, and a Jew, myself.

During one of the endless cocktail rounds that usually preceded dinner, the conversation had drifted toward the performance of the different armies during World War II. One of my colleagues, an American who had participated in the liberation of Europe, candidly remarked to the lonely Italian that the Duce's armies had not demonstrated too great a martial ardor during the conflict.

This observation seemed to act as a catalyst on the several German participants—Germans always seemed to need a catalyst before they voiced an opinion—who unleashed on my Italian friend a flood of derision and resentment, recounting how during the different campaigns of the war Italians had literally turned their backs to the common enemies and had run, leaving the entire burden of the conflict to the brave soldiers of the Wehrmacht.

Rather than reacting by a flood of words in defense of his honor, as was expected of him in accordance with the image projected by

Italian opera and by Hollywood, and which would have given a comic turn to the dullness of the cocktail ritual, our Italian kept his "cool." After a prolonged silence, in the most composed of manners as behooves a patrician of old lineage, he spoke the following words.

"Gentlemen, you are quite correct, the valor of the Italian army in which I was an officer was nothing to brag about. By no means does it come near to that of our brave German Allies, who in the process transformed Europe into a slaughter house and burned it to ashes. But before jumping to any conclusion about the Italian nation, please take into consideration that we are the descendants of Rome, the Roman Empire which through the courage and discipline of its Legions conquered and dominated practically the entire known world, as you all obviously know from your history classes. We, however, have learned that war and conquest are worthless, since we are today still paying the price for our ancient glory. Your countries, my friends, will undoubtedly learn in time."

The observation of my Italian friend left a deep impression on me. It was the key that enabled me to begin to understand the complexity of the Italian man, and perhaps the roots of the conflicting facets of that nation during World War II. What had struck me the most was the phrase, "we are today still paying the price for our ancient glory."

It was a phrase from a man who not only had the intellectual courage to admit the reality of his country's history, but during a business trip we were to take together to the State of Israel demonstrated an insight into Judaism and its people I have never since heard or read from any non-Jew, professor or theologian. My Italian friend is neither, just an engineer; but he is a patrician.

What is an intellectual? I have often wondered. I am sure that this title is not the monopoly of those on whom academia has conferred its title. The greatest biblical scholars, kabbalists, or talmudists, earned their living as simple craftsmen or traders. Were they not patricians in the context of their civilization?

The price still being paid for the collapse of the symbol of power and order which was Rome may be the lack of a national infrastructure, as compared to the rest of Western Europe. But then, perhaps, the slow process of evolution which followed its fall has brought about in the people of the peninsula, despite the yoke of popes and sovereigns, the realization that they must try to formulate a way of life in which the rights of the individual, in harmony with those of his neighbor, are to have priority over those of the State. The Duce

attempted to abort this process by harnessing the Italian people to the mystique of Fascism, the totalitarian State, under the mask of a resurrection of the past glory of the Roman Empire, which ended in catastrophe.

The real inheritance of the Italian nation is not in its ancient monuments but in the humanity of its people; a humanity which conveys that the vanity of power and glory that was the Empire is worthless, and is reflected in words and action, not form, however beautiful.

I have often thought about the monumental sports center built under the Fascist regime, a modern replica of the stadium of ancient Rome, whose obvious purpose was to glorify the memory of its warriors and gladiators, and inspire the Italians to follow in the tradition of their martial ancestors. Actually, the Duce's attempt to recreate the Mediterranean as the Mare Nostrum, the glory of ancient Rome, never materialized further than the conquest of Albania and the defeat of his modern legions at the hands of the small Greek Army.

When my Italian patrician said his country was still paying the price for its ancient glory and power, he must have been aware of the duality that today still runs through the Italian nation. Actually, it is a multiplicity of facets that has produced a Nation-State not only different in its character from other European countries but also in its structure.

It was only while working throughout the years with the Italian industrial and financial establishment or canvassing the country in search of my roots that I gradually became aware of its nature, which at first baffled me. The dichotomy between the panoply of power and fantasy projected by the Fascist State, and its humanity reflected in its half-hearted bellicosity whose most astounding expression was the endeavor of saving its Jews and those who fell under its control from its German Allies.

With time I began to perceive what appeared to be a trend, something familiar, as if the presences of the generations were recounting their tales. A trend that had its genesis in the days of Imperial Rome, to continue through the implementation of the Church Triumphant and the Byzantine Empire to find its way during the Renaissance to the mercantile state of the Doges, the *condottieri* and the papal States until, toward the end of the nineteenth century, through the Risorgimento the independent or semi-independent enclaves took on the shape of the Italian nation. Despite the Mussolinian era and the four decades of the post-war Republic, a trend—or moreso, a way of life—seems to have remained unchanged.

The popes and princes who shared the spoils of what had been Imperial Rome, under the effigy of Christianity hiding the different facets of an immemorial paganism, were interlocked with the children of Israel who dwelled in their domains. Here lay the roots of familiarity I had immediately felt with the land and its people, where individuals spoke, acted, and even seemed to think through innuendos and metaphor. A universe which seemed part of my own, and that of my forefathers of Sefarad, whose replica was to be found in Italy and the Ottoman Empire.

A universe of beauty of form juxtaposed with the pit of darkness and human degradation; the openness and generosity of the heart parallel to the cruelty of power and fratricidal conflict; Dante's *Paradiso* juxtaposed to his *Inferno*—the image of a civilization? The image of Machiavelli? This dichotomy, however, this facet of their civilization marked the limit with that of my forefathers, despite the assimilation to the mores of their environment so well defined by Yehudah Halevi in Spain and exemplified by the life of Leone de Modena in the Renaissance. They drew the line by their refusal to bow to the idolatry of form and the achievement of power by means of the dagger and the deadly chalice.

We, the descendants of Sefarad in our long journey throughout the lands of the Ottoman Empire and the kaleidoscope of states that today form modern Italy, did not internalize the very essence of the sea of the gods, the Mediterranean, which has been labeled pejoratively by the people of the cold as the Byzantine or Levantine mentality. A way of looking at life and the absolute enmeshed in all the legends and mythology swept by the winds of time immemorial, to give significance and *joie de vivre* ("joy of living") to its heirs, engulfing them in the azure of the Mediterranean and the brilliance of its firmament.

One could not define better than Fernand Braudel, in his monumental work, *La Mediterrannée*, the role of the Jews in the make-up of the Mediterranean world:

> It has assimilated not only Judaism and the tradition of Abraham, but a culture of mores, of habits that have been in place for a long time. A civilization is not only a religion, although it is at the kernel of every cultural system, but an art of living, thousands of attitudes that repeat themselves.

The Byzantine, or Levantine, mentality and its countless variations reaching their climax with Machiavelli and his legend! Could it have

been just the chance of a moment in time that brought me to the shores of Italy in the 'sixties, on a commercial-industrial assignment which gradually revealed its conspiratorial dimension?

Why should one of the large industrial complexes in its field in the United States break the taboo on the employment of Hebrews in any commercial capacity, except to hire an individual who in their view had the acumen of the Levantine tradition, that of the Sephardic Jew?

A Levantine Jew not only familiar with the American corporate mentality but also specialized in the international marketing aspects of a basic industrial product, seemed worthy of being an exception to the rule as the individual capable of unraveling the Machiavellian plot of which my employers suspected they had been the victims. A talent which they believed might have been sharpened during my professional experience in Brazil, during which our relationship had been established.

My assignment gradually revealed a landscape heavily strewn with obstacles, for my task consisted of tearing away veil upon veil, crafted in the best tradition of princes, merchants, and *condottieri*, not excluding princes of the church, that involved the acquisition by my employers of an industrial complex that in theory should have assured them their share of the nascent European Common Market.

The end result of my probings was that my employers were faced with a *fait accompli* which would half-way serve their original plans. I was entrusted with further assignments that kept me in Europe for an additional four years. However, the international industrial transaction in question, although in our age of giant corporate take-overs it did not present anything out of the ordinary short of its Levantine flavor, turned out to be relevant not only to my personal search for roots but also to be part of a kernel that over the next two decades would develop into a major economical scandal reverberating to the shores of America, and whose political implications shook the Italian establishment to its very core, with ramifications reaching into the realm of the Vatican City itself.

Personally speaking, what had started as an investigation of what was believed to be the Levantine undertones of an Italian industrial acquisition, turned out to lead to a plot that would have done full justice to Machiavelli himself, and those different facets that have kept his mystique alive through the centuries. By that time, however, I had been left out in the cold as the result of a Machiavellian trend made in America, my ex-employers having been twice the victims of

take-overs.

At this point the presences of the generations were reminding me that it was time for me to come to a better understanding of the role of my merchant forefathers, whom I had a tendency to denigrate as compared to the glory of the great kabbalists and rabbis. For during my return to Italy I realized how through their labor and dedication to the Jewish people they had survived the intermittent tyranny and benevolence of popes, princes, and *condottieri* from the days of Rome until the long night of the Third Reich; their legacy is now an intrinsic part of civilization.

Spain

Spain! I had dreaded the unavoidable encounter. Regardless of my professional assignment, sooner or later I would have to break the *herem* (anathema) so much a part of the discourse of my grandmother. The world had changed, and as to the universe of my youth in the house on the Hill of Pera, its time had come. Not to disappear from our memory, though, where it would remain engraved as part of the oral tradition. How else understand post-World War II, or to be more precise, post-Civil War Spain in the year 1961?

Since my arrival in Europe I had been told several times that Spain was beginning to participate in the economic revival, that the barriers which had isolated it for centuries were finally collapsing. This was the reason I had left Spain for the last stage of my industrial survey, as I wanted to be able to evaluate it within the context of what I had seen in the rest of Western Europe.

Although Spain had not directly taken part in World War II, the element of continuity between 1492, the Civil War, and Europe's "concentrationary world" was clear to me, heir to the generations of Sefarad: the Spanish Inquisition had found its climax in the Third Reich's Final Solution.

The shabby, pre-war Barcelona air terminal was in sharp contrast to the functional, often luxurious airports emerging throughout Europe. A show-window to the nation? If that was the case, the gate to Spain was not an auspicious one.

It was symptomatic of the poverty I was to see almost everywhere, with the exception of the fashionable quarters, where its elite showed off the kind of affluence one hardly ever saw in the rest of Western Europe. An aspect that reminded me of the class differences and discrepancy of wealth I had become so familiar with in South America. I wondered whether people were still going hungry.

Poverty did not seem to be limited to the working men whose features were stamped with signs of distress, as I could notice while visiting factories throughout Catalonia and the steel mills of the Basque country. I distinctly recollect the occasion when I went to a coffee house with a rather well dressed salesman—in Spain appearances are fundamental—who before sipping his expresso put the lump of sugar that accompanied it in his pocket, with the comment, "for the family."

The country seemed to have reached a turning point, though. Was Spain finally going to join Europe? Its borders were opening and tourists were flocking in. Massive quantities of grain were being shipped by the United States as part of a relief program.

Time and again during my frequent trips to Spain I was told in a confidential tone of the growing influence of the Opus Dei in the life of the country. Its members seemed to be mostly the heirs to the traditional economic elite of Spain who had been molded in the image of the founders of the movement, the more liberal segment of the Catholic Church, predominantly Jesuits. This new generation of technocrats had the goal of liberating the country from the grip of the old bureaucracy and the Phalange, a legacy of the Civil War era, and integrating it into the economy of the West. At a price, however: the iron grip of the police state, a strange combination of liberalization and repression.

Anxious to show me the wonders of his city, my host was driving me along the Passeo de Colón edging the port and the old city of Barcelona on the way to the hotel. I felt the fragrant touch of the Mediterranean afternoon breeze and the embrace of the glittering azure of the sea of the gods, cradle of mythology where it had all started, the birth place of Hebrew prophetism and Greek philosophy, the two pillars on which for the last two thousand years the West had been struggling to build a civilization, as in this land to which I was returning after five centuries.

Noticing my state of enchanment, my host had taken on the role of a proud guide, especially after I informed him that I was a Spanish Jew whose ancestors had come from that very city of Barcelona. Spanish pride and hospitality, which was to be repeated during my days in the land but not to be misinterpreted, for in a fraction of a second it could turn into open hostility.

When he pointed out Montjuich to me and told me that the old Jewish cemetery was located on top of the hill, I could barely hide my dismay. Although in the family tradition Barcelona stood as the

symbol of the land of Sefarad, a Jewish cemetery on Montjuich had never been mentioned. Yes, the name was familiar to me, but it was connected to the Spanish Civil War, when the medieval fortress had served as a prison for soldiers of the Republican Army. In its courtyard countless numbers had inexorably faced a firing squad every day at dawn, with the exception of religious holidays and, of course, the anniversary of the Caudillo. Their names, I had been told, would be chosen by priests to represent divine justice. This procedure, although reduced to a trickle, would be continued until the beginning of the 'fifties, just to remind the populace down below not to let their souls be tempted by the demons.

It brought to my mind the memory that Barcelona had witnessed the beginning of the destruction of the Jews of Sefarad, so poignantly described by one of the great rabbis and philosophers of the Golden Age, Hasdai Crescas, head of the community of Catalonia, in a letter written in 1391 to the Jewish community of Avignon in France:

> . . . the Lord poured his fury like fire, destroyed His sanctuary and profaned the crown of His teaching, namely the community of Barcelona, which was destroyed on that day. . . . [A]mongst the many who sanctified the name of the Lord was my only son. . . . [M]any slaughtered themselves and others threw themselves from the towers. Many also came forth and sanctified the name of the Lord in the open streets. All the others changed their faith. . . . [T]here is none left today in the city of Barcelona who still bears the name of Jew. . . .

The car had suddenly come to a halt and my host suggested that we get out for a moment near the monument to Columbus, the discoverer of America. Could he guess my feelings as I stared at the statue on the tall pedestal that seemed to dominate the entire harbor? It was as if, beyond the marble image of the man who had sailed to the New World, a vision unfolded of the last moments of the children of Israel on the land of Iberia, where they had lived for more than a thousand years.

> . . . This was the year 1492. From the four corners of the Kingdom of the Sovereigns of Aragon they are coming, the rabbis marching at the head of their congregations, on foot, on horseback, in carts or on the back of mules; they are marching to the sound of fifes and cymbals, men carrying the sacred scrolls of the law, some even the fragments of tombstones of their fathers, symbols of eternity.
>
> Stamped on the faces of some was despair, on others the certitude of a people who knew that they would be avenged, many believing that it

> was the exile of the return, the road to redemption. Some had fallen by the roadside never to stand on their feet again, for they had rendered their souls to the Eternal; others were born on the road. . . .

Thus it had been recorded in the annals, as the multitude of my forefathers had streamed down the streets and alleys to gather along the harbor I was facing, awaiting ships on which they would sail crowded like animals, many never to reach their destination. Each supporting and encouraging his neighbor, they did not succumb to the threats and supplications to the *Canes Domini*, the hounds of the lord; the predicant friars were swarming all around them, exhorting them to accept the cross and repent so that they might remain in the domain of the *reconquista*. They had married their daughters and their sons over the age of thirteen; in case the old ones should perish, they would not be left without companions, and would bear children to stand witness to the generations of Sefarad and the Torah of the Covenant.

As the car moved slowly along the single lane of the Ramblas, bumper to bumper, stopping at numerous intersections, I pondered the contrasts of this city of Barcelona which was not really part of Spain, as my host kept stressing. Although I had addressed myself to him in Spanish when I first met him at the airport, we ended up dialoguing in French, for he did not speak English. As I was to find out later, the real citizens of Barcelona address each other in Catalan, not in Spanish—to many the language of the oppressor. It was an important point, for the Catalan sees himself as a man of French culture.

The scenery changed as the car entered the modern city, the beautiful Plaza de Cataluña, to drive into the broad, modern avenue of José Antonio Primo de Rivera where my hotel, the traditional Ritz, was located. Traditional indeed it was, putting to shame the best London's Mayfair has to offer. Not only was I surrounded by a swarm of liveried footmen at a snap of the fingers of my host, a member of one of Barcelona's traditional families, but ushered into what seemed to me one of the royal suites.

Exhausted by the impact of the "return," I was profoundly relieved when my host took his leave, recommending that I take a rest since he would fetch me two hours later.

Having regained my strength, I was looking forward to one of those long, leisurely dinners Spanish hospitality is renowned for. To my surprise, I was taken to an office to discuss business into the late

hours of the night—an expression of Catalan independence or faithfulness to tradition? I was only taken to dinner, elaborate beyond expectations, after midnight. It is true, though, that I was only picked up for work at 11 o'clock the next morning.

It was a Friday, and I was worried whether the working schedule of the previous day would be repeated. Not that I felt compelled to welcome the Sabbath in a synagogue, but I wanted to be free to roam the streets of Barcelona wherever the presences would guide me. I sensed their urge to show me the places and tell me their tales.

My refusal to spend the weekend at his house in the nearby resort of Sitges with his family was graciously accepted by my host, after I explained to him that the following two days would be my only opportunity to get to know Barcelona. He excused himself after lunch for taking leave from me at such an early hour and drove to Sitges to join his family.

My first act was to move to the Hotel Colón in the old city; I had been told that it was the place for foreigners who did not have the pretension of being proconsuls. Besides, the night at the Ritz had been a very restless one. Having followed me to the land of the expulsion most likely against their will, the presences did not relish spending the night under the same roof which for more than a century must have housed many crowned, or ex-crowned, heads of Europe. I guess they reminded them of Ferdinand and Isabella.

The Hotel Colón is situated on the Plaza de la Catedral, in the midst of the ancient Jewish Quarter—*Call* in Catalan—one of the most renowned in the Middle Ages. Here again, I felt a crossing of the paths between the spirit the Jews of Sefarad gifted to the land, and the independence of the Catalan people, which found its climax in the Spanish Civil War.

This was the mood the presences seemed to convey to me as I checked into the hotel, confirmed by a French guest who told me that it had been one of the headquarters of the Republican Army during the Civil War. The tone of pride in which the statement was made, and the nostalgia and sadness on his face, tempted me to inquire whether he had been part of one of the French battalions of the International Brigade. I refrained from asking the question for I would find myself engulfed in the lore of the Spanish Civil War, diverting me from the search for my roots, the generations of Sefarad, toward which I intended to dedicate every free moment. Since my arrival I was, however, inexorably being drawn into it, as at every step I took there seemed to be a living memory to something that

was not yet over. This after all was Barcelona, one of the last bastions of Republican Spain.

From the moment I bought my first newspaper on Spanish soil, I was impressed by the extent to which the heavily censored press still fought its battles; the articles and editorials on the demons of the Spanish soul and the necessity of exorcising them to save the Spanish people, reflected a deeply rooted obsession. Echoes of the sermons of the predicant friars?

During the following days and the years of my first European assignment, in every town and city I came across a monument commemorating the victory of Franco's armies in a land whose sons, with the help of foreign armies, are believed to have butchered each other to the number of one million men, women, and children. My immediate reaction was to question why they persisted in perpetuating the memory of this terrible war, when common sense would seem to dictate that they strive to erase every trace of it. Victory against the Spanish people? I had come across throughout Europe with a strong urge to forget; why not in Spain, where brother had fought brother?

It was only in Madrid, in the Plaza Mayor where so many of my ancestors of Sefarad had joined their Creator in the flames of the *auto de fe* that I understood the obsession with the demons in the Spanish soul. The Caudillo had once more brandished the sword with which the Holy Inquisition had attempted to eradicate the devil from the soul of Spain represented by the Jew. All those monuments to the victory of the nationalist armies were but a reminder of the fate that awaited those who would allow their souls to be possessed by the devil once more, this time under the mask of a more modern heresy.

The very same forces of fanaticism and obscurantism unleashed by the Monarchs of the Reconquista against the Jews of Sefarad had found an heir in the Caudillo of the twentieth century, this time to be turned against the people of Spain itself.

Whether Communism will turn out to be a greater evil than Fascism, only the unfolding of history will determine. However, Communism cannot be fought with Fascism or its traditional facet, that of Hispanidad, to which the Latin American military juntas have become the heirs. In the 'thirties, Communism was identified with Judaism; and in our time, the Soviet Union has turned against the Jews and the State of Israel, equating Capitalism with Judaism. The paradox of it all!

Just like the identification of the Spanish Republic with the Com-

munist party, which happened to be just one of many parties, and a minority one at that. The short-lived Republic, hardly a decade old at the outbreak of the Civil War, was the first glimpse of the Spanish people at Democracy. A brief period of hope, following centuries of arbitrary power wielded by absolute monarchies and the obscurantism of a militant Church, only to be crushed in an ocean of blood under the onslaught of Germany's Condor airplanes; of Mussolini's black-shirted legions; of the Tercio, Spain's Foreign Legion; of the Banderas, hordes of Moorish warriors commanded by "Señoritos" brandishing swagger sticks and longing for the return of the monarchy; of thousands of Carlista peasants with red berets and bleeding hearts embroidered on their uniforms, led by priests carrying crucifixes, ready to die for Cristo Rey; of blue-shirted Phalangistas, the Spanish version of Fascists. They were all part of a sacred crusade to drag Spain back into the Middle Ages, to save the Spanish soul.

Here I was in Barcelona, finally free to roam at will for two days; in a few hours the first star would glitter over the clear Mediterranean sky, announcing the Sabbath.

Where should I start? My first impulse was to take a taxi and rush up to Montjuich. I hesitated for a moment, for I saw that a large crowd had assembled in front of the cathedral. To the sound of fifes, cymbals, and other ancient instruments, people seemed to be dancing a folk dance. No, it was more than that, rather like a ritual. Circle within circle, in concentric harmony, arm in arm, erect, with a stiffness projecting not only grace but strength and defiance. Group after group appeared from nowhere, forming a circle which, after having spent its strength and passion, disbanded to instantly give way to the formation of another circle. Each age group formed a separate circle; three generations were represented. There was not a smile, but their features and movements expressed equally nobility and gentleness, harshness and cruelty, not to say arrogance.

It was the ritual of the Sardana, the ancient Catalan folk dance, symbol of the autonomy of a people that had never been broken.

One could sense a discordant element, though. The performers were surrounded by a larger circle, covering almost the entire plaza, whose purpose seemed not only to prevent its expansion but to embrace them in a deadly grip. The varnished black tricorns of the grey-uniformed men glittered in the sun; the Guardia Civil, modern version of the secular arm of the Inquisition, a reminder that the Caudillo was watching for the demons in the Spanish soul.

As by an invisible sign the band stopped playing, performers and

onlookers who were one and the same disbanded. The people of Barcelona had spoken; once more the message had been sent.

For the first time since leaving the hotel I had the opportunity of looking around me. I was in the old city. The gothic cathedral was surrounded by what seemed to be remnants of medieval architecture, palaces of the Princes of the Church, the Counts of Barcelona, the Sovereigns of Aragon. From this center of historical power branched numerous narrow alleys to the old *Call*, the former Jewish Quarter.

I felt lost. From this amalgamation of ancient palaces, cloisters, and other abodes, centuries and centuries piled onto one another and erected on the foundations of ancient Roman walls still visible to the eye, where should I proceed? Each stone and square yard of space must have been a witness to the unfolding of history. Where was I going to trace the steps of the generations of Sefarad?

Was it the guiding hand of the presences? For suddenly I found myself right in front of what seemed a gothic palace, the site of the "Disputación."

The crossing of the paths! The Sardana, the act of defiance of the people of Barcelona, had unfolded before me a few hundred yards away from this ancient building where an epic event of Spanish Jewry had taken place, probably one of the most outstanding episodes of its entire history. The Disputation in the year 1263, when Rabbi Moses Ben Nahman, better known as Nahmanides, had single-handedly upheld the honor of the House of Israel in a theological debate with the representative of the Crown and the Church.

The annals recount that in the presence of Jaime I, King of Aragon, the Count of Barcelona and the entire court, the friars of the Dominican and Franciscan orders, and other dignitaries of the Church, Nahmanides took upon himself to defend with dignity and without fear, the eternal validity of the Torah, following the words of the psalmist: "So shall I keep thy Torah continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts. I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed."

Facing the apostate Pablo Christiani, a rabbi and talmudic scholar before his conversion, who was assisted by the finest Christian theologians, Nahmanides not only defended but proved the superiority of the religion of Israel to a point where the ecclesiastical authorities of the kingdom deemed it advisable to put a brusque end to the disputation.

The issue of the debate, as presented by Pablo Christiani, was to prove from the writings of the Talmud that the Messiah announced

by the Prophets had already come, incarnated in Jesus. Addressing himself personally to the King, who apparently actively participated in the debate, Nahmanides retorted with the following words:

> . . . from the time of Jesus until the present, the world has been filled with violence and injustice, and the Christians have shed more blood than all the other people in the name of their religion. And how difficult it would be for you, my lord King, and these your knights, if war was no longer learned. . . .
>
> . . . the core of the contention and quarrel between the Jews and the Christians lies in what you state concerning the dogma of the divinity is a very bitter thing. And you, my lord King, are a Christian, the son of a Christian father and mother. You have listened all your life to what priests, Franciscans and Dominicans, tell you about the birth of Jesus, and they have filled your mind, yes, your very bones with this matter; and thus it has become ingrained in you through habit. Yet that which you believe—and it is the heart of your faith—reason cannot agree to, nature also cannot extend to this. . . .
>
> . . . that the creator of Heaven and Earth, and all that this is, then shall become an embryo in the womb of a Jewess, shall grow there for seven months, shall be born a tiny creature, shall then grow up and later be given to his enemies, and that they will sentence him to death and kill him. And you say that later he has risen from the dead and returned to his first place. Such beliefs cannot convince either a Jew or any other human being. Thus your speeches are made in vain and emptiness, for that belief lies at the heart of our quarrel.

This was uttered two centuries before the curtain fell on the Jews of Christian Spain and before the Inquisition had been made official in the Kingdom of Aragon. Thus, at a time when the sovereigns of the land were still attempting to curb the ever increasing power of a militant Church, and the Jews were deemed essential in the interminable wars against the Moors who still dominated a large part of the Iberian Peninsula, King Jaime I indicated, in a daring show of magnanimity, that Nahmanides had been the victor of the Disputación.

After rewarding Nahmanides with the substantial sum of three hundred *maravedís*, say the annals, the sovereign of Aragon pronounced these words, "I have never seen a man defend the wrong cause so well." In a gesture unheard of during the Middle Ages, the King personally addressed the Jewish congregation in their synagogue the following Sabbath.

Unreconciled with what they considered the greatest insult to the very heart of the Christian dogma, the Dominicans and Franciscans

did not rest until they had bypassed the authority of King Jaime I and obtained from Pope Clement IV the approval that Nahmanides be punished for his heresy.

Thus Rabbi Moses Ben Nahman, the leader of the powerful community of Catalonia, the greatest sage of his time, talmudist and kabbalist, had to flee the land of Sefarad and like so many of his peers find his way to Jerusalem. In the devastated Holy City he spent three years in rebuilding the Jewish community, surrendering his soul to the Creator in Zion.

The Disputation of Barcelona turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory for the House of Israel in Christian Spain. Humiliated by the affront it had suffered at the hands of Nahmanides and fortified by its greater ascendancy over the sovereigns of the kingdom, the Church felt that, after the great massacre of 1391, the moment had arrived to seal the fate of what was left of the Jews of Aragon. All the important Jewish communities of the kingdom received written summons from Pope Benedict XIII to send two to four of their rabbis to receive instruction in the Christian faith.

Thus, on January 15th of the year 1413 started the Disputation of Tortosa, whose purpose was to convert to Christianity the Jews of Aragon already decimated by the sword. This was the scenario where the leaders of the Jewish communities struggled to defend the soul of Israel, according to the narrative of one of the rabbis:

> . . . and we found the whole large court arrayed in embroideries . . . and around the throne of the Pope, there were seventy seats for the dignitaries called cardinals, archbishops and bishops, all garbed in golden vestments. And all the great ones of Rome—the papal court—were there, and men from the cities and princes, near unto a thousand men. . . .

Again faced with an apostate, named Jerónimo de Santa Fe, and hordes of Dominican theologians, and confined within rigid rules established by the Church which did not permit them to expound but only to answer questions, the rabbis upheld the honor of the House of Israel against the power of the Church during almost two years (1413-1414). No longer, however, could they assume the attitude of defiance of a Nahmanides some hundred and fifty years earlier, for the mobs led by predicant friars were once more on the rampage throughout the land. The spirit of my ancestors of the House of Sefarad was not broken at Tortosa but its pride and glory was extinguished.

I left the Casa de la Disputación in a state of trance. In a sweep of vision over the bastions of ancient Spain surrounding the Plaza de la Catedral, I saw the dichotomy that had torn the nation apart from its very cradle. The beauty and dignity of form harboring so much cruelty and greed, alongside such nobility of spirit.

The next morning I decided to celebrate the Sabbath by walking all the way to Montjuich and visit the old Jewish cemetery my host had pointed out to me. As I strolled along the Gran Via I realized that instead of focusing on the beautiful women, a fusion of all the races from the four corners of the Mediterranean who had settled throughout the centuries in the ancient port city, my gaze would constantly return to the white-haired, mostly black-clad matrons whose proud bearing seemed to project the image of my grandmother. She really was a Spanish lady!

Montjuich is the site of a large park where art festivals are held, including a fair representing all the provinces of Spain, and as I slowly climbed its slope the beauty of the capital of Catalonia unfolded before me on one side and on the other, all the traditional symbols of the lands of Iberia.

Since I had left the hotel the presences seemed to be in a state of great anxiety, but when I reached the top of the hill I felt they were at peace, as if I had finally understood where they wanted to lead me.

Many a time I had stared into the Mediterranean Sea, as a child when I sailed toward France, or from the shores of the land of Israel, but never did it have the same impact as at that moment. Now I knew. I was seeing it through the eyes of my forefathers who had dwelled in the land. The presences were part of me.

Whether they had lived in Barcelona, Gerona, in Provence, or later in the holy city of Safed, according to family tradition we had counted among our ancestors many a kabbalist imbued with the teachings of the *Zohar*, the "Book of Splendor," which saw in every Jew a witness to all the generations from the time of the acceptance of God's Covenant at Sinai.

How very subjective, if at all possible, is the vision of the universe the *Zohar* attempts to convey; to discover in the language of biblical metaphors the hidden meaning of the words of the Torah, its metaphysical facet which gradually reveals itself as the narrative of the historical saga of the Children of Israel unfolds. Is it not the very purpose of the oral tradition to enable every generation to understand the words of the Torah within the context of its time?

Suddenly I found myself before an ancient tomb slab on which I was able to decipher the inscription, Salomon ben Moses Graziani, Gallico. I had stood with my back to the thousand-year-old Jewish cemetery only a few meters away.

In its emotional impact the experience was only equal to that in the Jewish cemetery of Vienna where I had witnessed, together with my wife, the crossing of the paths of our respective grandfathers.

Salomon ben Moses Graziani, thirteenth-century rabbi of Barcelona, who had sat on its Beth-Din (Religious Tribunal) and had placed his signature alongside that of Salomon ben Abraham ben Adret, head of the community of Catalonia, on the *herem* that had limited the study of philosophy. A name not too often mentioned by my grandmother, for although he was also a kabbalist, he was obscured by the great family kabbalist Moses Cordovero, from whom she claimed to be a direct descendant. After all, Salomon Graziani was my father's ancestor, who in no way could claim such noble ancestry.

Speaking of the anathema against philosophy, the two rabbis in question were at the very heart of a controversy that shook the Jewish Community of the period to its foundation. The controversy, which swept the communities across the world, was centered around the philosophical concepts based on Aristotle which Maimonides had introduced into Judaism—anathema to many traditional Jews.

Throughout their history, at least since the days of the siege of the Second Temple by the Romans, when different factions were fighting among themselves behind its walls, Jews have not indulged in civil war, although over the millennia ideological conflicts of great verbal intensity have abounded. These conflicts have enriched the Jewish inheritance on the whole, despite the level of fanaticism reached at times. For when the differences, sometimes lasting for centuries, have been worked out, the House of Israel finds itself rejuvenated and ready to project onto the civilizations of the world an added dimension, which some call the mission of Israel.

Only after living for many years in the truly pluralistic society which is the United States, did I begin to understand the full extent of what had been the Golden Age of the Jews of Spain. Within the context of its time, it was the only open society the Jews of the diaspora ever lived in, until the days of the French Revolution and the period of the Emancipation that followed.

During that period, stretching with intervals from the eighth to the fourteenth century, whether under the rule of Islam or of Christianity, they freely intermingled and played an important part within soci-

ety at large in the fields of finance, diplomacy, science, medicine, philosophy, even poetry. It was also frequent for rabbis to be great physicians, like Yehudah Halevi and Maimonides. The foundations were to be found in the education received by the sons of the Jewish elite, who were taught not only Torah and Talmud but also the sciences, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and not surprisingly, cartography and navigation, as well as philosophy.

Similar to what took place in Western Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, assimilation followed, leading at times to baptism, which would open a career in the power establishment which was the Church, including access to its highest hierarchy.

In the eyes of the more traditional leadership of the Jewish community, the cause of assimilation was principally the study of philosophy, bringing with it the challenging of religious tenets which might lead to the total disintegration of Spanish Jewry. Logically, the Spanish kabbalists should have been opposed to the philosophical concepts introduced by Maimonides into the interpretation of Jewish scriptures. But both Nahmanides and his successor, Salomon ben Adret, were fundamental in bridging the gap between the seemingly irreconcilable currents that had split apart the Jewish communities of the time.

By one of these paradoxes so frequent in Jewish history, reflecting the wisdom with which our forefathers interpreted the sacred texts of the Torah and remained faithful to the oral tradition, it was by means of the *herem* decreed by Salomon ben Adret that harmony was re-established. Here is the *herem* text of this most extraordinary document:

> From this day on and for the next fifty years, no members of our community shall study "Greek" works on science and metaphysics, either in the original [i.e. Arabic] or in translation, before he will have reached the age of twenty five; nor may any member of our community teach the afore-said disciplines to anyone under the age of twenty five lest these studies draw the student away from the Torah of Israel which is superior to this other learning. . . .
>
> We have exempted from our decree the study of medicine, although it is a natural science, for the Torah has given the physician permission to practice the art of healing.
>
> We have expressly exempted from the scope of the enactment the science of astronomy and all the works of Maimonides, the "Guide" and all his other books which are more precious than gold, both those written in Hebrew and those written in Arabic. . . .

Next to the signature of Salomon ben Adret was that of Salomon ben Moses Graziani, Galico. Before coming across its text I was aware that my illustrious forefather had signed the *herem* against philosophy, which I had believed to include a condemnation of Maimonides. To my great relief this had not been the case, since he had played an important part in the assimilation of the basic tenets of Greek philosophy into the mainstream of Judaism after eliminating from it the pagan elements. In its purified form it was transmitted by the Jews of Spain, through Renaissance Italy, to become the cultural mainstay of European civilization.

After terminating my business assignment in Barcelona, I was scheduled to go on to Madrid. What awaited me there? Madrid after all only became the capital of Spain almost a century after the expulsion of 1492, and before that time, its Jewish community did not seem to have any importance. I was proven to be wrong, but in a different context.

The airport where I landed on a Friday afternoon was a modern one. Remembering the decrepit old building of the Barcelona airport, I wondered whether this was not an expression of the capital penalizing Catalonia for its arrogance.

Contrary to what I had done in Barcelona, I decided to attend the Sabbath evening service at the new synagogue built with funds from the Claims Conference and U.S. Jewish communities. After finding my way into a narrow side street in one of Madrid's fashionable residential suburbs, I stood at the address given to me in front of a wall that totally hid to passers-by what they were not meant to see. Was the wall a symbol of the Marrano inheritance on the part of those still afraid to reveal their Judaism to the outside world, or a protection from the secular arm of a monolithic state, heir to the Inquisition in modern garb?

The service, exhilarating in a nostalgic manner, had the beauty and fervor of a tradition that seemed unchanged after five centuries. Most of the congregants, with a sprinkle of American tourists, were Jews from Spanish Morocco who after a long exile had returned to the land of Sefarad. I asked myself whether the congregants were burdened with the memory of the *herem*, for they seemed to carry a weight heavier than the average Jew in the different lands of the exile, even in Israel. However open the society in which he lives, there is always a memory. Maybe it was just the effect of the boiling cauldron under a thin veneer of law and order that was Spain, at a

time when those on the political right asked, "What will happen when Franco dies?" while those on the left said, "Wait until Franco dies. . . ."

That Sabbath evening turned out to be a memorable one, for a moment projecting me back in time to the house on the Hill of Pera. According to a tradition which I had thought no longer existed, as it was an almost unique occurrence along the long routes of my peregrinations, one of the congregants invited me to his home, perceiving in me the stranger and lonely traveler.

Around the large dinner table, where the family and their friends celebrated the Sabbath, once again I heard the narrative of the generations. There was one difference, though; apart from small children, no young people were present. The reason soon became apparent; their sons and daughters were studying at universities in America, Israel, or France. This was an affluent family, as were their friends. But they felt that although the economic future of their children would be assured, they should not return. In their vision of life, the future encompassed more than material well-being. One does not establish roots in the land of no return. Jews do not go back to the site of the crime. I understood then that the *herem* was still in force; the Jews were just in transit. I am convinced that the same will happen in Germany.

Early next morning I set out to discover Madrid. There is something to be said for the stroller in a city where the centuries seem to have stood still. Little traffic, no large crowds, relaxed passers-by. The Prado Museum across from my hotel I would leave for later; first the city. Passeo de la Castellana, the inevitable Gran Via, Avenida José Antonio Primo de Rivera to remind all Spaniards of the martyr of nationalist Spain, the Plaza del Sol, and all of a sudden, unexpectedly, after passing under the arcade of a medieval wall, I found myself in the Plaza Mayor.

There are few squares in Europe to match its vastness and almost breath-taking splendor, especially in contrast to the medieval alleys leading to it; the worthy symbol of the power and wealth that had been the Spanish Empire.

I knew that one did not verbalize one's thoughts in Spain, as they would surge like howls of pain and melancholy, like its songs whose tone is harsh. The inner voice of the Plaza Mayor was also harsh and cruel, the harshness and cruelty of the kings and cardinals who for centuries had shown off the symbol of their power, the *auto de fe*, in this very square. How often had I come face to face with the prints

and paintings of one of the great spectacles of Christendom! But the baroque splendor of the images created by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish artists made it almost impossible to penetrate the horror of the scene they sought to depict.

In the midst of the almost empty square came to life the magnificence of what had been the secular and religious power of the Spanish Empire, offering in sacrifice the souls from the calcinated bodies of those who had refused to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The sovereigns, the princes of the church and of the realm, their knights and of course their ladies formed the august assembly that testified to their faith, just as, in the arenas of ancient Rome, the pagan nobility and citizenry had testified to the glory of the Empire.

It was only later, when I had become more familiar with the land of Spain and its soul, that I grasped the difference between Madrid and all other cities of the country, the symbolism of its Plaza Mayor. From its foundation it had been a Christian city, never having been swept by the winds of Judaism or Islam. The symbol of Spanish power and Hispanidad, it became the capital of the land only after it had been unified under the cross to embark on what traditional Spanish historians call their Golden Age. By then the country had become *Judenrein*.

The harshness of a passage in the oral tradition came to mind. "One hundred years of the terror of the Inquisition had weaned the weak from the strong. . . ." Many had become New Christians and eventually had disappeared within the vortex of Christian Spain. But many others, while bending to the fount of baptism, took unto themselves a yoke just as hard, or perhaps even harder, than my ancestors who in the year of 1492 left the land for a new exile.

These were the Marranos, or secret Jews. Maimonides had determined that a Jew, if he was not strong enough to perish for the Sanctification of the Name, in order to save his life could bow to the outer trappings of the religion of his oppressor provided that in his mind and soul he remained faithful to the God of Israel and His people, returning to overt Judaism at the first possible occasion.

The Marranos were the ones to suffer the full brunt of the Inquisition during the century between the year 1391, when the agony of the Jews of Barcelona was repeated throughout the towns and cities of the land of Iberia under the rule of Christian monarchs, and the final extinction of the communities of Sefarad on the ninth of Ab of the year 1492, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple.

After those fearful days in the year 1391, when the mobs instigat-

ed by the predicant friars unleashed their fury throughout the land of Christian Spain against the children of Israel, those Jews who had escaped either the sword or the yoke of the cross were allowed to continue to practice their religion. Their services were still needed by the monarchs of Aragon and Castile, as the *reconquista*, the war to reconquer all the land still under the dominion of Islam, was in full swing. Under one condition, though: that they not try to influence those of their brethren who had accepted Christianity to return to the religion of their forefathers or practice it in secret, a crime punishable by death in the flames of the *auto de fe*.

During that century before the curtain finally fell on the generations of Sefarad, Jews were under constant harassment. From the pulpits of their synagogues they were subjected to sermons of conversion by Franciscans and Dominicans. Since the earliest memory of my childhood, a prayer in Ladino has always shaken me deeply when recited by the congregation in vibrant tones, the *Eyn Ke-Elohenu*. The melody, more like a war song of defiance than a prayer, dates back to those days when they were forced to listen to sermons on Jesus Christ the messiah, and the Trinity, and responded with the words: There is none like our God, our Lord, our King, our Redeemer.

Jews do not recognize the validity of conversion under duress, and thus it was their sacred duty to help their brethren, the New Christians, in whatever way they could to remain faithful to the religion of their forefathers, an infringement that would often lead to torture and death.

As to the Marranos, whether motivated by their secret decision while accepting baptism, or the yearning of their souls to remain faithful to the God of Israel, they endured the yoke of living as secret Jews for centuries, many to deliver their souls in the *autos de fe* after passing through the horrors of the torture chambers of the Inquisition.

The beauty and pomp surrounding the *auto de fe*, the ultimate expression of form for the pit of degradation, the taking of human life in the name of its Creator, the Master of the Universe! Why this pomp and circumstance? Why was it not done within the darkness and secrecy of a dungeon?

The cold hand of terror touched me—or was it the memory of a timeless recollection—when I attempted to think how I would have felt had I been a Marrano at that moment in time, being a witness to my brethren surrendering their soul in Qiddush ha-Shem (Sanctifica-

tion of God's name). I had been conditioned to see, in the exiles of 1492, those who did not accept baptism but faced an unknown destiny which was often death, the very epitome of the generations of Sefarad. On that day at the Plaza Mayor, surrounded by their ghosts, I understood that it was the Marranos who, despite a moment of weakness, had endowed the saga of the Jews of Spain with their aura of martyrdom.

The generations that for almost three centuries, in the secrecy of their homes, had passed on to their children the tenets of Torah and the tradition of their ancestors, while simultaneously disciplining them to follow outwardly a religion imposed on them by force while awaiting the moment when they could escape from the land to openly profess their faith, were also the heirs to the secret of Jewish survival. The empires of old and their religions have come and ended in the dustbins of history. We have survived the might of ancient Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, two millennia of a militant Christianity, the Third Reich's attempt at the Final Solution, and the Soviet Union's endeavor to destroy us as a religious civilization. Could there be a better testimony than the faded atmosphere that enveloped the Plaza Mayor, despite the remnants of its past glory? For in reality, despite the façade of splendor, it was marked by the shabbiness of decay. The small shops under its arcades belonged more to an impoverished suburb than to the heart of what had been a great empire. Was this the symbol of Spain in the 'sixties?

The next day I was to come across another vision, unfolding beyond the palaces, cathedrals, churches, and monuments of the past glory of the Spanish Empire in the most splendid of European museums, the Prado. Half-way hidden in a gallery of what must have been its basement, were the prints of Goya on the Inquisition and the war against the armies of Napoleon. Goya's images of what had been the Inquisition assured me that on the previous day in the Plaza Mayor I had not been the victim of a wild imagination; and the atrocities committed by the French were a metaphor of what the Spanish people must have endured at the hands of the Generalissimo's Moorish legions.

Upon the termination of my Madrid business assignment I decided to take the day off to visit the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen). Not without a certain hesitation, for the mausoleum that bore that name had been erected as a symbol of the victory of the Nationalists over the Republicans in the Civil War.

Atop the Sierra de Guadarrama about twenty miles from Madrid

stands this most impressive monument, the like of which none of the victorious nations of both world wars have built in memory of their dead. The memorial of Verdun, where lie the remnants of the half a million French and German soldiers who perished in that awesome battle, is a reminder of the insanity of war, a place where both sides can grieve together. But this is not the spirit of the Valle de los Caídos; quite the contrary. Under a thin veil of the anonymity of death, the victor still lords it over the vanquished.

Under a huge tower stands a massive granite structure whose stairway and entrance match that of any European cathedral. My first impression upon entering its portal was that I stood in the midst of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The beauty of the crypt is a homage to modern architecture blended with the glory that is Spanish craftsmanship. We were told by our official guide that it was to be the resting place of the soldiers on both sides killed in the Civil War, where they would be united in the brotherhood of death.

As I slowly walked along the aisle and observed the paintings on the ceiling, I realized that the theme was not limited to honor and glorify those who had perished to assure the victory of Nationalist Spain against the Republic, but sought to establish a symbiosis of their death with the martyrology of the Church Triumphant. On both sides of the austere crypt—for in its austerity resides much of its dignity—are inscribed the names of those who fell for España y Cristo Rey. I could not help remembering that the great majority of those who died for the Republic were also devout Catholics, although many were anti-clerical. The same could not be said for the Moorish Banderas of the Army of Africa, with whom the generals started the rebellion.

The crypt stretches out to both sides toward the end to take on the shape of a huge cross, and like all large cathedrals terminates with an imposing altar. In front of it is the tomb of José Antonio Primo de Rivera y Saenz Heredia, founder of the Phalange, the Spanish version of Fascism. Executed by a firing squad for treason against the Republic in 1936, four months after the start of the rebellion, his memory was to become the legend of Nationalist Spain as he stood for everything it had fought for.

Cathedrals and churches are abodes of the many saints of the Roman Catholic religion; Valle de los Caídos is different. Although meant to be just a crypt, it has all the dimensions and the mystique of a great cathedral, with one basic difference which in time might reveal new insights into the intrinsic nature of Spanish Fascism. It is

dedicated to a man who is the symbol of the secular arm of traditional Catholic Spain. Will Antonio Primo de Rivera's sainthood ever be recognized by the Vatican?

When I returned to Madrid at the end of the 'seventies, I was told that very few of the combatants of the Civil War had found their last resting place in the crypt of the Valle de los Caídos. Apparently, the families of those fallen on the Republican side refused to have their fathers, husbands, and sons lie alongside their enemies, for they would not rest in peace. In Spain, where the sons have the habit of fighting the battle of their fathers, the war was not yet over.

The families of most of those who died for Nationalist Spain do not think differently. After all, the mausoleum is a symbol of their Spain, which the Republic attempted to destroy. There is no place for the others.

As I became more aware of the complexity of the Spanish soul, another reason emerged for the empty shell to which the Valle de los Caídos is gradually being relegated, apart from the widespread notion in today's Spain that it is nothing more than a monument the Caudillo built so as to perpetuate his own memory.

This other reason had a direct link to the Plaza Mayor where the bodies of the children of Israel were burned in the *autos de fe*, so that in accordance with the magnanimity of the Christian dogma their souls would be saved rather than damned for eternity. The mausoleum of the Valle de los Caídos is the ultimate attempt, even in death, to save the Spanish soul from its demons.

As I left the crypt, it occurred to me that it was under the rule of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, Marques de Estella, the father of the "saint" buried in the mausoleum, that the Cortes had passed the decree granting Spanish nationality to the descendants of the exiled Sefardim of 1492, so that Spain once more might regain its power and its glory—and probably saving my family from the Holocaust. Are any of the facets of history clear-cut?

My earliest image of Toledo was the print of El Greco's famous painting. What was my first impression when I actually saw the medieval city perched on the rocky mountains, as if attempting to reach out into the heavens? Difficult to say, for wherever I found myself in Spain, it was as if I had never left.

Upon approaching the city and being faced with the imposing size and grandeur of its Alcazar, I could not help remembering that it had been the symbol of nationalist resistance. But from that point onward there was to be no more crossing of the paths, for I was

entering *Toledo la Nuestra*, part of Our Spain, as my grandmother used to say.

Because of the aura surrounding the city, I had attempted to familiarize myself with as many historical chronicles I could find and time permitted. Having walked through its narrow alleys, visited the El Transito synagogue and Santa María la Blanca, the Casa del Greco, formerly the house of Samuel Levi, advisor to the king of Castile, I wondered whether this was not just another old Spanish city with its classical *Judería*, despite the fact that at one period or another Jews were supposed to have lived in different parts of the city.

Barcelona with its dynamic force, or Madrid with its symbols of past glory, irradiate much of the history of Spain, the stage on which the saga of the Jews of Sefarad unfolded. But at first sight, where are its traces in Toledo? In Gerona I had an identical impression when I briefly walked through the narrow streets of the medieval *Call*, birthplace of the great Nahmanides. The *Shekhinah* must have dwelled there, but gone into exile with the children of Israel.

Toledo had been praised by Yehudah Halevi in his poems as the greatest Jewish center of his time in Christendom. But contrary to my longing and expectations, I could not project myself into that dimension as I had on Montjuich and Plaza Mayor. Was it the Jewish Heritage, a creation of the Spanish Tourist Office to attract the Jews of the diaspora, including many from Israel, also in search of a certain kind of roots? Its countless souvenir shops, where I came across a carved statue of Moses in the midst of a panoply of Catholic saints; had the spirit that dwelled elsewhere in Spain departed from Toledo? The presences are no longer whispering inside me or over my shoulders. Have they abandoned me here in the midst of the site Yehudah Halevi called a "Mother City of Israel"?

Yes, the presences. I am beginning to understand. They are the ones that have put up the barriers, for they cannot manifest themselves through the images of the others. I had to think of the others while visiting Mauthausen. Can those who did not stand witness at the Covenant of Sinai grasp the magnitude of the Shoah? The same applies to the previous Shoah, that of 1492. If the others want to atone, let them respect our memories.

I often returned to Toledo, and only gradually did the city unveil to me its mystery, mostly during the days when the howling winter winds swept down from the Guadarrama Mountains to frighten the tourists away and seal the doors of the souvenir shops.

The history of the city stretches all the way to the days of the destruction of the Second Temple. Jewish slaves were brought in by the Romans to colonize it, followed by Visigoth domination under the yoke of a new militant Christianity. The legendary Tarik, one of the leaders of the Moorish army and said to be a Jew himself, captured the city from the Visigoths with the assistance of its Jews.

For three centuries under Moslem domination, the Jewish population grew and prospered, to the point where at one time one third of Toledo's 40,000 inhabitants were Jews. Domination one could call it in the context of our time, for Islam had the power of the sword. However, it was hardly used. The relationship that developed between Islam and Judaism during most of that period was more akin to a symbiosis in an open society. Most of the time—for there were periods of brutal fratricidal struggle between Moorish princes—with the Jewish population caught in the middle. Thousands perished under the sword of the fanatic Almoravides.

In the twelfth century Toledo was reconquered by Christian monarchs, whose tolerance toward its Jewish inhabitants differed little from that of the Moslems. Christian domination was also plagued by civil war among its princes, during which thousands of Jews were slaughtered. In Yehudah Halevi's words, Israel was caught "between Edom and Seir."

Whether under Moslem or Christian rule, the Jewish community as a whole prospered, ranging all the way from modest artisans to court advisors, and the creativity that emanated from it was one of the most glorious expressions of its Golden Age. The administration of the State was conducted to a large extent by Jews, not to speak of the economy, essential to both Moorish and Christian princes. Many were ambassadors to foreign courts, since they knew the languages and the mores of the nations. From those who toiled their land to large landowners, many had established deep roots in the soil. Weavers, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, saddlers, and dyers were some of the professions of its artisans.

It became clear to me why the epithet of *Toledo la Nuestra* (Our Toledo) survived in the oral tradition of the Jews of Sefarad, for, probably more so than in any other country before the Emancipation, they had been an intrinsic part of the basic structure of a nation, the kingdom of Castile, of which Toledo was the capital. The Christians or the Moors were so involved in their pursuit of power and wealth through countless bloody wars that they had little time to dedicate themselves to improving the societies under their dominion,

and thus were glad to leave the task to the labor and diligence of their Jews.

Not that among the Jews, especially the wealthy ones, there were not those who developed a lust for power under the influence of their milieu at the court of kings and princes. There were even some who took advantage of their position to oppress economically their less fortunate brethren.

What are the traces of *Toledo la Nuestra* but the remnants of two synagogues, transformed into churches centuries ago, and the palace of one of its Jewish leaders? It is gone but for its spirit, like all the countless communities destroyed from the beginning of history. Its centers of scholarship had provided Judaism with its main elements of continuity. But like its sister city of Barcelona, the lights went out in Toledo during the massacre of 1391.

To my great chagrin, none of my Spanish business assignments ever took me to the south of Spain, while I traveled frequently to Catalonia and the Basque country where Spain's heavy industry is concentrated; the involvement in my professional life gradually obfuscated the memory of Sefarad.

Finally it was time for a vacation, and my wife and I took the first available flight to Malaga, where we rented a car. Driving from the coast up the slopes of the Sierra Nevada we headed toward Granada, remembered in Moslem lore as the Pomegranate of Spain, and at a certain point in history as *Garnatat al-Yahud* ("Granada of the Jews").

Destiny has blessed me with the privilege of spending a large part of my life in cities of light, whether the work of the Creator or the craft of man. Constantinople, the city of my birth; Rio de Janeiro, the city of my refuge; Paris, which attracts like a beacon even those who insist that the Ville Lumière has passed its zenith. I wonder if the cycle will close in Jerusalem.

When I first sighted Granada on the horizon, the ancient walls and towers of the Alhambra blending harmoniously with the white-capped Sierra Nevada in the background, aglow with the luminosity of a southern sky, all amidst the fragrance of an Andalusian summer evening, I knew I had found another city of light. As we drove into the enclosure of the old citadel, I soon realized that I was entering a different city of light, for its beauty was both that of the Creator and of man.

In Granada, which at one time had been a Jewish city hidden by a Moslem veil, there were no stones to lift, for since the *reconquista*,

Christian Spain had attempted to destroy all material memory of the generations of Sefarad, just as the Inquisition had for centuries sought to eliminate all traces of the physical and spiritual presence of Judaism through the persecution of the Marranos and the censorship of the written word.

On the other hand, it seemed that the beauty and splendor of the monuments and palaces of what had been the Moslem Golden Age was to be preserved as the living symbol of the strength and power from whose yoke the Christian monarchs had freed the Spanish people. By the sword of princes and kings the land had been delivered from the Moors, and their monuments should remain as a warning to those who dared challenge the power of the *reconquista*.

As I wandered through the palace, its chambers, and courtyards, the mosque, all the exquisite beauty that was the Alhambra of the city of Granada, the Pearl of Islam, last stronghold of Moorish power on the Iberian peninsula to capitulate to the Christian armies, the glory of the Golden Age of Sefarad as well as its tragic end unfolded. Entering the ancient Court of the Myrrh I was faced with two images that simultaneously took shape out of history: Samuel Ha-Naggid the Nasi, and Queen Isabella the Catholic.

Samuel Ha-Naggid, the Jewish prince, poet, *halakhist*, Grand Vizier of Granada and its military commander, was the very paradigm of the symbiosis reached between Islam and Judaism. A son of Israel, member of the Jewish nation, he had been granted the power by the great Prince of Andalusia not only to rule over his subjects but to lead them in battle. Could it be that his belief in being a descendant of the House of David gave him confidence throughout his rise to power to the extent that he felt free to write a critical interpretation of the Koran?

Amidst the magnificence of the court of the Jewish Prince had resounded the soft whispers of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arab words praising the glory of the Creator and lamenting the tribulations of the people of the exile, as well as the ornamental speech lauding the virtues of war, wine, and sensual love, all the hedonistic traits ingrained in the cultural heritage of Moslem civilization, to which the men of Sefarad were not immune.

The poetry of medieval Jewish-Moslem Spain! Could a man of power, court Jew, financier, or physician to princes and kings claim to be a person of culture if he were not able to express his being through the beauty of poetry? Samuel Ha-Naggid himself, in the language of poetry, not only exalted the glory of his military victories,

but allowed his soul to overflow toward his Creator in the anguish to comprehend the ways of men and the burden of the exile from Jerusalem.

The poets of Sefarad, despite their lapses into the luxuries of the land of Andalusia, were still kindled by a fire that urged them to give life to all their yearnings, sacred and profane, joy and despair, in that divine, clear and precise tongue, the Hebrew of the Bible, the language of their forefathers of the land of Zion.

Even Hasdai Crescas, the leader of the great community of Catalonia, was also a poet, and in the year 1370 participated in a contest between poets of Barcelona and Gerona.

Was poetry, which is supposed to give expression to the longing of the soul, really that important to the development of Judaism? The readings of some of Yehudah Halevi's poems, among others, had always greatly impressed me during the High Holy days. I came to grasp its importance as a link in the chain of Jewish tradition when I learned about the impact it had on Heinrich Heine.

The poetry of the Spanish Jews had a profound influence in Heine's return to Judaism. Through its words and moods this baptized Jew was first confronted with the spirit of Judaism, its universality, revealed to him by poets in whom he admired not only the delicacy of feeling, the rich and mobile spirit and the abundance of ideas, but also their depth, the stature of their temper, and immersion in the truth of the Jewish religion. Having long believed that Judaism and art were incompatible, Heine now saw that post-biblical Judaism had not only produced great poets, but poets who were and remained believing Jews, whose biblical and talmudic education had made them not only sensitive, inventive, and receptive, but also steadfast in suffering and stalwart in temptation.

The irony of it. In self-exile from his beloved Germany, for whom he had betrayed the faith of his forefathers and accepted baptism to open the doors of European society, Heine was roaming frustrated and embittered across England, Italy, and France, cast in the role of the eternal wandering Jew in search of the Jerusalem of the heavens. A saga in many ways similar to that of Yehudah Halevi, his spiritual mentor he so much admired, who strove to find redemption in Zion in an attempt to liberate himself from the fleshpots of Sefarad and the anguish of the exile.

Speaking of sagas, as so often happened in Jewish history when the children of Israel were blinded by glory and power, Samuel HaNaggid fell in battle, and the reign of his son Joseph who succeeded

him also ended in catastrophe.

On a Sabbath morning of the year 1066, says the narrative, the Moslem inhabitants of the "Pomegranate" of Spain, instigated by princes of rival caliphates and with the help of fanatic tribesmen, killed Joseph Ha-Naggid and butchered most of the Jews of the city in a most barbaric fashion. The Jews soon returned, but it was no longer the same, for the glitter of glory had been tinged by tragedy.

Thus, in the Pearl of Moslem Spain, once the Granada of the Jews, the stage had been set for the last chapter in the history of the Jews of Sefarad, this time, under the sign of the cross.

The scene that sealed the fate of Spanish Jewry in the year 1492 has become a classic in Jewish history. Don Isaac Abrabanel, the Head of the Exile as he became known in the saga of Sefarad, financier to the sovereigns of Aragon and Castile, made his last attempt to convince Isabella and Ferdinand to revoke the Decree of Expulsion.

> What is it you aim to achieve, Sovereigns of Spain, now that the entire land has finally been united under the banner of the cross, and that as a result of the long war your cities are devastated and your coffers empty? . . . Revoke the infamous Decree and the Jews will help you rebuild your domain. As a token of our good will, 300,000 ducats will immediately be at your disposal.

The encounter reached its climax when one of the draperies of the large chamber was violently opened, and brandishing a crucifix in his outstretched hand, Thomas de Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, burst into the room like a fury. In his eyes was the burning flame of hate of the Amalek of history bent on the destruction of the children of Israel since the beginning of time.

"Judas Iscariot sold the savior for 30 pieces of silver—you are ready to sell him for 300,000 ducats!" he screamed, dropping the crucifix at the feet of the sovereigns. Torquemada knew well Ferdinand's weakness for gold, but was sure of his own authority and power over the fanatically religious Isabella.

A recent biographer, B. Netanyahu, has described what followed after Abrabanel had felt the negative reaction on the part of the Queen.

> He now spoke to the queen—the haughty, fanatic and often ferocious Isabella—not like her financial agent, not even like a cautious, diplomatic courtier. He spoke to her now like a scion of the House of David and as the representative of an unconquered—and unconquerable—peo-

> ple. He spoke to her, moreover, like a prophet of old, in daring, castigating and threatening language. If Isabella thought that, by measures like expulsion, the Jews could be brought to surrender or to extinction, she was greatly mistaken. He pointed out to her the eternity of the Jewish people, that they had outlived all who had attempted to destroy them, that it was beyond human capacity to destroy the Jewish people, and those who tried to do so only invited upon themselves divine punishment and disaster. . . .

Whether the melodramatic interpretation of a deeply wounded people wishing to preserve the glorious memory of Sefarad, or the interpretation of modern historiography, I was standing on the very site where by the stroke of a pen, the curtain fell on almost fifteen centuries of Jewish life in Spain, probably the most illustrious between the time of the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth and the creation of the Jewish State of Israel.

V.

THE LAND OF FREEDOM

The Age of Prophetism is no longer with us. False prophets abound, though, in a world which often seems on the brink of annihilation. At the time of the Russian Revolution, which broke the yoke of feudalism and autocracy, many Jews thought they heard the footsteps of the Messiah. Instead, three million Jews were trapped in the grip of a totalitarian state.

The United States is different; even the presences who follow me everywhere and have felt restless in any other country nod their agreement. Jews are now free citizens in all the countries of the West, but in some countries it is a tolerated freedom. I remember that, before the war, it was implied that a true Frenchman had to be a descendant of the Gauls. "Nos ancêtres les Gaulois," hammered the history books, although that attitude has begun to change.

In America it is impossible to draw the line as to the pedigree of one's ancestry. A citizen is a citizen, whether born in the country or not, since almost everyone is an immigrant short of a generation or two; within the European context of nationality, only the Indians would be real Americans, and there are few still around. Any allusion to a *Mayflower* ancestry would provoke slight expressions of derision among the mostly waspish corporate world in which I earned my living.

How else explain my sense of perplexity when, the week of my arrival as an immigrant, I watched one million citizens parade along New York's Fifth Avenue wrapped in the green of Ireland and carrying the fanions of its Republic? The occasion was the celebration of St. Patrick's Day, the Patron Saint of Ireland. Paying his homage as a good Irishman was the President of the United States.

No politician would dare omit the phrase, "Our Judeo-Christian Civilization," from his oratory. No wonder Jews feel good in America, and are rubbed the wrong way whenever an Israeli mentions the words exile, diaspora, or even worse, *galuth*. Even I, with my strong roots in Sefarad, have accepted that in the context of U.S. society such concepts have an edge of platitude. There are moments, however, when the shadow of a doubt is cast on this universe of certitude in which basks the average American Jew.

When the head of one of the largest Protestant denominations at their annual convention declared to thousands of clergymen that God did not listen to the prayer of the Jews, shock and indignation possessed the members of the synagogue I belong to, especially those of the inter-faith commission. Or more recently, the militant involvement of some of these denominations in the political process of the country with the goal, however veiled, of transforming the United States into a monolithic Christian country, brought back memories of times past. What of the separation between Church and State, one of the basic tenets that had made America different?

To a Jew steeped in the mystique of Sefarad, the echoes of salvation reverberating throughout the land from the mouth of a preacher who asserts that he has been chosen by divine commandment to seek the presidency of the United States, with the mission of cleansing the nation from the evil of sin, conjures up the vision of a medieval grand inquisitor in the garb of a twentieth-century business suit. However, the Constitution still reigns supreme, with democracy firmly established on its Judeo-Christian foundation.

Speaking of Judeo-Christian civilization, I was reminded how distant Europe still is from accepting this concept, in no other place but London. The occasion was Armistice Day, the 11th of November of 1976. It was also the year of the Entebbe raid, and filled with pride for one of Israel's greatest days of glory, my wife and I decided to pay our homage to the more than a million Britons, including tens of thousands of its Jewish citizens, who had fallen in two world wars. The site was the Cenotaph facing White Hall, symbol of what had been British imperial power, on whose balcony stood the Queen, the Prince Consort, and many of the dignitaries of the realm; next to the Queen, the Primate of the Church of England. A religious ceremony of great beauty was taking place, reflecting all the pomp and circumstance of which only the British are capable. There was none of the inter-faith ritual one is acccustomed to at such occasions in the United States. In London, it was deemed normal that Jews should have

given their lives for King and Country under the aegis of a Christian Church which had anointed the dynasty by the will of God.

Regardless of Britain's being a constitutional monarchy I felt a touch of the obscurantism of the Middle Ages. We left profoundly depressed. More than three decades had passed since Europe was swept by the greatest evil of its history, and no mention had been made of the cause for which a generation of Britons was wiped out, just King and Country. Had Europe changed at all, despite its material progress? Was there any future for the Jews in the midst of this stifling tradition?

The next day I ventured to pour out my indignation to a non-Jewish acquaintance. How was it possible that his country could only honor its Jewish war dead by a Christian religious ritual? "Don't worry, old chap," was the casual answer, "next Sunday the Jews will have their own ceremony."

The Jewish Armistice Day commemoration on the following Sunday turned out to be another paradox of Jewish life. This insular and seemingly smug community of less than half a million, who up to then, to my eyes, had not shown any signs of great vitality or fervor, demonstrated what for me stands as one of the expression of Jewish strength and will to survive; loyalty and defiance were at its core.

Thousands upon thousands of Jewish veterans of two world wars, often fathers walking alongside their sons, marched past that same Cenotaph. A cross-section of the United Kingdom was present: Edinburgh, Leeds, Cardiff, Manchester, to cite only a few; bemedaled products of Oxford and Cambridge; financial men from the City, shoulder to shoulder with proud Sheffield steel workers and Cockney shopkeepers from Whitechapel.

The crowd was as large as that of the previous Sunday, when her Majesty's Christian subjects had honored their dead and their sovereign. Three, and often it seemed, even four, generations of Jews were standing witness; as if all the sons, brothers, and grandsons, too young to have participated in the wars to end all wars, watched those who had survived the carnage.

The ceremony that followed the parade was heartbreaking in its simplicity and dignity. The prayers for the dead were recited and the crowd dispersed after singing *Adon Olam*. Dignitaries? A representative of the Mayor of London; a couple of rabbis to conduct the *Kaddish*. Speeches? None. The presences were many; for apart from those who had perished in the trenches of the Somme or on the sands of Tobruk, there were also those who had disappeared in the

vortex of the Final Solution and the wars for the creation and survival of the State of Israel.

There is an element of veracity in the saying so often on the lips of Englishmen: there is fog in the Channel, the Continent is isolated. Often during the decades when I earned my living as an international business consultant, I had to fight U.S. corporate executives who insisted on London as the site of their European headquarters. It was difficult to put across the argument that they would be better off establishing it in New York, as that city was more attuned to the European continent than London. Try to convey to an American that the English language is not always the most important link to an understanding of Europe!

My vision of Great Britain is still blurred by a duality of memory. On one hand there is the awareness that without its heroic stand to face the Germans alone after the collapse of France, even the remnants of the Jews of Europe might not have stayed alive. On the other, the memory of a victorious Britain resisting until the end the establishment of the Jewish State, when boatloads of survivors from the death camps were brutally interned in the concentration camps of Cyprus, or returned to the refugee camps in the midst of the land of the dead.

An identical dichotomy of vision envades me every time I return to France. The Resistance on one hand, and on the other the shadow cast by Vichy. Nevertheless, the large communities in both countries are thriving and show strong signs that European Judaism is there to stay.

It might sound like a contradiction, but British Jewry is part of Europe, although Great Britain in the eyes of its citizens might not quite consider itself as such. An English rabbi is at the head of the largest Liberal congregation in Paris; and in a small synagogue on the French Riviera founded by a British couple, Sabbat services were led by a rabbi originating from North Africa, and the *Haftarah* read by an American executive from New York, who upon termination was kissed on both cheeks by the Sephardic rabbi.

The links of the Jews of Great Britain with *Am Yisrael* are strong, but the community seems to lack one element. The Jewish communities of North America, of France, and of Israel are constantly going through the motions of change, often drastic ones; a process of creativity is in full swing. That of Great Britain, in the well-being of its security, basks in stagnation. It might be the contagion of pomp and circumstance, and the insularity of its environment. The monolithic

structure of British Jewry, the second and third generation of the mass immigration from Eastern Europe at the turn of the century, with a sprinkle of Sephardic Jews from the days of Cromwell, a handful of German Jewish refugees, and practically no influx of new blood after the war contrary to what happened in America and France, might account for the lack of creativity, despite its intrinsic loyalty to Judaism and the State of Israel.

How can one explain that due to lack of financial support on the part of British Jewry—so generous in its donations to the institutions of the Crown usually rewarded with a peerage—the Wiener Library, probably the largest collection of documentation of the Nazi era brought over to London by a German Jew before the curtain fell, had to be transferred to Israel?

In the belief that their cultural heritage is rooted in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, many American Jews cannot help but be conditioned by the view on European Judaism emanating from Great Britain, which obscures or distorts the reality of Jewish life, especially that of France.

It was a depressing experience to hear a man who occupies a prominent position in his community speaking to U.S. Jews in a series of conferences not as an English Jew in regard to his brethren across the channel, but merely as an Englishman *vis-à-vis* the French, voicing many of the traditional prejudices, unfortunately shared by most American Jews.

This lop-sided view of French Judaism probably prompted the largest Jewish self-defense organization in America to open an office in Paris soon after the murderous attack on the Copernic synagogue in that city.

Was it to teach the CRIF (Conseil Representatif des Institutions Juives de France), how to fight antisemitism? The CRIF in 1944 originated from the underground coalition of all the Jewish social and political oganizations, including the Jewish resistance group.

It could only happen because of a lack of communication responsible for the distorted image most American Jews have of present-day European Judaism, especially of France. A chasm that prevents the interchange and enrichment of fundamental Jewish values deriving from separate historical experiences, so fundamental at a time when political antisemitism is once more beginning to raise its ugly head, even here in the United States, and when Israel has become the Jew of the nations.

The trauma of the Final Solution and the oppression of Soviet

Jewry have made it psychologically difficult for American Jews to accept the rebirth of a vibrant and powerful Jewish community on the European continent. Also, in view of the drift toward the political right in this country and the birth of neo-conservatism among a segment of Jewish intellectuals, many American Jews find it more convenient to see the increase of antisemitism in France not for what it is, a resurgence of Neo-Fascism, but rather an expression of visceral French antisemitism. Again, the result of a lack of dialogue and political expediency.

Why this emphasis on French Jewry? Within the framework of my personal experience, Judaism today rests on three basic pillars on which its civilization will develop in the future: the state of Israel, American, and French Jewry.

The Jewish community of France is an ancient one, stretching back to the time when Gallia was a province of the Roman Empire. Its Golden Age preceded that of Spain, a period that lasted from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries in the prestigious rabbinic academies of Troyes, Narbonne, and Lunel of Provence, when the Jewish population was to reach one hundred thousand; it ended with the Edict of Expulsion of 1306.

The descendants of those who survived the scourge of the Crusades and of the Inquisition slowly trickled back, to number forty thousand in 1791, when they became the first free citizens of Christian Europe under the Bill of the Rights of Man after the French Revolution. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, one hundred and fifty synagogues testified to the revival of French Judaism.

Prior to World War II, the Jewish community of France had risen to approximately 350,000, out of which 230,000 survived Hitler's Final Solution. Today they number over 700,000, an increase of more than half a million over a period of four decades, the largest Jewish demographic population growth outside of the State of Israel since the termination of the conflict. This is a phenomenon only equalled by the huge Jewish immigration to the United States from Eastern Europe at the turn of the century.

This powerful French community is adding a complementary facet to the rebirth of post-war Judaism. One of France's great intellectuals, a survivor of Auschwitz, stated it in the following words:

> To me, a Jew who is alive *hic et nunc*, what significance does it have that I am Jewish? Which are the duties imposed by this condition? Is the world not in need of our presence, our testimony, our affirmation?

> For this is our only chance to reintegrate ourselves into the course of history. A closed or an open Judaism is the alternative. To maintain an open Judaism by continuously eliminating all sclerosis implies a permanent state of tension, a perpetual redefinition. It is only through this struggle that we will save the Judaism whose inheritance we share.

These are questions asked by many a European Jew when the death camps opened their gates, questions that confront every Jew who sees himself as standing witness to Auschwitz and the survival of Israel. Some would add that on the success of the Jew might depend the survival of the West. Strong echoes of this can be heard among French Jews.

Confidence in its own future, the future of Judaism, added to the special structure and sheer numbers of the French Jewish community, are the foundation on which European Judaism is emerging out of the ashes, and possibly represents a new cycle in the unfolding of Jewish history.

When strolling along the streets of Tel Aviv, Haifa, or Jerusalem, I sometimes wonder whether a special link does not exist between the Jews of the State of Israel, a microcosm of all the communities of the diaspora, and those of France, its equivalent in Europe. As I watch the features and observe the countenance of Jews in the State of Israel or in France, I ask myself where they differ. In their passports, in the social and economic structures of the societies in which they live? Most likely. For the rest, not much. They seem to be two halves of the same apple, two facets of a coin.

From the four corners of Europe and the shores of the entire Mediterranean basin have come the remnants of the Shoah and the dismantled communities of the French colonial empire of North Africa; the survivors of the death camps and those who fought with the Polish or Russian partisans in the swamps of Eastern Europe, with Tito in the mountains of Yugoslavia, or with the French Maquis in the Massif Central and the Paris underground. They came to settle in the State of Israel or in the French Republic.

There was a parting of the ways, often by members of the same family, a brother to Israel and a brother to France, but they kept the visceral link of family or that of a common historical saga.

After the war, there were Jews who felt that France was the story of a great love betrayed that should be forgotten; many, including some of the leaders of the Resistance, chose the road of immigration to Israel to be followed by others in the wake of the stab in the back

preceding the Six Day War (June 1967).

The majority, however, believe that despite the extent of Vichy's collaboration with the Germans, a certain image of France has survived. Republican France had always been a proverbial haven for political refugees of all shades and creeds, many Jews among them, which accounted for the fact that of the pre-war Jewish community of 350,000, only 150,000 were native-born. At times it had a more liberal immigration policy toward Jews than the United States, especially before the war. Whenever I hear my American brethren rave against France at the slightest excuse, I remind them of my wife's stories about the long lines of Jews in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vienna after the Anschluss, waiting for the visas that were never granted.

Fundamental to the development of post-war European Judaism is the impact on France of the arrival en masse of almost 300,000 North African Jews from the former French colonial empire in the beginning of the 'sixties. It was an element that not only changed the nature and structure of French Judaism but shows signs that it will exert a profound influence on Judaism as a whole, especially Israel.

To understand the change within the French Jewish community one must grasp the fact that the North African Jews, and the Sephardic Jews in general, are free of much of the tension between religion and secularism, so prevalent among Jews from Eastern and Central Europe. They carry their Judaism far more naturally, seeing no contradiction in voting for Mitterand's socialist party and being religious Jews simultaneously, nor fearing dual loyalty in their deep attachment to the State of Israel.

Their integration into France was greatly facilitated because many, apart from being French citizens like the Jews of Algeria, had been educated in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Thus they were able to take full advantage of France's free University system, which permitted them in a period of two decades to achieve a position in society greatly out of proportion to their numbers.

Just as important was the fact that upon their arrival in France they found an established religious and communal infrastructure that enabled them to maintain the continuity of their tradition. The lesson of the mistakes of pre-war Jewish immigration had been learned, as well as those made by the State of Israel in its attempt to integrate the Sephardic Jews, due to a lack of understanding of their traditions and the urge to secularize them.

Today the Sephardim stand 350,000 strong, representing more

than half of the French Jewish community. From their ranks came 70 to 80 percent of the rabbis of France, including its Chief Rabbi.

Their dynamic exuberance and extrovert personality has earned them the epithet of "the Jews of the Sun." Due in great part to the symbiosis they have achieved between their Jewish heritage and the high cultural level of a France of Republican tradition, they have asserted themselves, often in an outstanding manner, in every level of French society over the last two decades.

Contrary to certain notions, the Sephardim of France, like their Ashkenazi brethren, also stand witness to the Shoah. It has been internalized as part of their Jewish universe, for they are well aware that the fate of the Jews of Salonika would have been their own, had not Rommel's Afrika Korps been stopped at the gates of Alexandria. It is common knowledge among them that the Vichy authorities, who ruled over their countries of origin until the Allied landing in North Africa, had already prepared the detention camps from where their final destination would have been the deadly wasteland of the Sahara desert, or the depth of the Mediterranean Sea, like the Jews trapped on the island of Rhodes.

It was their destiny to be spared as World War II unfolded, and they survived to testify. Recently one of the most important French weeklies in an issue dedicated to the Sephardim of France, defined it in its essence under the caption, "The Rise of the Jews of the Sun," in the following words:

> They are French without great emotion and Jews without complexes, originating from all the shores of the Mediterranean, the 330,000 Sephardim have gone beyond just settling in France. With their enthusiasm and dynamism, they have achieved over a few years an extraordinary break-through, and in the process have changed the face of French Judaism. . . .

I would go a step further in the definition of the role of the Sephardim in France. As the heirs to the tradition of the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry, they are acting as a catalyst that will assure the Jewish continuity in Western Europe. The great symbiosis with their Ashkenazi brethren, the survivors of the Shoah, is in process; its end product is the post-Auschwitz Jew.

Apart from their achievements during the last decades, there is a new element in French Jewry, a drastic change in attitude toward their country; their allegiance is no longer unconditional. A phenomenon unknown in the history of the diaspora since the French Revo-

lution, when the price for integration into the Republic as equal citizens was the abandonment of their ancient claim as a nation that stands apart, while the right to retain their religious distinctiveness was confirmed by Napoleon's Sanhedrin. This concept is natural to the average American Jew in a society where the separation between Church and State has been one of the basic principles of the nation. A state of affairs quite different from the one prevailing in pre-revolutionary France, for centuries under the yoke of an absolute monarchy and the obscurantism of a militant Church, which survived the Revolution up to the days of Vichy.

Today's French Jewry, at least a large part, no longer identifies with the nation in terms of similarity and symmetry, but in being different and complementary. The following message seems to be emerging: "I also have a claim to this Europe which so many generations of my forefathers helped to forge; having survived your attempts to eradicate me from its mainstream I demand the right to help mold it in accordance with the Jewish vision of history, the legacy of the Prophets of Israel."

The initial step is the identification of many intellectuals and scholars *qua* Jews. The Final Solution, they believe, sought not only the total physical destruction of the Jews but also the eradication of all traces of Judaism's spiritual values and concepts from Western Civilization. It is therefore an act of faith for them to present in their true light those facets of Jewish creativity that had been plundered and distorted throughout the ages to be labeled Christian Civilization.

This is not a trend toward narrow sectarianism; quite the contrary. Those involved are in the mainstream of modern French thought—one of the foremost philosophers also teaches Talmud to university students and appears periodically on television.

The best expression of this trend is the "Colloquium of Jewish Intellectuals of French Speaking Countries," a yearly gathering of scholars, philosophers, scientists, writers, etc., whose purpose is to debate relevant Jewish issues, often with the participation of non-Jews. Their papers are published by prestigious presses and widely read throughout the country. Among the themes are "Jewish Conscience and History," "The Solitude of Israel—Yom Kippur 5743," "An Example of Modern Paganism: The Ideology of the New Right," etc. Post-Auschwitz *midrashim*?

These symposia do not limit themselves to debating the current problems of Jews, whether in France or the rest of the world, but

mainly attempt to define the role of the Jew and of Judaism in the light of Auschwitz and the State of Israel, and in relation to a world which at times no longer seems to possess the will for its survival. None of the illusions so common among the emancipated Jews of pre-war Western Europe transpire in these debates; illusions unfortunately that are still heard from the lips of American Jews.

The evolution of these symposia throughout the last three decades is a symbol of the long and painful process French Judaism had to traverse since the days of the Long Night, in order to regain its sense of identity.

On a winter day in the 'fifties about twenty French Jewish intellectuals got together for the first symposium; most knew very little about themselves as Jews and had not much in common with each other, for their origins, professions, and political allegiance were manifold, though all were prominent in their fields. There was no rabbi among them.

As Jews, they could be divided into three different groups: the first, authentic, pious, and knowledgeable; the second, not as knowledgeable but with no problem in relation to their Judaism; and the third, those who were perplexed as Jews. This last category infused the entire "Symposium of Jewish Intellectuals of French Speaking Countries" with its sense of perplexity, which indicates the mood of the participants.

To grasp the extent of this state of perplexity is fundamental in understanding, more than a decade after the end of the war, the state of mind and confusion in which the Jews of France found themselves as to what had happened, who they were, and what their future should be in this Europe where the unspeakable had taken place.

Considering the level reached by the colloquia hardly three decades later is to understand, or at least begin to understand, how the post-Auschwitz French Jew was fashioned, his strength, and the role he is destined to play in the molding of the Jewish civilization of the future.

It is a very significant one, complementary to the roles of the State of Israel and the American Jewish community: that of a catalyst toward the reintroduction of Judaism within the mainstream of Western European civilization. At present, in spite of some dark shadows cast by the resurgence of the extreme right, the dynamics of European history seem to indicate that the soil of Republican France is receptive to a European Judaism rising from the ashes.

American Judaism, with its countless houses of worship, community centers, theological seminaries, educational retreats, defense organization, etc., represents an integrated universe, like the United States itself, with a genesis of its own. The past is relegated to the pogroms and gas chambers of Europe, a folkloric nostalgia for a romanticized *shtetl*, an abstract vision of the Spanish Golden Age, a decadent and assimilated pre-war German and French Judaism, and a present whose only link to the outside world is the State of Israel.

A State of Israel which to many American Jews, probably the majority of them non-Orthodox, is the last link to the severed historical heritage of their forefathers; or a kind of secular Judaism to which a Jew alienated from his religion can relate in his social or political frustration.

The Orthodox Jews of America do not find themselves in quite the same quandary as those of Israel, for a symbiosis between some of the traditional facets of Orthodoxy with liberal and even secular Jews seems to be in process, which hopefully might change the face of American Judaism within the next decades.

But in relation to Jewish history throughout the millennia, eschatological history in which a Nathan Krochmal or the kabbalist Jews of Spain saw the hand of God, where are its traces in the collective memory of the Jews of America? Where is *Zakhor*?

This is where the post-Auschwitz European Jew, now represented by the French Jewish community, may be able to perform a viable task by being the living presence of Jewish history, the eventual link between the communities of the State of Israel and the United States. A Jew with his two feet well planted on this earth, but with his head in the heavens; the present firmly linked to the past and the future.

It is my belief that eventually a symbiosis could be established between these three pillars of the modern Jewish world: the State of Israel in its national self-awareness and military strength, poised as a geopolitical element to be reckoned with by the nations and a security shield to the Jews of the diaspora; North American Judaism with the strength of its institutions of learning, service organizations, religious pragmatism, economic and political power; and French Judaism, with its spiritual and cultural revival, and awareness of the history of its roots, the symbiosis between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic/Oriental communities, as well as the lack of tension between its religious and secular segments, who see themselves as part of an organic whole.

Despite the tremendous recovery of French Jewry since the Shoah and the important part it plays in society as a whole, at times I am still possessed by serious doubts.

The burning of the Talmud in front of the Notre Dame Cathedral in the thirteenth century, the Dreyfus affair, Vichy, the stab in the back during the Six Day War, the present pro-Arab policy of its government culminating in its support of Arafat and the PLO—there are moments when I feel the mood of a French historian: "Why was the Jewish man trapped, why has he suffered so much? I can only say: you can hunt me down to the tip of the world, try to throw me over; but the earth belongs to all human beings, it is also mine, just as it is yours."

These doubts, however, do not justify the widespread belief among North American Jews that the roots of the Shoah are to be found in the nineteenth-century emancipation of Western European Jews, their illusions, and their eagerness to integrate themselves into European civilization. A simplistic approach to history, which is refuted by the very emergence of North American Jewry after the liberation from the ghetto. Once upon these shores, its eagerness to become part of the mainstream of U.S. society are a carbon copy of the emancipated pre-war Jewish communities of Western Europe.

The frequent distortion of the role played by the emancipation is due in part to the belief that it happened at one specific point in European history, bringing about simultaneous and uniform changes to the communities of Central and Western Europe. Actually, it was the result of gradual changes occurring throughout a century that changed not only the map but the political and social structure of Europe.

In France, Jews were declared equal citizens in 1791, and by 1812 the armies of the Revolution and of Napoleon had broken down the walls of the ghettos of Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and the south of Germany. But in the Austro-Hungarian Empire the last restrictions on the Jews were lifted in 1867, while in Great Britain and Bismarck's Germany this only occurred in 1871. Frequent official revisions resulting from political changes, as well as the resistance on the part of entrenched bureaucracies conditioned by centuries of antisemitic tradition, made Jewish integration into the respective societies a slow and painful process which differed from country to country.

Judaism before the emancipation, although it remained faithful to its intrinsic values, had for too long been deprived of exposure to

European culture, and the sudden impact of Western values, when juxtaposed to what appeared to be the anachronism of their own traditional religion and culture, resulted in assimilation and often conversion to Christianity, with all the symptoms of alienation, split personality, and self-hatred.

A self-hatred that epitomized the failure of some Jews during the emancipation to strike a balance between the values of their forefathers and their own inadequacy in understanding Western culture, which they were able to grasp only at face value. A radical example is the philosophy of the Viennese writer Otto Weininger, one of Hitler's heroes despite being Jewish, who maintained that the Aryan race was the embodiment of the masculine, creative principle of being, while the feminine, chaotic principle of non-being was embodied in the Jewish race and its culture. Unable to live with his own concept, Weininger put an end to his life.

At the other end of the spectrum of emancipation is Franz Rosenzweig. Intellectually assimilated to the border-line of conversion, this German Jew concluded in the aftermath of a spiritual crisis that the values he had been vainly searching for in the culture of the West were part of his own Jewish legacy, which however required redefinition to become meaningful to the modern Jew. A quest that led to his belief in a meta-historical Judaism, which had already attained the goal the other nations were still striving for.

In his opening address at the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus, Franz Rosenzweig vividly expressed this concept. "All of us to whom Judaism, to whom being a Jew, has again become the pivot of our lives, we know that in being Jews we must not give up anything, not renounce anything, but lead everything back to Judaism. From the periphery back to the center; from the outside in."

These words are echoed by a French philosopher and Talmudic scholar, the prototype of what is emerging as the post-Auschwitz Jew; he heads a group of Jewish scholars known as the Paris School, which derives its inspiration from the concepts of Rosenzweig, the continuity of the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus.

The emancipation also took a heavy toll among the Jews of France. Until the beginning of World War II, thousands accepted baptism not out of religious belief but because they saw it as the only means to total integration into what in their eyes was a monolithic Christian society. Others, because of an emotional link to family ancestry, hid behind the thin veil of "Français de Confession Israélite" ("French Citizens of Israelite Faith") the word *Juif* ("Jew") nev-

er to be mentioned.

An identical phenomenon occurred during the years following the German occupation. Of the 230,000 Jews of France who survived, many decided to cut their link with the ancestral faith and disappear into the vortex of assimilation. The majority, however, were a hard core who stood witness to their dead and, reinforced by concentration camp survivors and Jews from the Mediterranean basin, formed what to me is the post-Auschwitz Jew, divested of the illusions of the pre-war "Israélites" of France.

They now come out one hundred thousand strong into the streets of Paris to celebrate the anniversary of Israel's independence; they were there at the time of the Yom Kippur War, with shouts of "Israël vivra!" A shout of defiance at Germany's Nazi past and at the heirs of Vichy France still lurking in the shadows. On the anniversary of France's liberation, survivors from the Universe of Death, garbed in the rags of the concentration camp uniforms, march across the Rhine, lest they forget.

One of the most moving experiences of my life was to hear Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan at La Victoire Synagogue in Paris on the day of Rosh Hashanah of 1967, following the Six Day War, admonish General de Gaulle, then President of the French Republic, for having betrayed Israel in its hour of need. Two decades later I would see on my television screen Elie Wiesel implore the President of the United States not to honor German war dead at the Bitburg cemetery. Both symbols of the post-Auschwitz Jew?

From the Revolution to the end of the Third Republic in 1940, Jewish life in France had flourished in a climate of freedom, despite an underlying antisemitism and the explosion of the Dreyfus Affair. This climate is exemplified by a book published as far back as 1838 by the Jewish physician and historian Joseph Salvador, entitled *Jesus Christ and His Doctrine*, in which the author states that "Jesus never expounded or presented a single moral problem which had not originated from one of the Jewish Prophets. . . . Christianity was nothing short of a compromise between Judaism and paganism, a compromise Judaism could only reject totally. . . ." Echoes of Nachmanides during the Disputation in thirteenth-century Barcelona?

It was a very controversial book for the period, which caused a sensation in French society. It was favorably reviewed by the prestigious *Journal des Débats*, while violently criticized by the equally prestigious *Gazette de France*.

The above dichotomy is an expression of the schism between the

two faces of France, which surfaced during the Dreyfus Affair. To its detriment, the French Jewish leadership of the period assumed a low posture in order not to appear biased, while the defense on behalf of the accused was taken on by men of the political and intellectual liberal elite, like Emile Zola, Clémenceau, Jean Jaurès, Léon Blum, Bernard Lazare. They were the symbols of France's Republican tradition; Dreyfus' adversaries stood for traditional France, mainly the Army and the Church backed by the rabble, which surfaced as Vichy France in 1940.

Still, it was an army in which a Jew could become a member of the sacrosanct general staff at a time when this would have been inconceivable in his Britannic Majesty's Army, or in Bismarck's. In this respect Republican France had already made a dent in the armor of traditional France soon after the Revolution, for apart from two generals and numerous lower-ranking officers in Napoleon's Army, it is rumored that one of the legendary marshals was Jewish. In the French Army of World War I twelve Jews served as generals.

Due to its lack of a Republican past, in Great Britain only a gentleman could be an officer. During World War I, the Jews who volunteered to free Palestine from the yoke of the Ottomans were permitted to form their own unit—the Zion Mule Corps! By the same token, the Rothschild family contributed five officers to His Majesty's Army and the Sassoon family fourteen; they were gentlemen first, Jews second.

Although a century has passed, the Dreyfus Affair is an episode in French history that still today galvanizes the entire nation. A decade ago the state-owned television network telecast an eight-hour program in four weekly instalments entitled, "Emile Zola and the Rights of Man." The viewer attendance was the largest in the history of French television, and during those four weeks I witnessed the country reliving the Affair that had split France down the middle in the press, lectures, conferences, debates, exhibits, reprints of old magazines, and pamphlets. The basic issue was the question whether antisemitism as *raison d'état* was compatible with the rights of man, mainstay of the Republic.

"To be happy as a King in France," was an expression frequently used before the war by the almost one hundred thousand Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, despite all the hardships they had to endure. Could the same be said of Jews anywhere else but in the United States, and is it a mere coincidence that the Republic's proclamation of "Les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen" had many analo-

gies with the U.S. "Bill of Rights," which preceded it by a few years?

It is estimated that approximately 20 percent of the maquisards and the underground were Jews, a fraction of whom constituted special units considering themselves part of the Jewish Army. The percentage of Jews who joined the Free French in London was also considerable; De Gaulle once remarked sarcastically that his famous appeal to the French nation on having lost a battle but not the war was directed mainly at Catholic France, but it was the Synagogue that had responded.

One of the most astounding and almost unknown examples of Jewish participation in the French Resistance is that Jews constituted approximately 80 percent of the French underground forces that neutralized Vichy's defense of the city of Algiers the night before the Allied landing. Was it a debt of gratitude on the part of Republican France when it took in the 300,000 North African Jews and helped their integration into French society? They in turn have contributed totally out of proportion to their numbers toward the development of the country since the beginning of the 'sixties.

My purpose in giving what might look like undue importance to the resistance of French Jews to the Germans during the war is to emphasize that many Jews were not engulfed in the vortex of the Final Solution like sheep going to the slaughter. The image of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt stands in the eyes of the average American Jew as an exception to the rule. In relation to its numbers, the participation of French Jews in the Resistance was as great as that of the Jews of Poland.

Undoubtedly, the topographic nature of France made it easier than in Poland, for a large part of the Jewish armed resistance was concentrated in the Massif Central, a mountainous plateau in the southeast of the country. But the main factor was that Jews were an integrated part of the Maquis and the underground, which was not the case in Poland.

In this respect, the flatlands of the Netherlands did not offer the possibility of armed resistance, and it is therefore not surprising that out of 140,000 Dutch Jews only 30,000 survived; their deportation was handled solely by the Dutch police and members of the Fascist Party. The Dutch nation as a whole, though, stands ten feet tall, especially within the context of that large segment of West European society that cooperated with the Third Reich in the Final Solution. It was the only country where part of the population, mainly its trade unions, went on strike to protest the deportation order of its Jews, at

the risk of their own lives.

That the French Church saved many Jewish children is common knowledge among American Jews; indeed they did. However, almost totally unknown is the role played by the Jews of France in saving their children. There is a memorial scroll in Paris that reads:

> *In Memoriam*
>
> To those who perished in combat, shot, hanged, under torture, gassed, guillotined, decapitated by the axe . . .

and on it are inscribed the names of about one thousand Jewish men and women, mostly youths, who perished running the underground which was organized to save Jewish children; the names of those who sacrificed themselves in anonymity are countless.

The Jewish underground organization operating under the nose of the Gestapo and the Vichy police saved thousands of Jewish children by finding shelter for them among non-Jewish families and in convents, often without being able to obtain from priests and nuns the commitment not to convert them. Their main objective, however, was to smuggle the children into Switzerland and Spain.

The S.E.R.E.—Service of Evacuation and Regrouping of Children —was determined to save Jewish children at any cost, often at the sacrifice of their parents. It was difficult to convince those families who had not yet been rounded up and who still had the hope or the illusion that they could survive the long night, to give up their children. Thus most of the children had to be smuggled out of camps where they had been interned by the Vichy police or the Fascist Militia, and which were heavily guarded. An entire network of assembly points was established, where they could be safely harbored until smuggled into Switzerland or Spain. Despite functioning as members of the Vichy government, many Frenchmen in an official capacity, such as mayors in small towns or police commissioners, collaborated in this task, often at the risk of deportation or execution.

In this context, the role played by individual priests and nuns in harboring Jewish children, although often at the price of conversion, was outstanding. The role of the French Church as an institution is another matter. Xavier Vallat, Vichy's "Commissaire aux Questions Juives" (Head of the Jewish Affairs Bureau), was the one who elaborated the statute that legalized the handing over of Jews to the Germans. He testified during his trial after the Liberation that had he received even the slightest warning, not just from the Vatican but

the French hierarchy, as to any points of the law being in doubt, he would have changed them or resigned; he was condemned and executed.

Many of the lower clergy rebelled against the order of the Church to collaborate with the Vichy regime, and participated in the Resistance. A thousand priests were deported to German concentration camps; two hundred did not return.

Dealing in the macabre statistics of death, it should be mentioned that while the percentage of children among the six million murdered by the Germans is estimated at 30 percent, among the 90,000 Jews of France who perished the number of children was 6,000, about 7 percent.

But the exact number of Jewish children who were saved was carried to their graves by the leaders of the S.E.R.E., who perished in the process of carrying out their task, for none was deported or executed before the Germans had not attempted to extract information through torture.

Often, when I hear an American rabbi during Sabbath services extolling the role of the righteous gentiles without a word of remembrance for those martyred young Jews who sacrificed their lives to save the children, I feel like getting up and reciting the words uttered by one of their leaders on the eve of execution:

> I will betray tomorrow, not today,
> Today pull off my fingernails
> I will not betray
> I will betray tomorrow, not today,
> Tomorrow.
> I need the night to come to terms with myself,
> I do not need more than a night
> To renegate, to betray,
> To renegate my friends,
> To abjure the bread and wine,
> To betray life,
> To die.

Why is so much emphasis put on the righteous gentiles, of which I believe there were not too many, while we often forget our own brothers and sisters? Is it that American Jews, who were not part of the Kingdom of Death, would like to think that it was just an evil force surging out of the darkness of the German soil and that the Third Reich was its sole executioner? Is it to maintain alive the myth that a large part of Europe and the world was not against the Jews,

and that the Jews themselves did not lift a finger to save themselves?

If we could only break through the armor of oblivion and smugness with which we try to protect ourselves. In my mind echo the words of Elie Wiesel: "Our dead, the six million, they want to speak, they have a message; we are the ones who do not want to listen."

"I never thought this was possible! As I see these photographs, it is as if they were alive, as if I were also part of their world." These words were uttered by a friend of mine, a third-generation American Jew, as he was walking along the corridors of the photographic exhibit at the Center of Jewish Documentation in Paris, next to the Jewish Memorial. He was staring into the eyes of the Jewish resistance fighters throughout Europe, most of them destined to die, and of the long lines marching toward the gas chambers.

To howl in pain and despair at the vision of the burning bodies of the *autos de fe* of the Plaza Mayor, this time through the gaping mouths of their brethren in the gas chambers! Auschwitz, the modern garb of the angel of death within the framework of the modern industrial world—where does it differ from the pomp and glamor of medieval Spain? It is all the same, one is the consequence of the other, all part of the Kingdom of Death which just changes masks.

> Time passes, memory erodes. And thus also the features of those we have loved and who are no longer with us, are inexorably beginning to disappear. Is it really true that we were alone during four long years, excluded from the community of nations, abandoned by man and God? Twenty years after, everything in us refuses to believe that it was true, and thus we started recreating history in accordance with our desire, we embellished it, and soon there will no longer be any trace in our memory of what was the reality of the long night. However, I will tell you in a whisper: during those four long deadly years, we were alone, terribly alone.

These are the words of a French Jewish writer, a survivor of the death camps, already sensing the trend of the West attempting to whitewash itself from the Final Solution through a distorted vision, by universalizing the concept of the Shoah. Is the Carmelite monastery in Auschwitz there to project it as the symbol of Christian martyrdom, as memory erodes?

The Talmud says that the present is nothing but the connecting link between past and future. Judaism can only regain its balance through the awareness of the fundamental role it played in the building of European civilization. Through the physical destruction of a

great number of the Jews on the continent, it seems to have been obliterated from its soil. But its roots are still there, and on them the post-Auschwitz European Jew is set to reinstate Jewish values to their rightful role.

> The angel of history has his face turned toward the past, where a chain of events appears before us. He sees a single catastrophe which piles up a mountain of ruins before his feet. He would like to stay in place, resurrect the dead and reconstruct the wreckage; but his wings are forced back by a storm . . . which irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while a pile of ruins mount heavenwards. This storm is what we call progress. . . .

This is the vision of history of Walter Benjamin, a close friend of Gershom Scholem, who found his death in 1940 while trying to escape from occupied France into Spain; a German Jew who today is considered one of the greatest literary critic of the twentieth century. Moses could not have found better words on Mount Moriah after the Almighty had unfolded before his eyes the birth pangs of humankind.

Walter Benjamin is a symbol of that great universe of thought created by the Jews of the emancipation. In relation to Franz Rosenzweig, one of the giants of that turning point in Judaism, one might say that both these men stand on the shoulders of their forefathers, with one basic difference. Rosenzweig surrendered his soul to the Creator long before the advent of Nazism and, basing his philosophy on the concepts of his mentor Herman Cohen, believed that a symbiosis was taking place between Jewish prophetism and German philosophy. Benjamin no longer had such an illusion, if he had ever had it, for he was a witness to the collapse of that world.

Benjamin also belonged to the School of Frankfurt and its Institute of Social Research, one of the famous circles of the Jews of the emancipation, and was their representative during his Paris exile. The School of Frankfurt, at the same time as the Logical Positivist School of Vienna, was formulating the concepts which today are part of the foundation of Western culture.

Its legacy, however, no longer dwells in Germany and Austria. It is alive and well in the United States, brought by the Jewish intellectuals from Western and Central Europe who found a haven before the curtain fell. One need not go further than the New School for Social Research, and Columbia University, where the link in the chain was established for the New World.

During the last two decades the concepts of the School of Frankfurt, especially centered around the personalities of Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno, have assumed a central dynamic role among the intellectuals of France. For example, in 1983 a symposium on Walter Benjamin took place in Paris, during which approximately 50 papers were presented by scholars, mostly from Western Europe.

There were suggestions that Walter Benjamin was the only "true" philosopher to emerge in Europe between the two world wars, the man who wrote, "I have never been able to search and think but, if I may say so, in a theological sense; or, more precisely, in accordance with the teachings of the Talmud on the forty-nine levels of meaning in each passage of the Torah."

The participants at this symposium were mostly non-Jews, and despite a trend to try to divest Walter Benjamin of his Jewish origin, as in the case of Bergson, one could detect a distinct undercurrent that, without coming to terms with the dimension of Auschwitz, there was no place for the development of philosophy in post-war Europe.

Who was exempt from guilt during those fateful years of the occupation, either through outright collaboration or the sin of omission? Within the overall context of the split personality of many French intellectuals during the years of German occupation, what had motivated *L'Esprit*, a liberal Catholic publication, to dedicate a special issue to the School of Frankfurt, and mainly to Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer? I found the clue in an article published in *Le Monde* at about the same time, as exemplified by the following excerpts:

> What is left of the admirable civilization of the Incas, the Khmers, the Egypt of Tutenkhamon, the Greece of Pericles, the Persia of Darius, the Empire of Alexander, the Rome of Augustus? They were overwhelmed by the force of the very weapons on which they were forged, but that little group of nomads, the Children of Israel, have survived.
>
> . . .
>
> Faced with a world in which nothing testifies in the cold eyes of history that Jesus is really the redeemer, are not the descendants of Isaac well founded in rejecting the divinity of a man who despite his preaching of charity and love, could not prevent two thousand years of inhumanity and destruction? How could one not be profoundly shaken by this unique destiny? How not find in it religious transcendance?
>
> The flames of the crematoria have been unable, no more than the pyres

> of the Inquisition, to consume the indestructible soul of the people of David. . . .
>
> To think that two thousand years after the death of the Nazarene, it should still be the concepts of the descendants of Isaac that shake the world, be their name Marx, Freud, or Einstein. It all adds to the immense interrogation which is the destiny of the Jewish people. . . . Just the spark of an answer might finally shed a light on the insoluble and searing mystery which is human destiny. . . .

Were these French intellectuals, molded in their country's Republican tradition, seeking an answer to the future of their own civilization in the mystery of the survival of Israel?

The soul of post-war France was shattered by the defeat and betrayal of the very principles on which the Republic had been founded, nothing short of brother pitted against brother in a civil war within the context of the greater conflict sweeping Europe. It seemed to be turning for guidance to the descendants of Abraham, who had resurrected from the ashes with their soul intact.

Europe, burdened with the weight of its seventy million corpses, the end product of two great wars that had ravaged the continent since the turn of the century, and the tension resulting from the Cold War, requires desperately the insertion into its civilization of those Jewish values which for two thousand years it so staunchly strove to eliminate.

The School of Frankfurt epitomized the Jewish search since the emancipation to establish a symbiosis between religion and those cultural facets, like Freud and Marx, which had been distorted in their application and which could eventually help mold the West in the image of the Jewish prophets.

In every line of that issue of *L'Esprit* transpires the urge and anxiety for a sense of direction. Could its authors discern in the concepts of the School of Frankfurt the light at the end of the tunnel for Western Europe as a whole and France at its center, engulfed in the existential vacuum brought about by what Ignazio Silone so pertinently labeled as the gods that failed?

The heritage of the Jews of the emancipation has now come to rest on the American scene. It is, however, at the crossroads of being absorbed into the predominantly Christian culture, and places the Jewish intellectual at a point in history where he will have to decide whether to continue within the Jewish tradition, or not.

The predicament has been defined by André Neher at the opening of the first meeting of the "Colloquium of Jewish Intellectuals"

in 1957, since it was prevalent among most of the pre-war Jewish intelligentsia:

> . . . The Jewish intellectual used to be the lost child of Judaism. He was at work in all domains; he fought on all the battlefields; he was at the forefront of the most praiseworthy and dangerous causes, where the most diverse human responsibilities were at stake, with one exception: that of Judaism. Confronted with his condition as a Jew, he would react at best with slight irritation or indifference; at worst, with a psychosis of disdain or hate. . . .

Although this does not apply to the American Jewish intellectual to the same degree, I have often come across scholars who belonged to a congregation, contributed to the UJA, and sent their children to Hebrew classes, but functioned within a totally Christian-oriented universe as far as their disciplines were concerned.

This Christian imprint on American institutions of higher learning is a rather disturbing element because of its analogy to the educational system of pre-war Europe, which molded the Jewish intelligentsia of the emancipation; its end result was often alienation to the point of self-hate.

Can a Judaism divested of its spirituality and eschatological destiny, despite the strength of its organizational and communal structure, survive the impact of its environment? Unfortunately, the American Jew has seemed willing to give up more of his Jewish values than a pluralistic society expects from him. For while America has created the industrial and technological society par excellence, and in many ways has set an example for the economic growth and emancipation of much of the world, it is still seeking to create a culture of its own. By tradition Jews are ideally placed to contribute toward it to a greater degree than other ethnical groups.

The strength of America, the basis of its greatness, was its ability to break the yoke of its pre-war European past, of economic serfdom, of political and religious persecution. This was also the case of the Jew, who was able to build for himself a life of freedom and opportunities unequalled in the history of the diaspora; the first land where the synagogue stands on an equal footing with the church. So why be burdened with the ghosts of the past?

Rather than the futile attempt of some Jewish intellectuals to identify with the Anglo-Saxon world from across the Atlantic Ocean, the establishment of a link with the Jews of medieval Spain and the culture of its Golden Age would add to the cultural civilization of

this country.

Whether Sephardim or Ashkenazim, where are our roots? We all originated in the Mediterranean basin, the crossroads of all civilizations, to spread throughout its shores to the Iberian Peninsula and all the way north across the Rhine to the confines of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Mediterranean basin and the Fertile Crescent, where it all started; where often amidst tension and persecution, the dichotomy or symbiosis of Judaism took place with the ancient civilizations of the East, the culture of Islam, the philosophy of the Greeks. All of it to converge and reach its epitome in the civilization created by the Jews of medieval Spain and to find its way into the rest of Europe through the Italy of the Renaissance.

Could this civilization of the Jews of Sefarad, the first kernel of the diaspora to take shape after the destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth, be the very genesis of American Judaism?

I often notice the startled reaction, even resentment, of my fellow Jews in America when I dare ask the question. The tension usually abates when it is pointed out that the fateful year of 1492 might be a symbol, not a coincidence, marking both the Exodus of the Jews from Spain and the landing of Christopher Columbus in the New World.

Was it coincidence that most of the navigators, cartographers, and many of the inventors of navigational and astronomical instruments were Jews, or Marranos, secret Jews, who hoped to escape from the Inquisition and discover a land of refuge, to return openly to the faith of their ancestors?

Abraham Ben Samuel Zaccuto was a brilliant young man who had been instructed in the tradition of Torah and Talmud by his father, and who attended the University of Salamanca, in its time the greatest of Iberia, to study the secular sciences. With the collaboration of other Jewish scientists at the court of the Spanish sovereigns prior to the Expulsion, Zaccuto developed a perfected astrolabe, tables, and maritime charts with which the caravelles of Columbus were equipped.

At the time of the Decree of Expulsion in 1492, he was court astronomer to King John II, where he advised the great Portuguese navigators of the School of Sagres on the route to the Indies, eventually leading to the discovery of Brazil. But a few years later, the King of Portugal in his turn decreed the expulsion of the Jews from his realm, and Zaccuto once more found himself on the route of

exile. In his own words, describing the saga of Spanish Jewry, one can hear echoes of the hand of God in history:

> . . . on one hand, the expulsion of my forefathers in 1492 from "our land" where we had dwelled longer than the Christian conquerors, and on the other, in that very same year were to sail from the very port of my exile the caravelles of an expedition financed by the leaders of Spanish Jewry whose maps and navigational instruments were invented by Jews, and which had the Marrano navigators in its midst. . . .

Abraham Senior and Isaac Abrabanel, leaders of Spanish Jewry and counselors to the sovereigns of Aragon and Castile at the time preceding the Expulsion, realized that inevitably the curtain would fall. They had for a long time been negotiating with Columbus the financing of his expedition, which could never have taken place without the support of the Jews of Spain. Thus, as the greatest Jewish community of the diaspora came to an end, the foundation was established for the creation of North American Judaism.

In his book *Sefer Ha-Yuhasin*, Zaccuto not only reflects on the tragedy that befell the Jews of the Iberian peninsula, but clearly exposes the corruption and greed for power that had made it possible; for him the Jew's greatest weapon in the midst of this hostile world is the study of Torah, which will give him the strength and courage to face the onslaught of Christendom. The oral tradition maintains that, true to his belief, Zaccuto ended his days in Jerusalem immersed in the mysteries of Torah and Kabbalah.

Has the lesson been learned by the generations that followed him, especially those of the children of Israel who seem to have succumbed to the *hubris* derived from wealth and power?

As to Columbus' Jewish origin Salvador de Madariaga, Spain's foremost modern philosopher, asserts that Columbus was the scion of Spanish Jews who, after having converted to Christianity, settled in Genoa, where he was born. There are other strong indications that Columbus was a Marrano who returned to Spain. Scholars recently claimed to have detected in Columbus' correspondence Hebrew characters which could signify the phrase, "Baruch Hashem." There is also the phrase in one of his letters, "I am the servant of the Lord who raised up David." One has to take into account that in those days Marranos, while attempting to stay clear of the Inquisition, had devised means of communicating with each other by innuendos and metaphors.

There is also the version that in his navigational log Columbus mentions the "Two Houses," which Marranos would interpret as the Second Temple, and that on the flank of his caravelle the word Torah can be discerned, over which stands the figure of Moses holding the tablets of the Law.

Columbus, the alleged crypto-Jew, played a tremendous part in the flow of history as the discoverer of America, but for those American Jews who see him as a symbol of affirmation of Jewish continuity in history, there is another revealing fact. He apparently set sails in the hope of discovering the river Sambatyon, where in accordance with the oral tradition of our forefathers of Sefarad, the ten Lost Tribes had found refuge. The ten Lost Tribes who would vindicate the suffering of the children of Israel and assure their survival. The fulfillment of God's redemption, whether for those who had chosen the road of the exile in 1492, or for those Marranos who longed to return openly to the faith of their forefathers.

Columbus was not unique in his search for the ten Lost Tribes, a subject of much Messianic speculation among the Jews of Spain. None other than Isaac Abrabanel envisioned the ten Lost Tribes bursting forth from the confines of history to overwhelm Rome, the source of all evil, in retribution for the suffering of Israel. Many others were carried away by this vision of the apocalypse, among them Salomon Molcho, born Diego Pires of Marrano parents soon after the expulsion. Returning to the religion of his forefathers as a young man, Molcho sealed the pact of Abraham by circumcising himself with his own hands, and proceeded to Rome in an attempt to convince Pope Clement VII to liberate the children of Israel from the clutches of the Church. Tradition has it that he was able to influence the Pope; what other reason could there be for Molcho to have been granted protection from the Inquisition, but that Clement VII feared the retribution of the ten Tribes sweeping over the site of the Throne of St. Peter?

A kabbalist and the author of *Sefer Ha-Mefoar*, Molcho's vision of Israel regaining its lost glory led to his seeing himself as the forerunner of the Messiah. Announcing the approaching redemption, he wandered about the communities of Constantinople, Salonika, Safed, Jerusalem, and throughout Italy, where he gathered a large following. The arm of the Inquisition eventually caught up with him, and refusing to recant, he surrendered his soul in Qiddush ha-Shem on the pyres of the *auto de fe*.

In the thirteenth century, Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia had al-

ready pursued the mystery of the ten Lost Tribes. But, while Columbus would set sail across the ocean in search of the river Sambatyon, Abulafia went to the encounter of the ten Lost Tribes in the wilderness of the Judean desert. In his vision they were awaiting the proclamation of the Messianic era to burst forth and liberate the nation of Yisrael from the house of bondage. Upon his failure to find the lost children of Israel, Abulafia did not give up but just changed course. Convinced that he had achieved prophetic inspiration under the guidance of an inner voice, Abulafia set out on the road to Rome with the purpose of calling Pope Nicholas II to account for the suffering of the Jewish people. Not as lenient or as fearful of the retribution of the Ten Tribes as Clement VII, the Pope condemned him to be burnt at the stake. As the sentence was not carried out due to the Pope's death, Abulafia became possessed by the belief in his messianic attributes and began to proclaim the end of days, for which he was denounced and branded as a charlatan by the all-powerful leader of the Jewish community of Catalonia.

As far as historical reality is concerned, the river Sambatyon and the ten Lost Tribes was and remains a myth. However, as so often indicated in the course of this narrative, has not myth turned out to be reality when grasped within the essence of the oral tradition?

In the metaphoric language of Scripture, not to speak of the *Zohar*, could not the North American continent with its six million Jews, the largest and most powerful community since the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry, stand as the symbol of the dream of the river Sambatyon and the ten Lost Tribes?

How does one relate the language of metaphor to modern historical interpretation? Edmund Husserl attempted to grasp its significance. In the introduction to Julius Guttmann's *Philosophies of Judaism*, it is spelled out in a most revealing fashion:

> Perhaps the most important and almost subtle influence on Guttmann's thinking was that of Husserl, whose phenomenology claimed to prove a method of knowing those "a priori" elements and structures which were present as original data in human consciousness. . . .

Nachman Krochmal conveys in his monumental philosophic work, *Moreh Nevukei Ha-Zeman* (A Guide to the Contemporary Perplexed), that the history of every nation can be divided into three periods: growth and development, vigor and enterprise, decline and annihilation. However, he adheres to the kabbalistic concept that the Jewish people differs from all other nations. Israel is eternal due to

its special relationship with God, the Eternal Spirit, founded on the covenantal relationship of Sinai and the gift of prophecy.

Based on the cosmology of Krochmal, one might say that after Judaism had reached the third cycle, that of annihilation symbolized by the Shoah of Sefarad, one of their generation, namely Christopher Columbus, was the instrument for the beginning of a new cycle, that of American Jewry.

In the search for my own roots, a certain historical tapestry has gradually unfolded, as transmitted from generation to generation, symbolized in this narrative by the presences. Within this eschatological vision I feel that just as important as Columbus' identity as a Jew is the understanding of the world in which he lived. He stands as the symbol of the end of the cycle of one Jewish civilization, that of Sefarad, the greatest in the history of the exile, and the beginning of another, namely the twentieth-century North American Jewry.

The greatest in the history of the exile? It is well expressed in the words of the history professor mentioned above:

> Jewish history in the tenth century is largely an attempt to prove that we were and are there—that Jews were present at the various great moments of the world's history, that they were not just living in ghettos, that they did make contributions. I think the next stage is to find our significance in the Western historical experience. Spain comes closest to the present state of the world; there Jews also played a tremendous role in the life of society at large.

For the part he played in formulating U.S. foreign policy, most American Jews are enthralled by the image of Henry Kissinger. Rightly so, but in the context of his time, can he be compared to the legendary Hasdai Ibn-Shaprut, the *Nasi*, the Prince? In the tenth century, Hasdai Ibn-Shaprut became the model for the Jewish courtiers, financiers, physicians, scholars, and diplomats who for centuries to come would leave their mark on Spain and the rest of Europe. The pattern was set: to radiate from the inner core of Jewish civilization and tradition into the outer perimeter of society at large.

Primarily a physician, Ibn-Shaprut eventually became advisor to the Umayad Caliph of Moslem Spain, for whom he carried out numerous diplomatic missions, such as are not entrusted to the average diplomat.

> Hasdai Ibn-Shaprut's greatest diplomatic achievement . . . when in 958 he convinced the Queen of Navarre to travel to Cordova. That same year the queen and her grandson, with a large retinue of priests and

> nobles, departed for Cordova. The visit of a Christian monarch to a Moslem ruler was unheard of and aroused excitement throughout Spain. . . . As the Moslems of Andalusia saw it, this visit symbolized the greatness of the Caliphat, which had crumbled the Christian into the dust. The Jews also exulted, for they saw in it the foremost achievement of Hasdai Ibn-Shaprut. . . .

Greater in scope than Kissinger's overture to China? Maybe not, but there is an added element. In the tradition of Moslem rulers who surrounded themselves with Jewish physicians, Ibn-Shaprut's initial mission to the court of Navarre was to cure the queen's grandson, the end result being the first peace treaty between two seemingly irreconcilable enemies.

Undoubtedly, there was a quest for power on the part of Ibn-Shaprut, but it seemed to be but a means toward an end; his ambition was to return the glory of the house of David to the people of Israel. As a result of his life-long efforts, the one who came to be known in the lore of Sefarad as the Head of the Diaspora established the foundations that enabled the seat of Jewish learning to be transferred from the great Talmudic academies of Sura and Pumbedita to the land of Iberia, from where the interpretation of the Law spread throughout the European continent during the five succeeding centuries.

Power has often led to violence and war, and in this context stands Samuel Ha-Naggid, Grand Vizier of Granada in Islamic Andalusia in the eleventh century. A Talmudic scholar and a poet, he is remembered in Spanish and Jewish annals as a great military commander.

Samuel Ha-Naggid was molded in the tradition of Tarik, in Sephardic lore also a Jew and commander of the first Moslem army to land on the soil of Iberia as far back as 711, who with the support of the Jewish population of Andalusia drove their oppressors, the Christian Visigoths, out of the land.

Most of the men of the Spanish Golden Age were men of peace, but the men of war cannot be excluded from Jewish history, especially when they were leaders of their people steeped in the tradition of the Holy Scriptures, like Samuel Ha-Naggid.

The religion of Israel was the very foundation of the Jews of the generations of Sefarad, whatever their calling. In this sense they differed from our present-day Jewish scholars and scientists in America, for they were convinced that their achievements were rooted in their knowledge and constant study of the Torah. It is a historical fact that the culture which the Jews of Spain and of Provence creat-

ed and transmitted to the West was intrinsically Jewish.

The generations of my forefathers of Sefarad attempted to live in accordance with the Prophetic vision, true to their inheritance, whether in liberty or oppression, under Islam or Christendom. It was the only time during the long journey in exile until the North American commmunity came into being, when for long periods Judaism dwelled in harmony with Islam and to an extent with Christianity, while openly confronting them whenever paganism under the mask of the daughter religions attempted to infringe upon the supremacy of the Law of Moses.

Despite the doubts the presences burden me with, I am sure that North American Jewry will play a fundamental part in the development of Judaism as the heirs to the legacy of Sefarad. But how can I know that here, as in the land of Iberia, the day might not come when the curtain will also fall? With all this talk about evil empires, those preachers, Bible in one hand and the weapon of ultimate destruction in the other, covering the land and announcing Armageddon, the end of time—does it indicate that the greatest power of the world has entered its cycle of degeneration?

Krochmal might have been correct about the nations of the past, but America could be different, for there is the Law. The nations of the world have created, changed, and manipulated their Law to serve the interests of a minority, as exemplified by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, not to speak of the military juntas of the Third World where the tank has become the Law.

As in the history of Judaism, America's cycles might be transformed into a continuous upward spiral, provided the Law reigns supreme. The Law emanating from the Constitution, and not subject to the whims of the powerful as an end in itself. The Torah of the United States.

The symbiosis between the sacred and the profane that the Jews of the Golden Age were able to achieve, despite their personal ambition and the sin of vanity which possesses most men who have tasted power, was possible because in the context of their time they lived in what may be considered an open society. Open in the sense that in intermittent phases over the centuries, it actually consisted of three nations, the Moslem, the Christian, and the Jewish nations, until Spain became a monolithic nation-state after the *reconquista*. Thus, Spanish Jewry contributed to the civilization of their time as members of the Jewish Nation of the Exile, while American Jews do so as U.S. citizens, within the framework of a Christian culture and civili-

zation.

I sometimes wonder whether the American Jew, who has relegated to oblivion much of his ancient civilization, has not also deprived American society of fundamental values essential to a nation struggling to create a culture of its own on the debris of the myth of the melting pot.

In order to establish a comparison between the Jews of Spain and the American Jewish civilization still in the process of formation, a greater insight into the soul and mind of the Golden Age might be necessary; a search for the analogies or historical events from which the Jews of America might derive solutions for the problems that are plaguing it.

Foremost is the case of Maimonides, the Rambam. The dictum, "From Moses to Moses [Moses ben Maimon] there was none greater than Moses," is now accepted by all Jews, whether Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform. But was it so in the context of his time?

The dichotomy between the traditional Jews of the period and the so-called philosophers, as the followers of Moses ben Maimon were termed, might have been just as deep as what exists between traditional and liberal, or even religious and secular Jews, especially considering that the land of Israel has become its battle ground.

Born a century after Maimonides, Moses ben Shem Tov de Leon was the author of the *Zohar*, the magnum opus of Jewish mysticism which was considered for generations as important as the Talmud by many Jews. Although he stood at the extreme of traditional Judaism, Moses de Leon was attracted by the "philosophy" of Maimonides to the extent that he had a special copy of the *Guide for the Perplexed* made for himself.

A figure of great relevance in this schism of medieval Judaism was one of the giants of Spanish Judaism, Moses ben Nachman, Nachmanides. Talmudic scholar, kabbalist, and philosopher, he earned his living as a physician before becoming Chief Rabbi of the great community of Catalonia in the midst of the thirteenth century, in which capacity he defended the honor of the House of Israel in the famous Disputation of Barcelona.

Nachmanides strove with all his prestige to close the gap between the two camps throughout the communities of Europe, and his efforts did not remain fruitless.

A deeper analysis of the subtle theological nuances that enabled medieval Spanish Jewry to bridge the schism threatening the unity of the House of Israel, might help the Orthodox, Conservative, and

Reform movements in the United States come to terms with their differences. A quantum jump of a few centuries does not seem much in the millennia of the Jewish thrust. The presences, my inseparable companions, proudly agree as these thoughts flash through my mind.

Although to Maimonides the kabbalists of old were anathema, I was deeply moved in a matter that affects me very personally when coming across his "Treatise on Asthma":

> . . . the physician is important not only during the sickness but also when the body is healthy. Unlike any other craftsman, the physician must use art, logic and intuition. . . . [T]he physician must be able to take a comprehensive view of the patient and his circumstances, in order to make a diagnosis of both his general condition and the disease of the individual organ. . . .

The forefather of the thousands of Jewish psychiatrists roaming the land and attempting to heal the multitude of souls wounded by the alienation of the industrial society?

As in his approach to medicine, the greatness of Maimonides resides in bringing together all the different facets of Jewish civilization. Although a codifier of such magnitude seems to belong to a distant future among the Jews of America, I have been witnessing an almost imperceptible but gradual trend among the different religious denominations toward internalizing some of each others' tenets. There is the fusing of concepts between religious and secular Jews reflected in the prophetic dimension of Judaism; an eventual synthesis between the traditionalists and the philosophers, in the footsteps of the generations of Sefarad; even the acceptance of Kabbalah as an integral part of Judaism on the part of those who in the past recoiled at the very mention of Jewish mysticism.

The different facets of Jewish civilization! A concept that at first glance might appear confusing to many American Jews who are still encapsulated within the framework of what they believe to be the philosophy of the specific denomination to which they are affiliated. The presences who stand witness to the generations of Sefarad are restless again, lest I commit the sin of omitting the towering example that was Levi ben Gerson, known as Gersonides.

Gersonides, born a century and a half after Maimonides and only second to him as a commentator on Scripture, stands as one of the symbols of the civilization of the Golden Age. He is considered the greatest Jewish philosopher of his time, and although he was not renowned as a master of the Kabbalah his classic *Milhamot-Ha-Shem*

(The Wars of the Lord), deals mainly with the immortality of the soul, reflecting the cosmology and eschatological visions of the *Zohar.* It also contains 130 chapters on astronomy.

Was a synthesis of astronomy, philosophy, and Kabbalah achieved by Levi ben Gerson who, although he lived in Provence, was part of the universe of Sefarad? Gersonides was the inventor of the "Jacob Staff" and is thus considered a forerunner of Abraham Zaccuto and all the Jewish astronomers, cartographers, and navigators who centuries later developed the instruments and charts that made possible the discovery of the New World.

I can well understand the hurt and often indignant feelings of my fellow Jews in this country—especially my fellow students, for one is an eternal student in America—whenever I mention the quantum jump of five centuries that links them to Spanish Judaism. Where does Ashkenazi Judaism, the Judaism of Eastern Europe, stand in this equation?

It is fundamental, for without it there would have been no American Judaism. They themselves, six million strong, are the living proof. So why should the achievements of the Jews in this country be more along the lines of a community extinguished five centuries ago than based on the way of life of a father or grandfather in the ghettos of Eastern Europe? Here we are dealing on a subjective level, and I have to remember that my Ashkenazi brethren are also shadowed by the presences of their generations.

The presences of the generations is a difficult concept to be accepted by my brethren of America, especially the second or third generation born in this country and molded by its social and educational system. How can the generations have a voice in their lives? I guess this is why so many well educated, successful young Jewish professionals have to resort to their psychiatrists, at a tremendous fee, for any conversation outside the norms of society.

Not to show one's feelings is a problem that puzzled me the most when I settled in this country. For the first time in my life I came across Jews who did not pour out their hearts to a fellow Jew the first time you met. How else could one know of their joys and pains, find out who they were, not to speak of the warmth of discovering a friend of a friend from across the oceans, even a relative, as so often happened to me. Can it be that Kafka's words no longer apply to the American Jew?

> We cannot depict things statically. We see them always in transition,

> in movement, as change. We are story tellers. . . . A story teller cannot talk about story-telling. He tells stories or is silent. . . .

The syndrome of the modern American Jew not wanting to know who he is and where he comes from, reducing *zakhor* to the vague notion of a forefather who originated from a romanticized *shtetl*, seems to be the basis of his dependence on an analyst to come to the roots of his being; it must not be transposed beyond the generation of his own parents, who are often transformed into the scapegoat for early traumas. What would happen if I were to confide to my Jewish psychiatrist friends—or my fellow students—my relationship with the presences of the generations, not to speak of my kabbalist ancestors?

Only during the last decade, when the study of Spanish Jewry of the Golden Age including the Kabbalah has become widespread, did I dare to approach the subject cautiously. To be more precise, only after I read the book, *Creativity: The Magic Synthesis*, by Dr. Silvano Arieti, one of the country's leading psychiatrists and a Sephardic Jew born in Italy, on the subject of Joseph Caro's greatest work, the *Shulkhan Arukh*, and his relationship with his *Maggid*.

Dr. Arieti concludes in his book that Joseph Caro was far from being a psychotic:

> The end was the maintenance of a psychological equilibrium throughout a life dominated by a tremendous intellectual and spiritual ambition. . . . In the kabbalistically transformed mother-image of his celestial mentor [his *Maggid*], Caro found the divine, inspiring, reproving, chiding, encouraging, but above all loving spiritual agency that on the one hand confirmed his heart's most cherished desires and ambitions, and on the other acted as the personified pressure of conscience. . . . [W]e are entitled to speak of a psychological equilibrium rather than of a disturbance, and to understand the Maggid's influence as the compensatory function of a complex mother-symbol. . . .

Mysticism is also said to be at the root of Freud's psychoanalytic theories, for he did originate from a Hassidic family, heirs to the kabbalists of Spain and Safed.

One of the most startling examples of this new trend is an article on the question of the transmission of genes and memory, stating that all the theories so far have been proven wrong. One of the scientists, most likely resorting to oral tradition or long-forgotten *yeshivah* days, ventured an opinion as to the best explanation available. When a child is about to emerge from the mother's womb, one of

God's angels comes to him, passes a hand over his eyes and lips and says, "Before you go into the world, forget what you know, for otherwise you will not be able to live."

No doubt the Talmud is correct, but it also adds that a flicker of light remains in the mind of the infant to keep the link in the chain of eternity. Maybe this is what our *Maggid*, the presence of the generations, is all about. We all have one, but few are willing to listen.

The problem is that most psychiatrists and their patients, being secular Jews, do not believe in principle in presences, not to speak of the generations. If Freud, or his American Jewish disciples, had managed to go deeper than the tip of the iceberg, delving into the mythology of their kabbalistic ancestors, they might have been able to attune themselves to *zakhor*, the ancestral memory, and conclude that existential *angst* cannot be solved in the dimension of space, the norms of the society in which one lives, but in time, Jewish eschatological time. Perhaps in that context the ever-confused patient might have been able to place himself, finally knowing where he comes from, and thus who he is and where he is going.

The assimilated Jewish intellectual attempts to escape from the weight of space by projecting his mind and soul into what he sees as the universalism of time, whether through politics, science, art, or the written word. The traditional Jew, encapsulated in all the precepts of what he interprets to be the yoke of the commandments, which often denies him a realistic view of the world, attempts to grasp the purpose of human existence by projecting himself into the dimension of eternity.

My forefathers of Sefarad seem to have established an additional approach to liberate them from the yoke of space, whether or not dictated by the vicissitudes of history, which through the centuries became an urge for mobility bordering on compulsion; to pierce the barriers that separate nation from nation, man from man, not only as a means to grasp the reality of the human condition but to forge a link between the dispersed children of Israel.

The Spanish Jews were great travelers, the trail-blazers of the Middle Ages; not only as Marranos attempting to escape the Inquisition, but opening the trade routes that would bridge the continents, connect East and West. Their exploits filled the imagination of my early years with wonder. To what extent did it condition me to become a wanderer, rather than the unfolding of events?

Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela, who lived in the second half of the twelfth century, bequeathed to posterity the narrative of his jour-

neys that lasted from five to more than ten years, and stretched over large parts of the known globe as far as India and China. There are also echoes of a search for the Sambatyon River and the ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Was Benjamin de Tudela a wanderer, a trader, a dreamer?

Basically he was a trader who also carried out missions on behalf of beleaguered Jewish communities or the ransoming of hostages. Thus Benjamin de Tudela sought more than earning a living; like other Jewish wanderers, he attempted to grasp the meaning of life and the role played by the children of Israel through the conquest of space. The search for paradise lost, or for unknown worlds?

American Jews, no longer restricted by ghetto walls or the invisible barriers of the *shtetl*, now have the freedom to wander all over the globe. But there is also the call of their forefathers of Sefarad to be not only links in a world which is becoming smaller, but to ransom the captives in our twentieth-century context.

The salvaging operations set up by organizations like Joint and Hias, their cooperation with *Aliyah Beth* ("Clandestine Immigration to Palestine") to resettle the survivors of the Shoah often at the price of ransom, an effort that today finds its continuity in relation to Soviet Jewry, the redemption of the Jews of Ethiopia, the attempts to save the trapped community of Syria, and many others, testify that the community of North America is the true heir to Spanish Jewry, where even a man of the stature of Isaac Abrabanel abandoned his tasks as the counselor to the monarchs of Christian Spain and traveled to North Africa to ransom a number of Jewish families held hostage by a Berber tribe.

The access to the world by the generations of Sefarad produced men of universal vision, one of the foremost among them being Yehudah Halevi, philosopher, historian, poet, and a physician by profession. His memory is kept alive by the readings of some of his 350 *piyutim* in all the synagogues during the High Holy days. But he stands as one of the giants of Jewish history as the author of the *Kuzari. A Book of Proof and Argument in Defense of a Despised Faith*, which expresses Halevi's philosophy of history, is an eschatological vision of Judaism in comparison with Islam and Christianity. In it he shows the hand of God working through history, which cannot be grasped through philosophical speculation but only by revelation. Yehudah Halevi was the first meta-historian who set out to prove the superiority of the religion of Israel over Islam and Christianity. He felt that the Jew had to defend not only his faith but also

his honor; the *Kuzari* is an apology of Judaism that has inspired men in later centuries, like Abraham Krochmal and Franz Rosenzweig, in their concept of a modern philosophy of Judaism, and continues to do so.

Another monument in defense of the Jewish religion is Samuel Usque's *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel.* A Portuguese converso born of the first generation after the expulsion, he led the life of a wanderer and could not reconcile himself to the catastrophe which had put an end to the civilization of the Jews of Iberia. Through the voices of mythical notagonists, Usque narrates, in a literary style akin to that of the Talmud and the Zohar, the sins and virtues of the generations of Israel since biblical days until the Exodus from Sefarad. Although throughout the narrative runs the vision of the Lord of Sinai castigating the children of Israel for having broken his Covenant, the prophetic promise of redemption remains alive parallel to it.

Heir to the great Talmudic tradition of Mesopotamia and ancient Palestine, Spanish Jewry spread its wisdom throughout the communities of Europe. Their paradigm was Abraham Ibn Ezra, a twelfth-century biblical commentator, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, and physician, who for a quarter of a century lived as a wandering scholar in Rome, Lucca, and Mantua in Italy, Narbonne and Bezières in Provence, northern France, and London, teaching the Jews of those communities the scientific achievements and rational spirit of the enlightened Jews of Spain. He also wrote for the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe who were not trained in the secular sciences. He was to have a considerable influence on the Jews of the Rhineland, the Pietists of Germany.

It is said in the lore of Jewish tradition that without Abraham Ibn Daud there would have been no Maimonides. Biblical scholar, historian, philosopher, physician, and astronomer, Ibn Daud was fundamental in setting the basis for an eventual understanding between traditionalists and philosophers that threatened to tear apart the House of Israel of his time.

What makes Ibn Daud unique was that, together with Yehudah Halevi, who preceded him by one generation, he may be called the greatest meta-historian of his era. In his *Sefer Ha-Kabbalah*, the "Book of Tradition," he outlined the thrust of Jewish history from the days of Alexander the Great until the Almohade invasion of Andalusia, at whose hands he suffered a martyr's death.

Ibn Daud's book became a prime source of historical information,

for he showed how the tradition of Jewish Scripture was transmitted from generation to generation from biblical times to the period when "the mastery of the Talmud now rested exclusively in Spain. . . ." He also projects the destiny of the four empires that have persecuted the people of Israel as a metaphor for the destiny of the nations that would follow in such a path, as exemplified by Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

Although many American universities have recently endowed chairs of meta-history, who nowadays thinks of the Iberia of the Inquisition or the Germany of the Shoah in the context of Abraham Ibn Daud's eschatological vision of the destiny of the Four Empires? Historiography, in its urge to adapt the past to the geopolitical interests of the nations, is in the process of encapsulating the Dantesque quality of these events into the framework of normalcy. Thus it is well to remember Abraham Ibn Daud's words, "The empirical sciences are only the preliminary steps to metaphysics, whose proper content is the knowledge of God."

Don Isaac Abrabanel, the Prince of the Diaspora, also was a meta-historian in the sense that he understood the rationale of Jewish Prophetism toward a universal goal of peace and social justice. Treasurer of Alfonso V of Portugal, later at the service of Ferdinand and Isabella, and after the Expulsion, counselor to the Doge in Venice, Abrabanel became an avowed republican; his personal experiences had led him to detest royalty with its abominations and idols. At the dusk of his life Abrabanel, after finishing his commentaries on the Torah and the Prophets, left for posterity his reflections on the vicissitudes of the people of Israel to which he had been a witness, as exemplified by the following words:

> I, a humble servant of the Lord who has been afflicted by the rod of His wrath, joined my people on the road to exile, true to the legacy of my ancestors, a fugitive and a wanderer on the face of the earth. On that day of reckoning I looked back on my life and realized that although my good deeds had not been of small stature, I nevertheless profoundly regretted all the days spent in the vain pursuit of riches and honours in the palaces and courts of the Kings.
>
> Too little had I sought the Book of the Lord, the source of all wisdom and knowledge, and therefore made a solemn oath that should the Lord preserve my family and myself, I would dedicate my remaining days to the study and interpretation of our sacred texts. They alone could help me to grasp the extent of the terrible calamity that has befallen our people and understand why the glory seemed to have departed from

> Israel; only thus would I be able to bequeath to our children and our children's children a spark of comprehension of God's plan for man on earth.

Don Isaac Abrabanel and his peers of the generations of Sefarad symbolize a Jewish civilization springing from the kernel of Torah to reach out into the world, from the particular to the universal. Giants of the House of Israel, individual after individual, whether scientist, physician, courtier, philosopher, talmudist, kabbalist, or poet, not excluding trader and warrior, in a succession of generations spreading over six centuries, transmitted to Judaism and to the world the achievement of what is in the eyes of many the greatest Jewish civilization in the history of the Diaspora.

The Jews of North America have the choice to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers of the Golden Age of Sefarad, for its history is also theirs. However, in the context of the post-Auschwitz era the words of Isaac Abrabanel should serve as a warning not to confuse the power and hubris of the nations with the civilization of the House of Israel.

VI.

THE LAND OF ZION

Shortly the State of Israel will celebrate its 40th anniversary, I ponder as the plane lands at Ben Gurion Airport, and I walk through the crowded terminal. Is it different from airports in other large cities? The country has only three and a half million inhabitants—is this reflected by the multitude of travelers?

I feel the difference as soon as I leave the terminal, where only passengers are allowed, for I seem to be engulfed by a wave of humanity. Each arriving or departing passenger is surrounded by well-wishers, often the size of a clan. Joy, sorrow, perhaps anger, all emotions on the surface. Taxi drivers loudly offer their services. Yes, the State of Israel is part of the Mediterranean civilization. It is a good feeling. Maybe East has met West? My mind wanders back to our first arrival at the very genesis of the State, when Lod was hardly its gateway but rather the extension of a battlefield.

After our failed settlement, it had taken thirteen years before I returned to Israel on a professional assignment in 1962. Then as now, there was the same lack of decorum, reminiscent of the lobby of a synagogue after services which, for me, under the impact of the alienation that permeates the corporate world and the industrial society, was balsam to the soul. I knew I had arrived in a Jewish country.

On the way from Lod to the new Sheraton Hotel in Tel Aviv, I was impressed with the progress that had been achieved, especially the water-front, a miracle after only thirteen years. A kabbalistic number, thirteen, like seven, part of the universe of my subconscious that never lost an opportunity to dash to the forefront of my mind when an analogy or metaphor took form.

Like shadows whispering behind my ears, the presences I had in-

voked out of the timeless dimension of Jewish history, to allow me a glimpse into the saga of the generations, had followed me to the land of Israel, but their voice had changed. Here they seemed almost relaxed, at times not devoid of a certain irony when I stared in wonderment at the material achievements of the Jewish State, as if to hint that Jerusalem was still in exile.

The vision of a man of small stature with a flowing white beard, almost floating across the lobby of the Sheraton supported by the arms and veneration of a large crowd, jolted me back into the world of Jewish reality. I realized that this man, or rather this apparition, was a rabbi the likes of which I had never seen in the flesh, only in Saul Raskin's drawings or Vishniac's photographs. The presences in their mysterious ways had conveyed to me the message that the State of Israel was very much within the timeless flow of Jewish history.

On the first day of my arrival in Israel after thirteen years I had been confronted with the symbiosis, or dichotomy, that was part of the land: a banquet for a Hassidic *rebbe* at the brand-new Sheraton—was it really a nation like other nations?

The porter who carried the suitcase to my room, after glancing at me inquisitively, turned around and said, "You are not really American, are you?" In his eyes I did not fit into the pattern of the average American Jewish tourist or businessman, mostly Ashkenazi. My response that I was born in Constantinople, had lived in France and Brazil, and was now an American citizen triggered an emotional outburst as to a lost brother.

The gist of the story was that he and his fellow Jews from Egypt, who had been expelled by Nasser after the Suez campaign, had been hired by the hotel only because they spoke many languages; that they had belonged to the middle class and were more educated than most of the Ashkenazi oldtimers; that they did not earn enough to send their children to highschool, much less give them a university education, as the establishment did not trust them and wanted to keep them down. . . . Couldn't I help him to go to France?

In these outbursts, which followed me throughout the land during my stay and subsequent trips, I recognized the anguish of men who had been uprooted and had not yet found their bearing in a new society. I knew it only too well, the saga of immigration, in the process of which one dies before being reborn. But that was not the problem; they felt that the bureaucrats who controlled their destiny did not treat them like Jews. In Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, they had been Jews, had often suffered for it, but they were proud of

what they were. Here it was the other way around: they were seen as Egyptians, Moroccans, etc.

I could empathize with the difficulties of my Egyptian friends in their new homeland, but refused to accept their conclusion—that their tribulations were the result of an organized policy of discrimination by which the power of the State would continue to be the monopoly of the Ashkenazi establishment. By the same token, when the managers and politicians of that same elite confided to me their belief in the inadequacy of the Oriental and Sephardic Jews for building a modern technological Western State, I rebutted the argument with a vehemence that put an end to what I considered to be petty individual prejudice, normal in any society, especially one lacking the social and economic mobility at that stage of its development.

The decade of the 'sixties was the time when the industrial infrastructure of the State was being established, the reason of my professional assignment. I made contact with the mushrooming high-technology industries in Haifa and the backyard plants of the kibbutzim from the Negev facing the Egyptian-held Sinai, all the way to those in the plains of the Galil at the foot of the Golan Heights, at the mercy of the Syrian artillery barrages. The State had reached self-sufficiency in agricultural products, and the motto was diversification into industry.

At least from a technical and marketing viewpoint many elements of this approach had much in common with what I had experienced during the industrialization of Brazil from a purely rural society. It differed on one basic point, though; it was Jewish in the sense that almost every meeting resulted in an urge to find a common link, whether of family, place of origin, or shared historical experience, not to speak of spiritual identity, a vision, or a memory. Among those kibbutzniks, the pioneers who had made the creation of the State possible, I found men who had a dream. Through the small backyard industries would be born an industrial park of a sophistication that would assure the economic independence of the State and the basis of a just society. The dream of a utopian society was not dead, it had just changed course.

How did this outpouring of the heart relate to me? Not too many foreign executives had come in search of business opportunities, for this was before the Six Day War, and most were non-Jews who were met in the lobby of the Dan, Sheraton, or King David, an atmosphere hardly conducive to the unfolding of a vision. I was told that I had been one of the few to reach out to them. Facing the hazard

of often unpaved roads in a ramshackle "collective taxi," I would drive for hours to discuss their plans with them under the galvanized sheet roof of an abandoned barn, transformed into a rudimentary workshop, or over the formica table of a communal dining hall. I was the Jew coming out of the distant industrial world of the West, the heart of modern technology, who had acquired the knowledge they lacked and was eager to share it with them for the fulfillment of their dream.

These encounters, which left me profoundly marked, at times had an ironic undertone. When during one of those heart-to-heart talks I would reveal to them that I was born in Constantinople, I could feel a slight change in their attitude; as if, not being a real American, I could not be that well versed in the culture of the West.

Another often quite-serious problem I had to face in the world of the kibbutz industry had ideological and political roots. Not that it was related to the production and distribution by kibbutzim molded along the lines of doctrinaire socialism. They were resigned to the fact that their economic success depended on their accepting a free market society, with restrictions, of course. In some cases, even the sacrosanct dogma of not hiring paid labor had already been abandoned for the sake of the welfare of the kibbutz and the State.

Every kibbutz had its political affiliation, in accordance with its founders' concept of socialism, all the way from the extreme left to the religious. The Moscow trials of 1938, when most of the founding fathers of the Russian Revolution, many of them Jews, were executed by Stalin with the sole purpose of tightening his dictatorial grip on the nation, brought about the first quake that shook to its very foundation the beliefs of a minority on the extreme left who saw their role model in the Soviet Union.

However, the heroic role of the Soviet Union in defeating the Third Reich's onslaught raised the prestige of that country to new heights among the Jewish pioneers in a land still under the British Mandatory Power. There was also the vote of the Soviet Union in 1948 which, together with the United States, tipped the balance at the United Nations in favor of the creation of the Jewish State. Not to be overlooked were the weapons supplied by Czechoslovakia, at that time already under communist control, which helped to make possible the victory of the newly created State over the various Arab countries.

The remaining illusions of the kibbutz movement were shattered by the trial and condemnation to death in Czechoslovakia of one of

the leaders of the extreme left-wing (Hashomer Hatzair), Mordehay Oren, who owed his life to international pressure, and his eventual liberation by the Prague Spring uprising. A recalcitrant minority, however, provoked a split among the oldest and most powerful kibbutzim of the land. It became a physical split, for in some of them a line was drawn, one side to be known as Aleph and the other as Beth. An invisible line, almost as harsh as the Berlin Wall, for all communication between the two was severed, a situation that lasted for years until tempers cooled. In the context of the first decades of the State, it was a schism comparable to the one that now exists between secular and Orthodox Jews. Jewish fanaticism, or in the ultimate analysis, the root of our survival?

Thus I found myself in the midst of a crossfire that affected no less than the sacrosanct industrialization of the nation, which thanks to the Jewish innate abhorrence of violence produced no casualties, although in the annals of kibbutz life there is the memory of an exchange of blows, to which not even members of the Knesset are immune when engulfed in the tempest of debates. Orthodox versus secular, Ashkenazim versus Sephardim, we do have the reputation of pulling out our belts at the climax of a heated discussion, but never knives—sometimes attributed to us Sephardim as one of our worst characteristics. It is true, though, that during the War of Liberation in 1948 the last stronghold of the Egyptian Army in the Negev, a brigade composed of fierce Black Sudanese warriors, was finally conquered by the cold steel of an Israeli brigade of equally fierce Moroccan Jews.

My role in making peace between the Aleph and Beth segments of one of the largest kibbutzim, at that time in the midst of an economic and manufacturing deadlock, is one of the fondest memories of my Israeli assignment. Before the ideological schism the kibbutz had started a fine industry, a pioneer in its line of production. As a result of its division, the industrial equipment was split in two, bringing about an industrial bottleneck for both parties, as Aleph and Beth turned out identical products in excess of what the country was able to consume or export. Two industrial plants separated by no more than a mile or two, run by individuals who had labored and fought together, comrades of the heroic days, who could not come together to coordinate and rationalize their respective industrial output because of an ideological schism! The two opposing factions apparently had not spoken to each other since the days of the Prague trials, the only exception being in time of mobilization for

war, another matter entirely, for war is war, and ideology is ideology.

Under these circumstances, both in relation to my professional assignment and for the sake of the unity of "Am Yisrael," I had no alternative but to jump into the fray as mediator, which seemed to be welcomed by both parties despite a lingering suspicion that I might take sides; obviously not in the area of production and distribution, but in matters of ideology. Although I was dealing with rugged pioneers, the level of the squabbling at times sounded to my ears like the fierce verbal battles between my mother and my mother-in-law over the future of their grandchildren.

My performance both as a professional and a Jewish mediator turned out to be a success, and the ideological gap between the contestants narrowed to the point where it was mentioned only with great embarrassment. Though meager in financial reward or promotion in the corporate world, it stands as one of the great achievements of my life, in the best tradition of the Sephardic courtiers or diplomats of the Golden Age.

In the Jewish nation-state taking shape in front of my very eyes, little thought was given to the place of religion. There was no lack of synagogues, and Orthodox Jews in their traditional garb could be seen everywhere; most of them were in Jerusalem, where I did not go too often, as the city was still divided and not part of the industrial parks being built in many sections of the country, mainly in the Haifa area.

The Sabbath was one aspect of the State of Israel which at first reassured me as to its spirituality and left no doubt that the light would come from Zion. Not as the day of rest for the toiling men and women, but as if all of a sudden the land was projected from the dimension of space into that of time, eschatological time. Every human being, every structure, seemed under its spell, visible in the composure and dignity of those who still walked in the streets, as if the air they breathed was not the same as that of their six days of toil.

On the first Sabbath eve of my return I once more experienced what I had felt while passing through the main street of Bnei Brak in the war-torn land of 1949. This time it was different, though; it seemed to exude a spirit of peace.

I was walking past a synagogue, and the familiar chanting of *Lecha Dodi* welcoming the Queen of Sabbath projected me into the timelessness of Jewish history—or was it the living presence of the generations? It was as if the melody had brought to life the man who had

composed the words, Rabbi Solomon Alkabets, together with his teacher and brother-in-law, Moses Cordovero, the family's kabbalist. Over the green hills of Safed they would wander with open arms on the eve of every Sabbath to receive the *Shekhinah*, the symbol of the redemption of Israel, who had lost her crown of glory when accompanying the Jews into exile. Alkabets, Cordovero, and their faithful companions had left the plentiful cities of Salonika, Adrianopolis, Constantinople, and had chosen to follow the *Shekhinah* into the land of Zion where they would witness her redemption. Would it be the privilege of my generation to see the fulfillment of their dream? For a fraction of a second I felt I had grasped what the Sages of Israel throughout the exile had meant when speaking about the footsteps of the Messiah.

The following week it would take on a more sobering aspect, that of historical perspective. The Festival of the Torah, it was called by a friend of mine, or more precisely, of the new Torah. Words from the lips of one of the great biblical scholars I have known, in charge of an American Jewish organization in Israel.

My initial impression was that I was being taken to a religious celebration. A celebration it was, but of a different nature, as I realized when my friend led me into the large Mann auditorium in Tel Aviv. I watched in bafflement his outstretched arm pointing toward the stage at the new Torah of the State of Israel—two battle tanks. Around these engines of death clustered a large group of men in military uniforms, the defense forces of the nation. The large auditorium was filled to capacity. It was the celebration of a graduating class of tankers.

I again felt the presences, but this time they were not emanating joy, as on the eve of the Sabbath, but anxiety.

"I do not know whether to laugh with joy or cry in despair," my friend commented. "Look around you at the people in the audience, the parents of the boys on the stage. Some are kibbutzniks, but some of the others are broken human beings, concentration camp survivors. To many Israelis they are the symbols of the Diaspora, the end result of two millennia of Jewish history that might as well be obliterated from our memory. Their strength was the Torah of Sinai. Now look at their sons, young, strong, and proud, the symbol of the New Jew on whose shoulders rests the survival of the State of Israel. Their Torah is the battle tank. The state will survive, I am sure. But will Judaism?"

We walked back to my hotel in silence. The presences were equal-

ly silent. The witnesses to the generations had no answer either.

Part of my professional contacts had been with earth-bound kibbutzniks attempting to build their backward industries, mostly older Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, who still reached out with their hearts to a fellow Jew, despite the camouflage of his corporate business suit, the very antithesis of egalitarian community life.

At the other end of the spectrum stood the best and the brightest, the new generation, mostly sons of the kibbutz and the political elite. Often veterans of the Palmach who had gone to America and Western Europe for a college degree, they had erected a wall between themselves and the Jews of the Diaspora, between "us" and "them." The element of continuity seemed to have been severed, the memory obliterated. During the leisure hours when I was being entertained, the subject invariably cropped up but not through open discussion of the merits of the State of Israel versus the Diaspora, or the religious versus the secular, but the honeymoon with France.

In the early 'sixties, the entire country seemed to be swept by the mystique of France, at least the bourgeoisie of the new residential neighborhoods and the elite institutions like government, academia, the "special" industry, and of course the Armed Forces. Those were the years of the tacit alliance between the State of Israel and the French Republic. Signs of it were everywhere. French movies, music, festivals, etc., but foremost, the numerous French engineers around the Beersheba and Dimona areas, and the Mirage and Mystère aircraft, pride of the Israeli Air Force. It was the time of the termination of the bloody Algerian War of Independence which preceded the Six Day War.

The geopolitical reasons for the alliance were obvious to me, as I was living in Paris at the time, but the attitudes many Israelis derived from it were rather disturbing.

Initially, I did not take any notice that whenever I greeted one of my business contacts with Shalom, I was invariably answered with a Good Morning or Good Afternoon. The consistency of this response puzzled me, and with time started gnawing at me, until my Sephardic temperament could no longer be held back. In a mixture of anguish and anger, the question burst out, "Why don't you say Shalom to me—am I not a Jew?"

It happened in a relatively large social gathering of the new elite, and the answer to a controversial and emotional question was not devoid of hostile undertones. The State had been created for the ingathering of the exiles, and most of the Jews of the Diaspora had

not responded. There really was nothing much in common left between us; they were much closer to the French, who were their allies and gave them the weapons and technology needed for their defense; we, the Jews of America, thought we could buy a clear conscience with our financial contributions.

My rebuttal at the time fell on deaf ears. I tried to convey to them that it was all right to make a pact with the devil for the survival of the State, but one had to remember who he was. Not that the French Republic was the devil, but Israel should have no illusions as to the reasons for their support—the Algerian war. Now that it was over, the French would want to reestablish their good relations with the Arab countries. I implored them to remember that the only real friends of the Jewish State were the Jews of the Diaspora they seemed to despise.

The Six Day War took place a few years later, and Israel was victorious in the most spectacular manner. But the honeymoon with France was over. A bitter taste remains among Israelis and Jews of the Diaspora toward that country to this day. It is a pity, for despite the stab in the back we should not dismiss the French Republic altogether, as there remain so many links of much greater significance than the weapons and the dark blot of Vichy.

A non-Jew stands out in my memory for having put his finger on one of the fundamental elements that had made possible the survival of Judaism and would assure that of the State of Israel. The scion of a traditional family of northern Italy, in whose veins must have run the blood of Doges and *condottieri*, and who was steeped in the lore of forefathers who had fought alongside Garibaldi to liberate their country from the Hapsburgs and the Popes, my patrician was one of the top executives of the European steel mill that belonged to the metallurgical conglomerate for which I worked.

As part of my assignment I accompanied him on a tour of what was considered Israel's basic industry in the early sixties. An engineer well familiarized with the sophisticated industrial parks springing up throughout Western Europe as the result of the Marshall Plan, my companion did not seem too impressed with the industrial development of the State of Israel. These were the days before the sophisticated Israeli Merkavah tank, and we were shown World War II British Army depots now transformed into assembly lines, where the discarded rolling stock of the 8th Army as well as U.S. war surplus was being cannibalized and reconverted into vehicles for the armored corps of the IDF.

Over dinner he unexpectedly blurted out, "How do you Jews expect to defeat the Arab armies equipped with the latest models of Russian tanks with old World War II Sherman tanks, even if they are equipped with a new 105 mm. gun?"

What could I answer him but that for us Jews, if you did not believe in miracles, you were not a realist. I did not sound very convincing, even to myself. But my companion had grasped what many Israelis would not accept when he had said "you Jews." In his eyes, we of the Diaspora and those of the State of Israel were but one.

Throughout our market survey across Portugal, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and now Israel, all lands of the sojourn of the generations of Sefarad, my patrician friend had been baffled by what he saw as my problem of identity. When I entertained him with some of the tales of the saga of my forefathers, he could not hold back a certain expression of irritation when he asked me whether I was a Spaniard, a Greek, an Italian, or a Turk. To which I could only reply that I was a bit of everything, which made me a Jew, a Sephardic Jew.

The issue was clarified in his mind as the result of a tour to the Dead Sea on one of the proverbial Egged buses, neither famous for comfort nor service; a day-long journey amidst Jews from the four corners of the world, with a number of Israelis among the mixed multitudes.

As usually happens in a gathering of Jews who have never seen each other before, one is sure to come across at least a friend of a friend if the conversation lasts long enough. After canvassing the globe for mutual relatives and analyzing the geopolitical situation of the State of Israel, antisemitism, the state of world politics, etc., the discussion turned to a very actual problem, two facets of the same coin, one very distant to some and the other of immediate relevance to most of the participants—the problem of the Blacks and of the Arabs.

Blacks and Arabs, the main topic of discussion among a bus-load of Jews from all over the world on their way to the Dead Sea—how did it start or end? The way Jewish stories usually unfold, starting from nowhere and ending without a conclusion.

The American Jew, a dentist from Detroit, expounded at length on the problem of civil rights in the United States, a mining engineer on the exploitation and segregation of Black labor in his country, South Africa; an English Jew about the legacy of hate left by the British among their former colonies of Africa.

I joined the fray to pontificate on how the racial tolerance existing

in Brazil could serve as a model to the more advanced nations of the West. I had to admit, however, that there was a problem, but it was of a social and economic nature.

As the discussion went back and forth, one of the French Jews touched on the most explosive and controversial matter, that of the Arabs. The long and bloody war fought by the French Republic to retain "French Algeria" apparently had taken almost a million Arab lives and had brought France itself to the brink of civil war, not to speak of the legacy of hate among the Arabs. It also had transformed the State of Israel into a scapegoat for the abominations of European colonial power.

This outburst raised the discussion to such a level of intensity that every passenger got involved, with the exception of my Italian friend and a Jew from Switzerland. The issue had become that of the Arabs of Israel and its neighboring countries, all its aspects were being dissected and analyzed, the Talmudic minds functioning at full speed. One trend, however, could be discerned among all participants, including the Israelis whose voices had the capacity of rising above those of the other contenders—how to live in peace with the Arabs.

In Paris I had been aware of the profound resentment against the Arabs, often bordering on hate, that was the result of the Algerian war. On that Egged bus, among Jews from around the world, including those from the land of Zion, hatred seemed to be the only feeling that was absent.

Throughout the trip, my Italian companion had not uttered a word, and when the argumentative capacity of the passengers seemed to have exhausted itself, he appeared to be totally withdrawn. After a couple of hours' rest, while sitting across a table in the soothing atmosphere of the Hotel Dan dining room, he came out of his reclusion.

"My dear friend, I have often pondered on the reasons for the survival of the Jewish people." His voice had taken on a solemn tone. "You were present in history since the days of the Roman Empire when our legions destroyed your Temple and razed to the ground the land of your ancestors. You survived, while we went into decay. Not even the power of the Roman Catholic Church was able to erase you from the face of the globe."

"I was an officer in the Italian Army during World War II and witnessed the efforts of the Third Reich to carry out what they had termed the Final Solution. Later, at the occasion of the Badoglio Armistice, I was captured by the Germans while fighting with the

partisans and was sent to a concentration camp, where I saw with my own eyes the fate destined for the Jews. Now I think I have understood the secret of your survival. Believe it or not, it was on that tour bus to the Dead Sea."

His face showed signs of emotion for the first time since I had known him. "There you were," he went on, "a group of Jews of diverse origins who had never seen each other before. All of you in one way or another survivors of a great catastrophe, full of love for this piece of desert and of anxiety for its survival, surrounded by enemies that have vowed its destruction. And you were worrying about the suffering of the Blacks, whether in America, South Africa, or Brazil, not to speak of your concern that justice should prevail toward the Arabs, the very people who want to destroy you. This is the secret of your survival, and that is the reason why this little country of yours most likely will also survive."

The outpour from the heart of my friend rekindled my hopes, as I was at that time under the impact of the internal squabbling among the ingathering of the exiles and was becoming bitter at the growing prejudice against the Oriental/Sephardic Jews. For here was a highly educated man, a non-Jew, who had grasped the element of solidarity and spirituality which in his view would assure the survival of Judaism and of the state, despite all its weaknesses.

Almost from the day of its independence I had the privilege of periodically witnessing the development of the Jewish State, its moments of glory and of pain. Pain, for at times it seemed as if brother no longer recognized brother, the children of the tradition of Ashkenazi and of Sefarad standing in confrontation.

In 1949 I had already seen the hydra of intolerance raise its ugly head, and upon my return at the beginning of the 'sixties I had to recognize at first that the problem still existed, and tried to convince myself that it had only been part of the birth pangs of a nation.

It was not the frequent observation of some Israelis that I did not look like a Sephardi, but certain innuendos that finally made me realize that what I had believed to be a prejudice on its way out had in fact reached the proportions of a schism. Part of a tacit official policy?

Time and again I heard from men of the political and new industrial elite that they had to prepare the country for the Russian Jews, who were the hope for the future. They were good material who would help build the country.

At the beginning I did not grasp the underlying significance of

such comments, since they seemed to be a cry from the heart. No doubt the Russian Jews would contribute greatly to the development of the State of Israel, provided they saw their fulfillment in terms of living a full Jewish existence. At the time I was connected to Jewish organizations involved in the resettlement of Jews coming out of the communist countries in considerable numbers. What seemed to lure many was not Zionist ideology but the fleshpots of Western Europe and North America.

New housing developments would be pointed out to me, and it was said with pride that they were for the new Russian immigrants. Initially these observations filled me with satisfaction, for it seemed that one of the main problems of the country—the housing shortage—was being tackled. However, I soon realized that the ugly sight of the *maabaroth* (transition camps) still dotted the land, and its inhabitants were mostly Oriental Jews.

The response as to why people who had arrived years ago were still living in ramshackle dwellings already resembling the "favelas" of Rio de Janeiro, was usually a shrug of the shoulders. When my companion was not aware of my Sephardic origin, the answer would be that they were Jews from Arab countries, a lost generation. They had come out of the caves and were still in the Middle Ages, just like the Orthodox; only their children could be saved. I should not forget that the Jews coming from Eastern Europe and eventually the Soviet Union would be Europeans, molded in the technology of the West and imbued with its culture.

A word here, a phrase there, sometimes an outburst about the evils and degradation of the Diaspora; the social gap between the two ethnic communities resulting in the creation of a lumpen-proletariat in the suburbs of Katamon, Jaffa, or in the wastelands of the development towns, gradually enabled me to visualize a pattern. The basic problem seemed to be religion.

The men of the first and second waves of immigration had been the product of the Eastern European Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) movement, who envisioned the redemption of the Jewish people along the lines of nineteenth-century nationalism in which religion had no part to play.

The puzzle in my own mind was resolved when I came across the following sentence by the famous Israeli historian, Jacob Talmon: "The State of Israel is a direct continuation of the culture and society as created by the secular Jews of Eastern Europe."

A painful conclusion for one who personally saw in the Jewish

religion the very basis of its people, apart from seeing himself as a proud bearer of the heritage of the generations of Sefarad. What did I have in common with a secular society created on the culture of the Jews of Eastern Europe? Should I switch my ancestral Ladino to Yiddish, exchange our traditional *burekas* for *blintzes*, and start eating noodles with sugar instead of the traditional pasta mixed with the fragrant herbs of the Mediterranean basin?

Irony apart, what struck me was that the dichotomy between the two branches of Judaism ran much deeper than the cultural and social mores they had picked up during their exile. It was the basic confrontation in the land of their forefathers between a power establishment that was secular and anti-religious on an ideological basis, and a large Oriental/Sephardic community of immigrants whose outlook toward life and society was religious. How could a secular Jew from Eastern Europe recognize as a brother a Jew from the Mediterranean basin if the mortar that had united Jews around the world —religion—no longer existed?

The most enlightening and human experience, during our latest prolonged stay in Israel at the beginning of 1988, was within the framework of my family, consisting of numerous first and second cousins and their children. As a whole, they represented a success story as far as their integration in the Jewish State was concerned. They had all come from Bulgaria, with none of the dreams and great expectations of the pre-war pioneers.

Actually, it was an unexpected experience, this emotional encounter with an extended large family, both on my mother's and father's side. The only memory I had of the entire clan was that of my father's sister in a dilapidated Arab house in 1949, still vivid in my mind. Her son, who at the time worked in an orange grove, then needed only one year to finish his engineering studies in Bulgaria when he left as part of the great mass of forty-five thousand souls—out of a total of fifty thousand—who had chosen to go to Israel.

This same young man, of whom I had lost track, was married to a young woman born in a *moshav* of Russian parents and a practising psychologist, working mainly with children of Holocaust survivors. To my surprise, despite our limited means of communication, which proved to be my main area of frustration during my stay in the country, we soon found a common subject of interest, nothing short of Kabbalah.

The reader should not hastily draw the conclusion that my first cousin, originating from a rather secular family, was in the process of

becoming a *baal teshuvah* and moving to Meah Shearim. After picking oranges in his youth and serving for years in the IDF, he had received a scholarship at the Technion and had graduated as a mechanical engineer. He had fought in three of the country's wars, and helped to set up the pontoons over the Suez Canal that enabled Sharon's brigade to cross into Africa and surround the Egyptian Army toward the end of the Yom Kippur War.

The sum total of these experiences, added to a successful career as an engineer in one of the country's industries, prompted my cousin to attempt to find a greater meaning to human existence through the visual arts by becoming a painter. Through the creative process arose the quest for a total system of values, which led him to study Kabbalah with Gershom Scholem at the Hebrew University, after having found no adequate answers in any of the Eastern religions.

His forays into the Kabbalah to grasp the mysterious order of the universe, which our forefathers of Gerona and Safed had articulated in the cosmic dimension of the *sefiroth*, ended in the study of Astrophysics. For as the result of his search he concluded that what our kabbalist forefathers had managed to convey through biblical metaphor, despite their limited means, could in our time be expressed through scientific concepts.

During our discussions I felt we were not alone; the presence of the generations seemed to hover over both of us. Not only the presence of the great family kabbalist of my grandmother's mythology turned reality, but the realization that his disciple on my father's side, who was responsible for having introduced the Kabbalah into Renaissance Italy, had one of his descendants, my paternal cousin, carry on in his path.

My cousin and his family considered themselves to be secular. Did he consider the Kabbalah as a facet of Jewish religion, or just as one of the foundations of Western civilization, as it had led him to Astrophysics? This syndrome, or the limitation of language to express concepts, moods, and feelings related to the absolute could also be seen in my cousin's two sons.

The older one, a strapping young teenager whose ambition was to become a computer scientist, upon our first meeting proudly presented me with an elaborate genealogical study that stretched four generations back in time and filled some of the gaps in my own search for ancestral roots. What an astounding attitude on the part of a young *sabra*, a member of one of the labor youth movements who attended a secular school.

But when he informed me that the year before he had celebrated his *bar mitzvah* in a traditional religious ceremony, I was really shaken. Had it been the influence of his parents? No, was the brisk answer, the decision had been made solely by himself. Upon my startled probing it turned out that eighty percent of his schoolmates had gone through the *bar mitzvah* ritual performed by Orthodox rabbis.

The younger son, whose eyes seemed permanently to wander into a dimension beyond grasp, who was called Zohar and was, in the words of one of his aunts, pure *neshamah* ("soul"), had the ambition to become a philosopher and a painter, like his father.

Was this a typical family, middle class in its economic and social structure, of the Israeli Nation-State? My exposure to its people seemed to confirm this in the months that followed.

We had rented a flat at the northern tip of the Tel Aviv waterfront, which during my daily walks along the beach gave me the opportunity to reflect on the nature of the massive blocks of luxury hotels that stretch on for miles and will reach all the way to Jaffa within a decade. How do they fit into the Jewish State, all these "brand" names found in the four corners of the world? They do provide the average business man, the participant in a congress or a mission with a feeling of security, of home, as I myself experienced during my traveling career. But to what extent did these structures along the waterfront or scattered all over Jerusalem, and the universe they project, convey to their guests the realities of the land of Israel and its people?

The four-star hotel was the vehicle by which the Israeli host party rolled out the red carpet for the numerous missions with the goal of obtaining financial donations from benefactors whose names would be engraved on the stone of almost every official building of relevance. This was done by projecting on the Jews of the Diaspora their own particular reality of the land of Israel, or what they believed it should be, whether political, social, or religious. The end result of such encounters was that both parties got the wrong impression of each other, which has not helped toward a real dialogue and most often resulted in total rejection or blind acceptance by those who did not have the interest or the fortitude to seek for themselves.

Whether walking across the grounds of Hadassah, the Weizman Institute, or Tel Aviv University, I have watched the reaction of my host, usually a relative, to the names of the donors engraved upon the stone walls of the compounds. Simultaneously reassured by what they saw as a link with the Jews of the Diaspora toward the progress

of the State, there was also a sense of dependence which often reinforced their feeling of insecurity over the future of the Jewish State.

Would it not be more in the spirit of our tradition if instead of the names of the benefactors, the memory of one of the sons of the State of Israel fallen in its defense were to be perpetuated? We plant trees in the name of the victims of the Final Solution, the Jewish symbol for the continuity of life. Why not so honor the memory of the citizen-soldiers, so that parents, wives, sons, and daughters would perhaps find solace in seeing that life is stronger than death, for the fallen have made it possible that they and their children shall live?

Wherever I have traveled throughout the world, I have seen the signs of the generosity of American Judaism toward communities in need. In Israel, however, when I see the names of donors engraved in stone, I ask myself sadly what might be its purpose. That their names should endure for eternity, or that they be assured their place in Gan Eden? Speaking of eternity, in the city of Bahia in northern Brazil, there still stand today three hundred baroque churches ornamented in gold, each one built by a slave merchant with the purpose of having his place reserved in heaven.

In the house on the Hill of Pera, I remember my grandmother telling the tale she had heard from the mouth of her grandfather, that it had been the sacred duty of the community of Constantinople to ransom the Jewish captives the victorious Ottoman armies brought from their conquests to be sold as slaves. The money would be raised among the wealthy and not-so-wealthy. Under severe penalty the name of the donators could not be revealed, for it would offend the poor, whose dignity had to be safeguarded, the ransoming of the captives being the responsibility of all Israel.

On my first visit to Jerusalem, about to enter the decade of the nineties, under the impact of the magnificence of the city of David where the old has been so harmoniously blended with the new, I had my initiation into the undertones surrounding the visceral question of religion.

This very city, of which it is said that every stone has a story to tell and has witnessed the coming and going of the empires attempting to subjugate it, could not possibly be the object of negotiations, of political bargains based on peace for territories, or other such empty slogans.

Before the partition, the British Mandatory Power had promised Sheik Abdullah Jerusalem as the capital of his newly created reign, a

piece of land torn out of the ancient land of Palestine. Ever since its liberation, many have laid claim to it: the Vatican and the United Nations to internationalize it; the Protestant fundamentalists for the Second Coming; the little King across the Jordan for his capital; the PLO as the capital of a Palestinian state stretching all the way from Haifa to Gaza. Having withstood the pressure of the nations for four decades and having built a most beautiful city, how could any Jew, Israeli or not, fail to be possessed by a sense of awe, inseparable from the thrust in history for which there is no better definition or word than religion?

The day I went up to the Mountain of the Lord gave me a clearer insight into this drama of the Jewish soul. I was heading for the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus for a three-day symposium on the Jewish Experience, which would encompass its social, political, and religious facets. Scholars and rabbis from Israel and the Jewish communities of the Diaspora would participate in the debates, with the exception of the ultra-Orthodox. The event was sponsored jointly by the Hebrew University and an American Jewish organization.

On the inaugural day of the symposium, as we drove down toward the heavily populated Arab sector, I had a vision of the Mount Scopus University perched on a steep hill across it, bringing back to mind that of the Ciudad Universitaria of Madrid which had stopped Generalissimo Franco's offensive to capture the city at the beginning of the Civil War.

My host, a European Jew who had made his *aliyah* years before, was making a detour to avoid the kernel of the Arab agglomeration. Pointing to a cluster of modern apartment buildings on the western part of the slope, he told me of his experience a couple of nights before. Looking down from his terrace into the Arab sector, a dantesque vision had unfolded of exploding Molotov cocktails, cars set ablaze, women screaming to encourage their rock-hurling teenage sons to face Israeli soldiers chasing them with sticks.

He had just returned from reserve duty in one of the elite units made up of kibbutzniks, university students, professors, and professionals; no Gush Emunim types or followers of Rabbi Kahane. The mood had been bleak and a consensus was growing among them that there might be no other solution but putting the West Bank Arabs on buses and driving them across the Jordan, as they feared that the next stage would be PLO members among the men attacking with lethal weapons. My host concluded in a tone bordering on despair that he had endured enough and had already found a position in

Europe; he had a wife and children to think about. This was the voice of an intellectual, and I wondered how the man in the street felt, the tough Oriental Jews from the development towns, the bazaar merchants from Tel Aviv, or the Gush Emunim settlers from the hills of Judea and Samaria.

Many criticize the way the Mount Scopus complex was built, a labyrinth of blockhouse-like structures which seem to be unconnected to each other. Finding my way among the fortress-like buildings of the campus on the western side, I could see the agglomeration of Arab dwellings down the slope, and to the east the wilderness stretching toward the kingdom of Jordan. I could not help muttering the old battle-cry that hovered over the Ciudad Universitaria, "No pasarán."

Why these words? From what I had seen and felt, the military might of the State of Israel had never been greater. Was I being overwhelmed by a paranoic fear, a catharsis brought about by memories of the past? I could not dispel the vision of the convoys of armored cars, organized by the Haganah during the last days of the British Mandate, which had been surrounded by the armed inhabitants of the same Arab villages I was facing at that moment. Overwhelmed by the mob, many members of the scientific and intellectual elite had been butchered on their way to Mount Scopus.

Undoubtedly, the complex of Mount Scopus looked impregnable, considering that its flanks were protected by the settlements on the bare but awesome hills of Judea and Samaria, especially the rebuilt religious kibbutzim of the Kfar Etzion block. A few days ago I had stood there on a wind-swept day, remembering how during the War of Liberation in 1948 they had resisted the onslaught of the British-led Arab Legion of Jordan and the Arabs of these same villages. Their sacrifice to the last man is said to have saved modern Jerusalem from the fate of the old city. Now it was settled by their children, who had returned after the Six Day War. To stand witness to their fathers? It is still the tradition in much of the world that, in the settling of accounts, the children should share the fate of their elders, lest one day they return to take revenge. In Kfar Etzion the historical annals maintain that the children were spared due to the intervention of British officers.

The flight of my imagination on the heights of Mount Scopus brought to mind another historical event of the Spanish Civil War. The defenders of the Ciudad Universitaria had prevented the fall of Madrid in the initial phase of the conflict, but there was another

army that would bring about the collapse of the capital of Spain, this time from within. This army came to be known as the Fifth Column, its effectiveness a historical reality.

Flavius Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews* quoted Titus Vespasian as saying that the fratricidal conflict within the walls of the besieged city would find the Jews so debilitated that they might no longer be able to withstand the assault of the Roman Legions.

I dismissed with horror the scenario that the two camps who are today fighting each other with such virulence over the issue of peace for territory, might attempt to solve it with weapons in hand. That is, until I read, in a special issue on the fortieth anniversary of the State of Israel, an article by a well known Israeli professor, ending as follows: ". . . this is why, in order to save our democracy, should it even be at the price of a civil war . . . we have to speedily find a solution to the problem of the territories. . . ." Are we marked with the sign of Cain?

Even the presences are shuddering at such a conclusion, although they are well aware of the saga of the generations and the historical continuity between the Shoah of 1492 and that of Hitler's Final Solution. The reader has a right to be indignant at the comparison of some Jews in Israel and America with Franco's Fifth Column, and I do retract such an analogy. But the virulence of some of the debates that took place during the three days in Jerusalem when I had expected at least some meeting of the minds, can only be classified as a dialogue between the deaf and the dumb."

Those were moments when I became aware of the extent to which the attitude of those representatives of the Israeli elite, whose very foundation was secularism, did reflect the dogmatism of the traditional Jews of Meah Shearim.

For time and again during these three days, the rhetoric of Israeli academicians or politicians seemed aimed at convincing the participating Jews of the Diaspora and the audience, mostly Americans, that what threatened the very roots of the Jewish State was traditional Judaism.

A vehemence of purpose that surprised me, for it was difficult to believe that the symposium, whose stated purpose was to discuss all the different facets of the Jewish Experience, looked more like a full-fledged offensive on the part of the Israelis to totally discredit the role of religion in Israel in the eyes of the participants from the Diaspora. Although the thrust of the attacks in theory was aimed at the Orthodox, I could not help feeling that the American rabbis,

whether of Bar Ilan University or from the United States, mainly of the Conservative and Reform movements, interpreted this as being directed against Jewish religion as a whole.

Actually, during the last hour of the symposium one of the most prestigious academicians of the land, who is also a leading figure of its political establishment, opened Pandora's box by stating, "You have to understand that the religion of Israel is secularism." I could not help but conclude that this concept prevented the ideological secularists from grasping all the other facets of Jewish civilization, with the exception of that of nationalism. At the kernel of this statement is the current that has divided Israeli society into two opposite political camps, labeled as right and left, or to be more explicit, the Labor Alignment and the Likud.

In the Israel of the late 'eighties it is difficult to see what the Alignment has of Labor, for it seems to be largely a bourgeois party, while the Likud does not seem to be of the traditional political right. Although it is nationalist with obvious Jewish messianic undertones, it has placed more emphasis on social justice, which seems greatly responsible for having bridged the socio-economic gap of most of the Oriental Jews in relation to the Ashkenazim.

I left Mount Scopus in a state of shock. As a Jew in search of his roots, I did not know in what context to place what I had seen, heard, and felt during those three days. That night I took a long walk through the rain and wind-swept avenues of the new Jerusalem. At one point I found myself on a height from where I overlooked the illuminated walls of the old city, the city of David, in all its splendor and mystery.

Back into my mind flashed the vision of the apocalypse, the analogy of some of the inhabitants of the city with a fifth column, a flight of the imagination that still fills me with shame and dread. However, time and again during the symposium, members of the country's elite had expressed their readiness and anxiety to hand over the hills of Judea and Samaria to those who countless times had vowed to throw the Jews into the sea. I asked myself what would become of Jerusalem, the capital, left unprotected without the new pioneers standing watch on the hills of Judea and Samaria.

I remembered the similarity in architecture between the cluster of buildings on Mount Scopus and the new settlements. One of the top strategists of the IDF, while taking a mission of major donors from the United States on a tour, had pointed out their fortress-like structures as being a fundamental bastion in the defense of the State

against an Arab onslaught. He had explained that these settlements would permit the armed pioneers to hold up an enemy attack for a few hours until regular army units could reach them. They would then have the task to resist together for another 12 to 24 hours for the citizen-army of Israel to complete its mobilization and take the offensive.

The militancy of the gun-slinging pioneers of the Gush Emunim had often been mentioned since my arrival. I was therefore surprised when not far from the Kfar Etzion block of Mizrachi, the religious Zionist party, I came across a new cluster of buildings including a *yeshivah*. The settlement had been founded by a popular young modern Orthodox rabbi of New York City, who had brought with him a few hundred of his congregants, many of them intellectuals and scientists. What had drawn these people to leave the affluence of America to settle on the barren hills of the land of Israel?

There had been a lot of talk, including coverage in the press, as to whether, if, and when an agreement was reached with Jordan on land for peace, the settlements of the territories would have to be abandoned. Should the settlers then be evacuated by force, in case they refused to leave? This was an issue I could not take seriously, for if such a peace treaty were to become a reality, why should Jews not live under the sovereignty of another state?

But it did happen in the Sinai, after the signing of the peace treaty with Sadat, that the inhabitants of Yamit, after blowing up the settlement, were evacuated. Despite broken hearts at the shattering of a dream, would the settlers leave Judea and Samaria peacefully, or would they fight? There were hints in the *Jerusalem Post* of the possibility of a civil war.

I witnessed a one-sided answer the day the Prime Minister of Israel left for the United States to discuss a new plan for peace in the Middle East. The site was the Kings' Square in Tel Aviv, the largest in the country, where a crowd gathered, estimated at 200,000 to 250,000. My initial reaction took me back 40 years in time to the first anniversary of the Declaration of the State. There were thousands upon thousands of young people, singing and dancing to the tunes of the early pioneers. They all wore a *kipah*, though, and countless banners expressed their determination never to abandon Judea and Samaria.

A romantic, mystical vision that had no relation to the real-politik position of the State of Israel and the world it has to live in: that was the reaction of part of the press the following day. The Jewish State

would have to conform to reality, commented my mostly secular friends, including members of my family sympathetic to Labor.

But the tens of thousands of settlers who had come down from the hills with their families, often pregnant women pushing a pram surrounded by numerous children under the protective watch of a burly, bearded father carrying a weapon over his shoulder, also had a vision of the future of the Jewish State, and my gut feeling told me that they would fight for it.

The mood of exhilaration was very different from the one I had observed in that same square the night before, the most ambiguous and disturbing since I had arrived in Israel. Violence had already been sweeping the territories for some weeks, and it was to be a mass appeal on the part of *Shalom Achshav*, the "Peace Now" movement, to protest the government's opposition to what was being labeled as territories for peace.

A disciplined and well organized gathering of thousands of young people, mostly members of youth movements from kibbutzim and moshavim, pouring out of buses with banners advocating their cause, but hardly any of the fervor I was to witness the following night.

I was appalled when I grasped the meaning of the words from the tone of the speakers, reflecting the slogans on the numerous banners, many of them in English, and from the emotional response of the crowd. They seemed to convey that it was the government of Israel that did not want peace, peace with an Arab world that still proclaimed its aim of destroying the Jewish State. Can one be so naive, I wondered, to think that it only takes one to make peace, so unaware of the realities of the world?

Crowds had gathered in front of the Tel Aviv Museum, from where they marched to the Kings' Square in a long, candle-lit procession. Suddenly I was possessed by a sense of panic, for I felt in them a profound resignation. Here were the sons and daughters of the founding fathers of the nation and their elders in a march toward their destiny with a passivity that frightened me. These were the same people who had pointed an accusing finger at the Jews of the Diaspora for having marched toward their death like sheep to the slaughter.

Strange, the unfolding of Jewish history. Hardly half a century before the spiritual forefathers of those religious Jews, who now stood with gun in hand for the territorial integrity of the Israel of the Promise, had chosen death in martyrdom rather than violence, while the sons and daughters of a generation who had built the State with

blood and fire now advocated peace even at the risk of total annihilation.

The two images remained engraved in my mind, one filled with resignation and the other with militancy, but both with profound prophetic undertones. I had been present at a third gathering on that same Square, which symbolized to me the strength of the State of Israel and the very roots of its survival, the popular rejoicing on the occasion of Simhat Torah.

Twenty years earlier, I had been a witness at the Mann Auditorium to what my friend had pointed out as being the new Torah—the tank—at a graduating ceremony of the IDF. This time, the symbolism had evolved. The entire square was surrounded with battle-chariots of the Israeli armored corps, including the Merkavah tank, the latest vintage of the Israeli armament industry reputed to be among the best, if not *the* best, produced by any nation.

Their monstrous bulks were hardly visible, as they were swarming with children, while tankers were explaining to them the functional aspects of these engines of death. In between, large army tents had been set up, where on large television screens unfolded, before the eyes of a future generation of IDF soldiers, the battles of Israel's armored corps during four wars.

Overwhelmed at first by the multitude milling all over and around the engines of death, I had not seen that on a large podium erected at one end of the square sat a row of men, each holding in his arms a Torah Scroll. Some in the traditional black garb, some in uniform, and others in plain civilian clothing.

After what seemed an interminable number of speeches, part of the crowd started singing and dancing, the Torah Scrolls were brought down from the podium and passed from arm to arm in traditional fashion. Was this a symbiosis of the mystique of the battle tank, guarantor of the survival of the State of Israel, with the Scrolls of the Law, symbol of its continuity through time and history?

The Simhat Torah festival also differed from the other two gatherings in its religious and social structure. Peace Now consisted mainly of what appeared to be Ashkenazi Jews, a mixture of kibbutzniks and "beautiful people," the inhabitants of the new, fashionable residential districts. What met the eye at the rally prominently attended by the Gush Emunim was that a number of its participants seemed to be Jews originating from Arab countries, who live mainly in the development towns of the Negev and the Galil, or the poor neighborhoods of the large cities. At the Simhat Torah festival, however, a

social cross-current of the population of the country seemed to participate. It was non-sectarian, part secular, part religious.

The emotional impact of the memory of the diverse expressions of Israel in the Kings' Square catalyzes in me subjective reactions to a people who against all odds has created in less than two generations a viable society that could serve as an example to many considerably older nations. What had impressed me the most during my latest forays was that I had found poverty, especially in the development towns, but no misery. None of the misery one is beginning to notice in the developed countries of the West, not to mention the millions in the shanty towns of Latin America. The working-class city of Ashdod built around its modern port, for example, is a model of urban planning of which there are few equals in the West.

These are conclusions I have drawn from a visual impact, whether it refers to the people of Israel or its industrial and social development, not to speak of the political scene in the late 'eighties. What are the motivations that made Israeli men and women, their children and grandchildren, express their feelings and thoughts as they did at those three rallies in Kings' Square?

I gained a valuable insight through the stories of one of my cousins, a man of my age who arrived in Israel with the Bulgarian immigration of 1949. During our long walks along the seashore of Tel Aviv, often watching the sun set, he narrated to me in detail the last three wars the people of Israel had to fight for their survival in the wasteland that is the Sinai, not only as a witness but as a participant. Dashing about in his ramshackle stationwagon, he stared into the very soul of Israel's citizen army. When describing the mood of the country in the days preceding the Six Day War, he made a statement that startled me in its ambiguity—the country was afraid, but the soldiers were not.

As the saga of Israel's struggle for survival was taking shape, I began to understand the strength of the State of Israel and its potential for growth, in contrast to the soul-searching *angst* and self-flagellation of many of its citizens. On three continents I had come across the destructive power of self-hate, mostly on the part of assimilated Jews whose roots had been severed from their ancestral memory, and who were unable to come to terms with the catastrophe that had befallen them in Nazi-dominated Europe.

My cousin proceeded to tell me about those terrible days when the Egyptians were moving their large army, equipped with the latest weapons and armor supplied by the Soviet Union, into the Sinai

desert toward the Israeli border. All they had to face them was mostly an amalgamation of reconverted World War II tanks, armored cars, and halftracks left behind by the British Army as obsolete, for no one was helping them in those days. Of course, there were the French Mirage airplanes, but that was another story.

He spoke again of the great fear that had gripped the country, but as he stood by his dilapidated stationwagon and watched the hastily mobilized citizen-soldiers in an assortment of so-called military garb, many even arriving without weapons, he was struck by their countenance—the certitude of men who will not be vanquished.

As my cousin unraveled the vision of what in France had been labeled as "Israel facing Death," I suddenly understood the visceral feeling that had gripped me almost from the day I had arrived in Israel. There was no fear in the eyes of the man in the street and in the hills. There was also an attitude that conveyed contentment; they had no problem with the land of Israel, it was their country. This feeling has remained with me, and is the basis of my belief in Eretz Yisrael.

I returned to Nice in the hope of finding the distance required to put on paper my latest experiences in the Land of Zion. France was in a state of political and intellectual fermentation, engulfed in an election campaign that would determine the future course of the nation and most likely influence greatly that of Europe. Fascism threatened to come alive again in the form of a party of the extreme right that in the first round of the election obtained fifteen percent of the votes. Only this time it was not the Jew who was responsible for all the ills of the nation but the foreign workers.

Ultimately, the French Republic remained true to its real vocation by electing a man who to me was the heir to those virtues that had made France a symbol of the democratic world.

Despite finding myself in the country I believed to be at the heart of my intellectual formation and whose language I spoke, I could not communicate emotionally in the same way as in the State of Israel in spite of my ignorance of Hebrew. Initially baffled by what seemed an intrinsic contradiction, I soon realized that when speaking to the average Frenchman, the same words had a different meaning to each of us, limiting the significance of the dialogue.

With many Israelis, those I call the people in the street and the hills, although the words often were lacking, through gestures and the eyes—for the Talmud says that the eyes are the windows of the soul—long dialogues were carried out. As an example not devoid of

humor, I remember the hour-long conversation I had on the beach of Tel Aviv with an old Iraqi Jew, despite his ten words of English and mine of an identical number in Hebrew.

During the years of my formation I undoubtedly assimilated many facets of French culture, those of its civilization which are rooted in the universal, but I do not share with them the same journey in history which accounts for the visceral bonds of a people.

The fundamental question I continue to ponder is what it means in practical terms to stand on the shoulders of your forefathers.

The religious Jew, who has returned to the land of the promise to meditate on the mysteries of the messianic era? The equally messianic Jew, who has attempted to build an utopian society where social justice would reign supreme? The Jew from the Orient, who has returned to the ancestral land to fully live the prophetic vision, the living symbol of Judaism's continuous Mediterranean roots? Each represents a different facet of the Jewish universe, who by different routes and means have returned to the land of his forefathers to build the nation of the promise.

The city of Nice on the other shore of the Mediterranean is at the crossroads between France and Italy, through which passed the ancient civilization of the East before it was channeled to the rest of Europe, not omitting the Iberian peninsula, to evolve gradually into what is the civilization of the West. There I came to see a strong analogy with what is taking place today in Israel, only—to the great dismay of its population—a phenomenon occurring in reverse.

While I am writing these words I feel the presences of the generations nodding in approval, for they are not only witnesses but participants in that flow of history. With the return to Zion it seemed that a full cycle in Jewish history had been achieved, which the founding fathers of the Jewish nation were not able to grasp. Back in the East, at the source of their own genesis, on the other shore of the Mediterranean, they are possessed by the fear that the nation of their dream will become levantinized. A threat, real or imaginary, not so much due to the impact of their feudal neighbors but the ingathering of their own brethren originating from the Arab countries which now constitute the majority of the Jewish population.

Among some of the Israeli intellectuals I have sensed a fascination or nostalgia toward the Mediterranean basin that reaches beyond Greece and its islands, to find its way through Italy and Southern France to the Iberian peninsula. When it comes to its African shores, however, there seems to be a break in their vision, as if it were not

part of the Mediterranean landscape.

This was an identification with Italy, France, or Spain reinforcing the vision of themselves and their culture as European, while the rejection of the civilization of the southern part of the Mediterranean basin implies a denial that the culture of the North African Jews is part of the heritage of the State of Israel.

In retrospect, it was only during my recent sojourn in Israel that I understood the clan's puzzlement, in the house on the Hill of Pera, when exposed to the dialectics of the emissaries from Eastern Europe extolling the virtues of political Zionism as a substitute for religion. Neither my father nor the other men of my family, whose synagogue attendance seemed to be limited to the High Holy days, could conceive of Judaism without religion. This attitude was prevalent among the Sephardim of the Balkans and shared by most of the members of my family I came to know intimately in Israel.

Those who believe in doctrinaire Zionism, symbolized by the kibbutz movement, including members of my family—like a founding member of one of the oldest in the land or a doctor at one of the most exposed kibbutzim during the War of Liberation—have stressed that without the pioneers and their sacrifice the State of Israel might not be a reality. This is a historical fact.

Are the men and women of the kibbutz blind to the reality that the men of the hills are their spiritual heirs, with the difference that they are clothed in the mantle of religious prophetism? Why the hostility toward those who, in my eyes, are their brothers in arms?

The Oriental Jew? In my mind he still stands for the man in the street or the development towns, who through his daily chores lives the promise of the return. Rather than his fellow Israeli who in the ivory tower of his kibbutz, university, or *yeshivah* is immersed in the dream or the nightmare of how the Jewish State should be fashioned, the Oriental Jew dwells in its reality.

The reality of the azure of the Mediterranean Sea, the sun-swept soil, the fragrance and harshness of its winds, are all part of his memory. A memory rooted in the warmth of a religious and cultural tradition, mythology and history all blending into one. As if the element of continuity had never been severed between the beginning of the exile and the days of the return.

How often during personal encounters, despite the sometimes harsh and often brutal reaction at my attempt to establish the link that makes one Jew recognize another, there was a certain expression in the eyes, the window to the soul, that revealed the flickering

memory of a timeless encounter.

Not that the Oriental Jew is the sole bearer of the memory of Sinai; the ultra-Orthodox Jews in their black garb live it, at least some of them, as if they were in another universe, left untouched by the unfolding of history. A universe from which we have been excluded, for they do not allow us to look into their eyes.

The dialogue of the eyes, the vehicle of recognition often more important than the word, has been excluded by the Orthodox from the scope of their vision. This is a denial I feel is rooted in a fear that, should the veil of blindness be lifted, they would stare into a reality that might shake, or even shatter, the world of their certitude.

How often do we Jews from New York, London, or Paris, when we come across a fellow Jew in the garb that for us symbolizes the medieval expression of our religion, shrink at any recognition? Are we, the assimilated in our dress or in our soul, not in part responsible for having brought about this schism? The secular Israeli does not even acknowledge their physical presence, and they react by not looking into the eyes of anyone without the trappings by which they identify who is a Jew.

Often I had attempted to break the barrier of the eyes through the power of the word, only to be met with silence, with one exception that brought to light the ambiguity of such a dialogue—or the lack of it.

The occasion was not an auspicious one, for I was on my way back to Tel Aviv after attending the Mount Scopus Symposium on the Jewish Experience, where the discussion had at times been passionately against the Orthodox to the point where my own mood was rather unsympathetic toward them.

I was about to take a collective taxi when I was confronted by a group of five *yeshivah* students, apparently discussing rather excitedly whether to embark on that vehicle. Upon entering I realized that its sole occupant was a young woman, obviously the object of their hesitation, despite the fact that she had occupied the corner seat of the back row; I placed myself at its other end.

My presence inside the taxi seemed to have resolved the problem of the young men, for they proceeded to enter, two of them placing themselves next to the driver while the remaining three squeezed into the middle row. Their moral sensitivity having been satisfied, I was confident that we were finally ready to leave.

However, our driver announced that before departing he would require an additional shekel per person, as we lacked one passenger

to complete the required fare. So it was either pay or wait, possibly for a long time, as it was rather late. The young lady and myself paid the additional sum but a heated argument developed between the leader of the *yeshivah* students and the driver, as the result of which he informed us that we could not depart because they would not pay the additional five shekels.

At this point I did not hesitate to provide the driver with the additional five shekels. He took off full speed toward Tel Aviv, while I vented my anger and frustration, which had reached an explosive dimension. I actually accused them of having given me a tacit demonstration that the accusations hurled at them by the secular might not be too far from reality. Allowing the verbosity rooted in my Mediterranean heritage free reign, I ended my outburst with the *pronunciamento* that the five shekels they had refused to pay would be reimbursed to me by Divine Providence.

During the remaining part of the trip I found myself engulfed by a feeling of guilt. What did I know about their way of life or their problems, to throw accusations at them? Had I been so conditioned by my secular relatives and friends, not to speak of the professors on Mount Scopus, that I had internalized their prejudices? Speaking of prejudices, I must admit that there was an underlying element of anxiety, for I had been told and read that many *yeshivah* students had become prone to violence. They might consider my diatribe as insulting to their view of religion. There were five of them, and no response was voiced during the entire journey.

The taxi came to an abrupt stop on a deserted street in one of the Tel Aviv suburbs. It was late at night. My five friends—for in a fraction of a second I had grasped their mood—got out of the car, placed themselves in a semi-circle around the car, and with outstretched arms set out to bestow on me the blessings of the heavens. As the taxi moved on, I looked back to see their waving arms until they were out of sight. The girl by my side muttered that they were strange people, while the driver laconically mentioned that they had no money and could not pay the extra five shekels.

In Jerusalem there is a monument which does not catch the eye. It is inconspicuous, as if reflecting the hesitancy of those who idealized it in relation to the purpose it is supposed to serve. It is a stone dedicated to the bravery of the Jordanian Legionnaire, not erected by King Hussein honoring those of his Pretorian Guard who fell in the fight for the old city in 1948, but by the Israeli authorities after Tsahal had reunited Jerusalem in the Six Day War, I suppose to pre-

serve the memory of a "gallant enemy."

It was an experience that perturbed me profoundly. I had been to another memorial that same morning, Ammunition Hill, to honor the citizen-soldiers of the Jerusalem Brigade who had given their lives in the battle for the city, a mausoleum on one of the strategic heights of the city on the spot where Hussein's Bedouins had made a stand to the last man. What moved me most on Ammunition Hill was not the magnitude of the fortifications that had to be conquered, but the photographs of the men who had fallen in the battle to reunite their city. All the children of Israel are taken to this shrine to stand witness to their memory.

Significantly, it also expresses the futility and cruelty of the prejudice that existed at the time against the Sephardic Jews. Under every picture there is a biographical note that indicates the place of birth, more frequently as Morocco, Tunis, Baghdad, and the rest of the Fertile Crescent than Poland, Russia, and the rest of Europe, including those born in the State of Israel. In the face of death, they were equal.

While under the impact of those names that had made possible the Jerusalem of today, anger surfaced in me as I remembered the statement by one of the commanders of that same Brigade, that Oriental Jews were not adequate officer material.

Juxtaposing the two monuments, I wonder what must have been the sentiment of the parents of the men of the IDF fallen on Ammunition Hill when faced with the dedication of Hussein's mercenaries, men who had not hesitated to butcher to the last the men and women defending Kfar Etzion in 1948.

Putting my sentiments aside, what is the reaction of the average Arab, especially the politically indoctrinated youth, when coming across this monument? Will it instill respect for those Israelis who have the gallantry to honor the memory of their enemies? As the descendants of those who believe it to be a sacred tradition for the sons to avenge their fathers, will they not see it as a weakness of the Israeli character?

As the hostility of the Western nations that started with the Lebanese War now seems to have reached a climax, I have the feeling that many Israelis do not understand the nature of the so-called insurrection, or actually refuse to do so. Either they are the prisoners of the concept of what in their eyes is a normal nation in this crazy world of ours, or they just have had enough.

Those in the first category are convinced, or try to be, that once

peace for territories is reached with the Arabs and the guarantees of the nations are received, they will be secure and comfortable in their coastal cities, flanked at one end by the Galil and the Negev at the other, and the Arabs will be happy in their newly created Palestinian state on the West Bank. And once the still unspoken second clause of such a treaty is implemented, namely the internationalization of Jerusalem, the future of the state of Israel will be guaranteed and peace will prevail.

Thus the Israeli problem will be solved. I stress the problem as being an Israeli one, not Palestinian. For during my stay I too often heard and read, no longer implied but said directly, that the fault lay with the Jews, who were not willing to reach out to the peaceful hand offered by the Arabs.

It seems that we have become experts at self-delusion. When Hitler threatened Austria with annexation, my father-in-law was convinced that its independence would be defended by Italy, as promised by Mussolini.

"Hussein, be patient, we will soon come to an agreement on the West Bank," proclaimed the English-language newspaper. Does anybody remember that Jordan is Palestine, artificially created by the British in order to counterbalance the development of the Jewish State?

The Palestinians of the West Bank do have a country, but it is on the east side of the Jordan, where they make up eighty percent of the population. If they want to consider themselves Palestinian citizens, they could remain where they are. They could even accept Israeli citizenship if they wish to, as many Israelis believe they would.

One thing I am sure of, however; they do not want to live under Jordanian rule. They remember only too well the Jordanian occupation from 1948 to 1967. If they opened their mouths, they would be hanged in the public square by the Bedouin legionnaires of the Hashemite sheiks. It is good to recall that the Bedouins are not Palestinians. Actually, they hate each other, for the memory of Black September lives on, when thousands of Palestinians were butchered regardless of whether they belonged to the PLO.

Now the Israelis affiliated with the so-called parties of the left, whose axioms are social justice and democracy, in the name of doing justice to the Arabs of the West Bank want to hand them back to the tyranny of a feudal state. I wonder if even the Arabists in the State Department, the Foreign Office, or the Quai d'Orsay consider the Kingdom of Jordan as anything else!

The Arab of the West Bank was well aware of the extent to which he has benefited from being linked to the Israeli economy and its social welfare system, despite the tutelage of the occupation, probably the most benign in history. This did not prevent him from suffering in his self-respect and ancestral pride; he resented the Jew but there was no hate.

Before going to Israel, I had spent a considerable amount of time in South America. When I walked in the streets, I could see and feel the hatred of the hungry, destitute masses, which convinced me that the military juntas that had ruled the area for two decades really treated their own countries as occupied territories. The daily harvest of the death squads! By these standards, the Israeli rule over the West Bank Arabs cannot quite be called an occupation. What has been taking place since the War of the Stones started is another matter.

As mentioned before, the purpose of my trip to Israel, rather than being lectured to and surveying the material progress of the state, was to attempt to get an insight into the soul of its citizens. Walking for hours wherever it was possible, I also saw many Arabs. I am not speaking of their densely populated areas, but of those working in the predominantly Jewish cities. We did not speak to each other but there was often an intense dialaogue of the eyes, which made me feel that they had something to tell us Jews, but too many barriers, on both sides, prevented it. One thing struck me and remains vivid in my mind: their eyes conveyed none of the hatred I had so often seen and felt in the eyes of the dejected men and women of South America.

The Israeli public in general first became aware of the War of the Stones on their television screens and the headlines of the newspapers. Youngsters, mostly children, their faces hidden by hoods, gesticulating and running in rhythmic cadence, reminded me in some ways of the festivities of carnival in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. But the scene did not stop at that, for they were throwing stones at young Israeli soldiers who in rather badly coordinated fashion were chasing them, brandishing sticks. It was rather pathetic, for obviously the young recruits cannot run as fast as teenagers, especially when the action was taking place within the narrow lanes of ageless Arab villages.

What gave these scenes at times an almost hilarious tone was the presence in the background of Arab women, often veiled, howling at the top of their voices what sounded like a mixture of curses and

encouragement. One element seemed to be lacking in what was being labeled by the commentators as riots—that of spontaneity.

From my memory of the Battle on the Place de la Concorde, when I was first engulfed by a crowd whose fury had been unleashed in a riot, to my South American initiation when I was caught in a mass of humanity pursued by sabre-swinging cavalrymen who left twenty dead on the ground, what was projected by Israeli and Jordanian television could hardly be classified as such.

When during the following days I read the foreign publications arriving from Europe and America, it was with dismay that I realized that the flashy headlines referred to the same events. Israelis, who have been avid listeners of the BBC of London since World War II, had to hear at the head of the news about the brutal repression in the occupied territories of the defenseless Arab population expressing its longing for national independence.

A serious escalation seemed to take place when the stones hurled at the Israelis were supplemented by Molotov cocktails. To this the soldiers responded with tear gas and rubber bullets, which resulted in increasing casualties among the Arab youths. Where were the men? I kept asking myself, for the Arabs facing the Israelis were still teenagers. Working in Tel Aviv and Haifa?

Personally, the only thing I witnessed when driving from Beersheba up the narrow, winding road through clusters of Arab villages, Hebron and Bethlehem, until reaching Jerusalem, were closed shutters, few people in the streets, and mainly silence. Silence at times can be frightening, for it may be the foreboding of things to come.

This foreboding did express itself to me in a rather frightening explosion. Not among the Arabs but among the Jews, for it seems that the War of the Stones, despite the few casualties it caused at the time, split the population of Israel in two.

As I now see it, the War of the Stones can be considered a great Arab victory. For the way it was orchestrated and disseminated by the international media, and some of the Israeli opposition, to the four corners of the world, in a manner totally out of proportion to the reality of events, brought out into the open one of the main curses of the world, one we had hoped lay buried since the Shoah and the creation of the State of Israel: that of antisemitism. It appeared under a different mask this time, though; the State of Israel had become the Jew of the nations.

To the average Israeli this was a trauma that shattered his vision of the world and of himself. I call it the splitting of the Jewish soul.

We Jews of America and Europe had come to terms with this catharsis on the part of the nations since their reaction to the Lebanese War. However, as I soon found out when I arrived in Israel, many of its citizens, including members of my family who had served in that war, had internalized Operation Galilee in the form of a *mea culpa.* Israel had waged an offensive war without having been attacked, and had brought unto itself the wrath of the world.

The reaction of the nations to the War of the Stones was different. It hit the Israelis not only in their psyche, it shattered the very validity of their national doctrine. The State of Israel was a normal nation, built in the image of what they believed to be their national heritage, Western European civilization. How could it be stigmatized in such a fashion?

Soul-searching has always been a Jewish characteristic, and one of the fundamental elements in our survival; it mainly meant giving account of our actions to our Creator. Ever since the War of the Stones started, the State of Israel has been entangled in a desperate attempt to account for its actions to the nations. Atone to the nations in a world where every act of a nation-state is moralized under the veneer of *raison d'état*? Can the military might of Israel, which is said to be greater than ever, compensate for the exposure of its inner weaknesses, its doubts, its fears, the virulence of its political life?

Memories are short. Ben Gurion had stated that, in order to assure the survival of the nation, every generation had to be forged in war.

During the War of Liberation, when the road to the besieged city of Jerusalem had to be opened, it was achieved at a tremendous cost. During the countless times I drove to Jerusalem during my last stay, I hardly ever noticed the wreckage of the armored cars which have become part of the scenery. However, whenever I pass the hill dominating the cross-roads of Latrun, I remember the survivors from the death camps freshly disembarked from the ships that had brought them from Cyprus. After a few hours of basic training they were thrown into the assault of the monastery, transformed into a fortress by the men of the famous Arab Legion. The attack on Latrun failed, and the slopes leading to the top of that hill were littered with hundreds of corpses, but it had allowed time to build a new road, the Burma Road. Thus the new city of Jerusalem was relieved.

Raison d'état—was Ben Gurion justified? I had to think of Latrun as an analogy, a painful one, every time the waste of the six hundred dead of the Lebanese campaign is used as a political weapon. I once

asked a relative, a veteran of the second migratory wave and a staunch supporter of the Labor Alignment, his opinion as to the necessity of the Lebanese war. After some hesitation, he admitted that it might have delayed an inevitable war with Syria for ten years, as the objective had been not so much to relieve the Galilee from PLO attacks, but to destroy the infra-structure they had built for an army of two hundred thousand men, the Syrian army. The Syrians, whose military doctrine has always been an open secret, were to pierce the northern border in the final assault of the Arab countries to deal the death blow to the Jewish State.

The elimination of the State of Israel from the face of the globe, the Final Solution of the Israeli problem—is it only the Arabs who wish it? This is where my own Jewish soul is torn, at the realization that it lurks in the recesses of the Western world, the Christian world, not excluding the Communist societies like Poland, a country without Jews, where the hatred of the Jew is expressed ever so often.

The War of the Stones never escalated into a Palestinian insurrection, for the men stayed behind the closed shutters of their shops during the time of the general strike. Even on those days when the early morning news from the BBC declared that the State of Israel was about to explode, I would observe the multitude of Arab workers going about their chores in the midst of the densely populated Jewish streets.

Not a sign of belligerency or aggression, or even a curse. Although I do not understand Arabic, a curse is a curse, and one can feel it whatever the language. Belligerency does not have to express itself through the motions of the body; it mostly expresses itself through the eyes.

As to the Jewish passers-by, there appeared to be neither fear nor anger toward their Palestinian enemies. Not even the countless old ladies who roam the streets, survivors of Hitler's Europe, could discern among the Arab workers the semblance of a cosack or an SS.

In my frequent forays into four-star hotels in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, either to buy my foreign newspapers or attend a convention, I did come across signs of war. Throngs of what obviously were newspaper and television reporters or cameramen, had flocked in from the four corners of the globe, risking their lives in the line of duty to stand witness to the Palestinian insurrection raging all around them. Although I did not see or hear any sign of it, at least not in the proximity of the Hiltons and the like, their press rooms were relaying, round the clock, full details of Israeli atrocities, and of the sacrifice

and heroism of their Palestinian victims.

Israel is a small country, and not even the most rabid anti-Israelis or antisemites, who most Jews by now are convinced are an identical species, would deny that covering the Palestinian "insurrection" was not of the same nature as following GI's into the jungle of Vietnam or the guerilla-infested countryside of many Central and Latin American countries. Early in the morning they could hop into a taxi, be guided to where the day's bloody action was to take place or listen to the harrowing tales of Arab mothers whose sons had been beaten, tortured, or imprisoned by the dreadful monsters of the IDF for having done nothing, and be back on time at their four-star hotels to enjoy the best of Israeli cuisine. At times the lack of any event could make the life of these dedicated individuals rather boring, despite the fact that they were on expense accounts; and it was rumored that, at a price, a scene or two of violence in the territories could be orchestrated.

There was no point in complaining of prejudice or historical reality. One Israeli who did was answered in dismay, "What are you kicking about? Your country is getting the best exposure in the world. . . ." Television exposure, form, is what counts—but what about the message?

It could have been hilarious if it were not tragic. It even surpassed the phantasmagorical universe of Kafka, for he had not been a witness to the Western world's attempt at the Final Solution, nor could he have visualized how, stone by stone, consciously or not, the world was setting the stage where eventually the Arab nations would try to continue the work of Nazi Germany.

In the metaphorical language of my ancestors, the vessels must be mended. Although they seem shattered beyond repair at the moment, the links between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael must be re-established.

I have often wondered what would have been the reaction if the founders of the future Jewish State had sent the Arab world the following message: "We, the descendants of Isaac, are returning to the land of our forefathers to join hands with you, our cousins, the descendants of his brother Ishmael, to rebuild the land in accordance with the tenets of our ancient Jewish civilization. We have much to share, for both have suffered at the hands of those who in the name of their Western culture and their religion have oppressed us for centuries. Let us not forget, however, that there is another facet of that Western civilization to which we have contributed its very ker-

nel, you with your philosophers and we with our prophets. We are returning to the fold. Shalom!"

The past is the past, and its mistakes should only be remembered in order not to be repeated, says the Talmud. Can Judaism and Islam still reach out toward each other?

A large part of the population of the State of Israel today consists of the generations born in the country, and those of Sephardic and Oriental origin are in the majority. Many concepts or slogans brought in the baggage of the different waves of immigration have not found fertile ground in the land of Israel. Everything is in a state of flux, ideology, and religion, and a new interpretation will emerge in the Jewish nation as it has in every phase of our history.

Those of the Nation of Israel who have gone full circle, and have chosen the road of the return, should keep in mind that the Jews have given and taken much from the civilizations in whose midst they have dwelt during the exile. Its bad facets, which Israelis not erroneously call Diaspora mentality, will have to be discarded, enabling the State to establish its own values. However, what must be retained from the long journey is *Zakhor*, our historical memory. The saga of the Sephardic and Oriental Jews, who never lost the link to the civilization of Islam, is an important part of our common heritage. Those of the House of Sefarad and the Orient who have returned to the land of our common ancestors must not be prevented, either through political expediency or ideology, to reach out to Islam within the framework of the vision acquired throughout their coexistence in past centuries.

Edmond Fleg, in one of his books, tells the story of a conversation he had with a taxi driver in Jerusalem at the occasion of his visit in 1931. Fleg voiced his concern about the future, the lack of dialogue with the Arabs, the problem of the solitude of Israel. The driver answered him, "I see Israel reborn, but Israel cannot be reborn without resuscitating the Orient, nor the Orient without resuscitating Israel." Fleg, a little worried but interested, replied that he sees far into the future, that it will take a long time.

"Israel will wait," answered the taxi driver, "it has a patience 3,000 years old. And the more patience ages, the younger it gets." The wisdom of the man in the street!

VII.

THE LAND OF JACOB'S TENTS

It was only in the Chagall Museum, on our first foray in Nice, that the gloom which had enveloped my being as the result of the Israeli psychodrama started to lift. What pitted Jew against Jew over the destiny of the State of Israel, I suddenly realized, was rooted to a great extent in the very mores of the nations among whom they had dwelled, and which they had idealized as the model on which to fashion Israeli society. The vision flashed into my mind as I sat for hours in front of the huge painted canvasses of Chagall's unique genius representing his "Biblical Message."

The millions of non-Jews who visit the Museum and view the biblical message projected by those paintings cannot fail to grasp, unless they are blinded by religious bigotry and antisemitism, that it is the genesis of their civilization; it represents one of the great modern legacies of Judaism to the world.

On the wall opposite the entrance is engraved the essence of Chagall's Biblical Message, in his own words:

> If all life inevitably leads toward its end, during the course of our own personal existence we must color it with love and hope. In that love is found the social significance of our life, and the essential basis of every religion. For me, perfection in art and in life has sprung from that biblical source. Devoid of its spirit, the mechanics alone of logic and constructivity, both in art and in life, do not bear any fruit.

This symbiosis between the artistic and spiritual dimensions of Chagall's Biblical Message created in me an impact of such magnitude that I wondered whether any person who considers himself part of Western civilization did not, upon leaving the Museum, retain at least a spark; the Torah of Israel is its foundation.

Any Israeli who can afford it at all travels abroad constantly. Most likely, many have passed under the portal of the Chagall Museum in Nice. Those who consider themselves secular and see the Hebrew Scriptures only as the history of the nation before the exile, devoid of any religious or meta-historical significance, do they reject the spirituality and interpretation of Chagall's universal Biblical Message? Fernand Braudel, the French historian, maintains that it was the Mediterranean where it all began, namely the roots of the Civilization of the West. The impact of the luminosity of the colors of Chagall's paintings projected me back to the shores, the desert, and the hills of the land of the Bible, where the Torah was codified.

During the countless hours I walked along the glorious Mediterranean shore, stretching from Naharia to Jaffa, or watched one of the sunsets when the colors of the heavens seem to express all the splendor of creation, I gradually became conscious of the root of the trauma tearing Israeli society apart—that of its Jewish identity.

The founding fathers of the Jewish nation had overlooked one basic element upon returning to the land of promise and establishing the structure of the country: the ancestral Mediterranean roots of the Jewish people. To set its own course, the State of Israel should look back on the long history of the Jews in the Mediterranean basin and their contribution to its civilization.

I am quite aware that this concept would be tantamount to heresy to the secular Israeli establishment, for looking back into the history of the Jews of the Diaspora would be to identify their own past with religion, the basis of all evil—past, present, and future. It is a state of mind and attitude that rejects, and seeks to obliterate, the entirety of Jewish civilization over the two millennia of the dispersion.

Of course, there are the Sephardic and Oriental Jews, but their socio-economic and political position within the state do not allow them to set a course based on their own tradition, deeply rooted in the Mediterranean. The Israeli establishment has chosen to eliminate it together with the memory of their Central and Eastern European religious roots.

Upon the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, the people set off on the road of the exile along the shores of the Mediterranean carrying as their baggage the legacy of Sinai, the Torah. Thus started Israel's mission to the nations, to stand witness to the Covenant.

Within this concept there obviously is no place for the view so often voiced that Judaism has only survived because of antisemitism.

It is sad that these prophets of doom are Jews, for even many rabid antisemites stand in awe at the phenomenon of the survival of Judaism. Can there be a better example than the unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Church of Rome to eliminate the Jews from the face of the earth during two millennia?

Speaking of the Mediterranean destiny of the State of Israel, I would not want to be interpreted as suggesting that it should take as a model the historical model of the city states of the Mediterranean basin, whether ruled by prince or pope.

Fernand Braudel concludes in one of his books on the Mediterranean that "civilization is war." This is the cold conclusion of a historical analyst who is not devoid of passion when he describes the beauty of the city of Venice and the splendor of its artistic achievements, and stands in awe of the laws that governed its society and the extent of its power. But that power was achieved and preserved through the constant waging of war against its rivals and would-be rivals.

Can the power of the sword, which was the foundation of the Doges of the Venetian Republic, blind us to the beauty of form and the depth of its intellectual achievements bequeathed to Europe, and to an America progressively alienated by the impersonality of the industrial society?

The city of Venice, today part of the Italian Republic, where the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean have left their mark, contains an element that Israeli society might attempt to emulate, in a twentieth-century context, in order to gear the nation toward a Mediterranean destiny—or to be more precise, a universal Jewish vision.

What can we learn from Venice, from the life of its Jews? Did it not create the ghetto?

The Venice of the Renaissance became the gate through which the values created by the civilization of the Jews of Iberia were passed on to Western Europe.

The Spanish Jews of the exodus of 1492 brought with them many of the achievements from the Golden Age, in medicine, philosophy, the sciences, finance, poetry, even astronomy and the art of navigation. Don Isaac Abrabanel, financial counselor to three monarchs and a master of Jewish Scripture who had found refuge in Venice after the expulsion, painted in glowing terms the liberalism and wisdom of the Doge to whom he became counselor.

However mythological it might appear, it is my belief that the State of Israel should look upon the historical journey of the Jews of the Mediterranean basin and their influence on the formation of its

civilization, since the days of the dispersion, as a guideline toward its evolution as a political and economic power within that area and beyond. One must not forget that at the time of the expulsion from Spain, eighty percent of the Jewish people lived on its shores. What at first appeared to belong to the realm of mythology has often turned out to be historical reality in the history of the Jewish people.

Now, power is a word that is anathema to many a Jew, even Israelis. However, once a part of the Jewish people have determined to see their future within the framework of a Nation-State, a normal State, power becomes one of the fundamental ingredients by which it can survive and remain Jewish. The other is its spiritual heritage, the covenantal relationship that has kept the Jewish people alive, while the great empires have come and gone.

Power and Torah, the symbiosis by which the Jewish communities of the Western Mediterranean participated and contributed toward the development of European civilization, during a period of history that spans the days of ancient Rome to the Risorgimento of modern Italy.

In the Roman Empire, Jewish settlements spread from what is now Istanbul all the way west to Gibraltar, mostly as free Roman citizens with full rights of religious worship. It was a citizenship that was not revoked even during the revolts that brought about the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem—a period during which historians maintain that the Jewish population throughout the empire numbered three million.

The collapse of Rome followed by the creation of the Byzantine Empire and the introduction of Christianity as a "universal" religion was a time of transition for the Jewish communities, which often fought with weapons in hand to preserve the civilization of their forefathers.

A turning point, and very likely the most important in the history of the Diaspora until the emancipation of the Napoleonic era, was the millennium of Jewish civilization on the Iberian peninsula. The Jewish communities throughout the many principalities and papal states of Renaissance Italy, amidst trials and tribulations, became the heir to the civilization created by the Jews of Sefarad. They served as the gateway through which it was transmitted to the rest of Western Europe.

I often wonder if the secular establishment that has held the reigns of power for most of the time since the creation of the State of Israel, both politically and intellectually, can claim as its own both

the memory and works of Maimonides and Ibn Gabirol; can it accept their philosophical achievements, and by the same token deny that at its kernel is the Jewish religious thrust in history?

To me it seems that Maimonides and Ibn Gabirol are paradigms of Israel's existential predicament and soul-tearing, as far as its Judaism is concerned. It will determine its Jewish character, if the schisms between secular and religious, between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, are not bridged; nor can the heritage of Maimonides be preserved as an intrinsic part of Jewish civilization if one attempts to dissociate the talmudist from the philosopher.

In this respect, I had several depressing experiences during my recent stay in Israel. Symptomatic was my discussion with a young *sabra* who told me that he was going to get a Masters Degree in philosophy at the Sorbonne. When I inquired whether he had studied the Philosophy of Judaism, he retorted in a startled manner that there was no such thing, putting an abrupt end to our conversation.

This little incident struck me as typical of the confusion of many Israelis, especially among the second generation, as to their own identity, and *ipso facto* the relationship of their country to the world, not to speak of the communities of the Diaspora. Having rejected the religious element of Jewish civilization, they have also denied its other facets and thus broken the umbilical cord with their past.

Of course, I am excluding the religious Jews of Israel, but they live in an integrated universe of their own, totally detached from the vision of the secular, mostly Ashkenazi, elite of the nation. Most of the Sephardic-Oriental majority of the population, although they have attempted to remain faithful to their traditional cultural way of life, they have not yet reached the socio-economic level within the framework of the state to help mold it within their heritage.

Is Israel, the symbol of Western technological culture in the Middle East, allowing the Oriental Jews' heritage a role in creating a genuine Israeli culture? How dare one suggest a culture of the Levant for the Jewish State!

Upon my return to Europe, I had cruised among the Greek Islands and spent a considerable period of time on the Côte d'Azur and in Provence. Again I was struck by the similarity of average men and women with the majority of the Israeli population. I could not help telling myself, time and again, that the Israelis were a Mediterranean people; even sons and daughters of Eastern European Ashkenazim are beginning to acquire the sharp, aquiline features of the classical Greek, Etruscan, Roman, and Byzantine sculptures present

throughout the museums of Europe.

Is the original Mediterranean Jew coming to life to haunt and eventually destroy the Western European archetype by which the Eastern European Jew strove to mold himself? The Jews of the State of Israel reverting to the original biblical archetype, with its roots in Mediterranean civilization—why should the State of Israel not come back to it in order to fill the spiritual and cultural gap of a nation groping for a destiny?

The historical reality that the land of Israel was inhabited by Jews, often in large numbers, throughout the centuries from the days of the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Mandatory rule, and its relevance to Mediterranean civilization, struck me—of all places—during my latest round of the Paris bookstores.

Every one of these stores invariably contains a large Jewish section. What impressed me was not only the selection of religious Hebrew books translated into French, but the number of modern publications by European writers, mostly French, some non-Jews among them, that deal with the extent of the influence of Jewish civilization on the historical development of the Mediterranean basin, from the first Jewish colonies of the Roman Empire to medieval Provence, Spain, Renaissance Italy to the nineteenth-century Risorgimento. The Kabbalah, as it developed in Provence and found its way to Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey, finally to reach its climax in sixteenth-century Safed, seems of particular interest to French intellectuals, and judging from the book reviews on the subject, this facet of Jewish creativity is being considered as an intrinsic component of the civilization of the West.

Non-Jewish scholars regard the Kabbalah as the genesis and key to modern meta-history and cosmology, while secular Israelis have relegated it to the exclusive domain of the Orthodox, who in their eyes symbolize the very primitivism and superstition of an antiquated Jewish religion left behind in the dustbins of history by the modern State of Israel. Professors at the Hebrew University, one of the strongholds of secularism where Gershom Scholem taught Kaballah, will maintain that he was not religious and classify his discipline within the realm of mythology and folklore, alongside the rest of Sephardic tradition.

I would like to make it clear that I see the word Kabbalah as a metaphor, actually "the hidden potential of Jewish history in a continuous process of unfolding," as expressed in Ezekiel Kaufmann's

The Religion of Israel:

> The fall of Jerusalem is the great watershed of the history of the Israelite religion. The life of the people of Israel came to an end; the history of Judaism began. . . . Israel ceased to be a normal nation and became a religious community. This development was rooted in the idea of the pre-exilic religion, both priestly and prophetic. Its manifestations are the crystallization of the Torah book, and the transformation of Israel into a witness to the nations, the bearers of a universal religious mission. . . . [T]hroughout the world wherever Jewish people were dispersed, paganism was destined to die. . . .

I have often wondered how these words of a great Israeli historian fit into the classical Zionist ideology, that of a secular State built in the context of the founding fathers' vision of normality, when in this century of ours the so-called civilized world reached the climax of insanity—two world wars, and ready for a third.

André Neher, whom many consider one of the great modern French Jewish philosophers, elaborated further on that concept in the following words:

> The Jew is the man of the passage. Abraham was the man who passed, passed from one world to another, from one bank of the river of life to another. It is on the barge built by every Jew who repeats the act of Abraham that mankind passed from one river bank to another in the cycles of history. The Jew in his Hebrew vocation is the man who has made humanity pass from ancient paganism to Christianity, from Oriental paganism to Islam, from neo-paganism to humanism, and eventually make the remnants of paganism in our actual civilization pass on to messianic humanism. Thus, like Abraham, the Jew is in permanent and necessary exile. The exile is his mission that takes him to wherever a passage must be accomplished, in the great vocation that makes him the brother-in-action of all men.

Ezekiel Kaufmann, born in Russia, came to Palestine as a young man, while André Neher had returned to the land of his forefathers a few years ago. Both, I assume, were motivated by their vision of Zionist fulfillment, and I often try to envisage how they harmonized their own return to Zion with their messianic vision of the exile.

It is my belief that both the State of Israel and the communities of the Diaspora are part of an identical civilization and share the same meta-historical destiny, whether we are of Israeli, American, or French nationality. Israeli by nationality does not intrinsically mean being Jewish, if one takes into account its Arab and Christian minori-

ties. On the other hand, Israel is a Jewish State and cannot avoid linking itself to the historical and spiritual past of the Jewish people as a whole.

A common historical past! It should not stop short at the memory of the religious and social dimension of the life of the ghettos of Eastern Europe before World War II, as it relates to the Orthodox Jews, or the ideological rhetoric of the secular Jews during the confrontation between Haskallah and religion. Nor should the memory of the North African and Sephardic Jews of the Balkans be thwarted due to the veneer of the European colonial or Ottoman civilization that dominated the societies they lived in.

Nor should North American Jews, conditioned by a century of life in the first genuinely open society whose size and wealth has given them unequaled social and economic mobility, attempt to impose on Israeli society those elements of Americanism that today are an intrinsic part of their Judaism. They allow time for Israel's Jews to evolve toward it.

All of these diverse currents, the result of the Jewish historical experience, should with time help the Jews of Israel toward a national-religious consensus, rather than one specific branch of Jewish civilization, whether religious or secular.

It is an ancient truth that revolution devours its children. The Russian Revolution being no exception, it was carried out to its ultimate absurdity; the Jew was liberated from the yoke of feudalism only to fall into the servitude of the spirit. His social liberation was conditioned to cutting his ties to his ancestral tradition, his religion, and today he finds himself trapped within the confines of the Soviet Union.

The French Revolution also demanded its toll, but a considerably less harsh one. By divesting himself of his concept of a people standing apart, namely a Jewish nation, and limiting himself to being a citizen of Jewish religion, he would be integrated into society on an equal basis with any other citizen; in reality, he would only be tolerated until recently.

The irony of it all! The instrument of the greatest revolution in the history of mankind, the Covenant of Sinai, when he became the recipient of the Law in the name of humanity following the Exodus from Egypt, the universal symbol of liberation from slavery, the Jew was to fall victim to those historical cataclysms he helped to bring about by his very presence as a meta-historical witness. The scapegoat of the nations, incapable of living up to their vision?

The Jew as scapegoat? Yes, as a simplistic answer to the roots of antisemitism. But in the eyes of a French Jewish professor of philosophy, who outlined his concept in a lecture, entitled "Revolution and Judaism according to the *Zohar*—The Unity of Values," it is far more complex, and only through metaphor can it begin to be grasped; this is where the link between the *Zohar* and revolutions is established.

In accordance with this concept, while the Talmudists undertook the task of formulating and refining the legislation given to the Jews by divine revelation, the aim of the *Zohar* is to grasp the purpose of history. In this context, it presents the emergence of Israel in the history of humanity as a revolutionary phenomenon. Thus it is fundamental to understand the development of human history, and why the Law was granted to Israel.

Israel's destiny in the history of humanity starts with Abraham on an individual level, to be followed by the Israelites in the Exodus from Egypt, and culminates with Moses on a universal level.

The Kabbalah perceives this meta-historical thrust in the midst of a humanity that is in a state of revolt against the purpose of human history, a rebellion against the designs of the Creator of the Universe. A thrust that, first through Abraham and then through Moses, projects to humanity a view of the absolute, called Israel, which will soon find itself in conflict with a humanity in a state of revolt against its inexorable destiny. Thus is outlined by the *Zohar* the scenario where Israel, as the bearer of the Law for the whole of humanity, finds itself in confrontation with it.

The *Zohar* sees two conflicting attempts to mold universalism, one symbolized by Abraham and the other by Nimrod, who stands for the rest of humanity. With two conflicting views of life and the absolute, they set out to establish an order of values. There follows an inexorable rivalry within Israel, whose destiny in relation to the Covenant of Sinai is to remold the universal as well as all attempts from the outside to impose their own vision of humanism; visions rooted in Israel, but whose bearers always end up by rebelling against their origins.

The vision of the Nimrods of history being a limited one, usually based on power and unable to grasp the universal human identity epitomized by the biblical man called Israel, will turn against the Jew and attempt to destroy him, ot ar least eradicate him from the flow of history. This is what society and historiography has labeled as antisemitism; the basis of the revolt against Jewish civilization and survival whose secret is *Shlemut* (Perfection, Harmony), The Unity of Val-

ues. In the words of the ancient prophets of Israel, the son of man will only achieve his authenticity when he will live by the one-ness of values.

Once the Law of Sinai has been given and accepted by the assembled multitudes of the Hebrews, they are bound by the Covenant to complete the Exodus from Egypt, to terminate the attempt to free mankind, to liberate it from distorted values. Each time we have alienated ourselves from a specific empire or what it represents, such as Babel, Egypt, Christian, or Marxist civilization, we have alienated ourselves from real values but false gods, in the sense that they are exclusive and in the process shatter *Shlemut*, the Unity of Values.

According to the Kabbalah, concludes the philosopher, the basic difference in the eschatological vision of history consists in the fact that Nimrod, by appropriating for himself the garments of the first man, wishes to be the sole heir of humanism, while Abraham desires these same vestments in order to assure the plan of the Master of the Universe.

The Jews are the people of *Shlemut*, while the revolutions stand for one value or another, true values in their specific essence but which, when transformed into absolute values, become false gods.

The French professor of philosophy, who attempts to establish the link between the essence of the *Zohar* and the role of Judaism within the framework of the universal, epitomizes to me the post-Auschwitz European Jew. He has taken upon himself the task, in the words of André Neher, to pick up the torch from those who perished in Auschwitz; to reintroduce the values of Jewish civilization into the mainstream of the culture of the West.

The post-Auschwitz European Jew—what kind of label would one put on him in accordance with American Jewish standards? Traditional, secular, or perhaps best of all, the Jew who aims toward *Shlemut* within Judaism. Like many who became catalysts of a French Judaism out of the ashes, the French Jewish philosopher stood witness to the long night of the Final Solution in the ranks of the Maquis, and commutes between France and Israel in order to establish a strong link between the two communities.

His concepts bring to my mind the last paragraph of Gershom Scholem's book, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*:

> That is the position in which we find ourselves today, or in which Jewish mysticism finds itself. The story is not ended, it has not yet become history, and the secret of the life it holds can break out tomorrow in

> you or in me. Under what aspect this invisible stream of Jewish mysticism will again come to the surface we cannot tell. But I have come here to speak to you of the main tendencies of Jewish mysticism as we know them. To speak of the mystical course, which in the great cataclysm now stirring the Jewish people more deeply than in the entire history of the Exile, destiny may still have in store for us—and I for one believe that there is such a course—is the task of the prophets, not of professors.

Gershom Scholem wrote this in 1941, when the Final Solution was in the making. His words were prophetic, for the Jewish people, like a phoenix resurrected from the ashes, created the State of Israel, and less than half a century after the Shoah has arrived at a point in history when it can again set itself on the path to fulfill its universal destiny.

In the course of this narrative I became convinced that the word mysticism reflects, or is a metaphor for those elements in the unfolding of history which we are not yet in a position to grasp. The Kabbalah, which Gershom Scholem interprets as Jewish mysticism, are the legendary veils that the post-Auschwitz Jew will gradually lift to discern the historical reality of where he stands as an individual in the scope of the mission of Israel. These are the veils that still blur the vision, whether of the traditional Jew or the messianic secularist, of the prophetic redemption of the world.

Gershom Scholem's prophetic insight is complemented by Walter Benjamin's metaphorical vision of the unfolding of history through the eyes of his "Angel." Both Scholem and Benjamin, the products of Jewish emancipation of the twentieth century, each in his own manner grasping the very essence of Jewish civilization, could be said to represent two facets of the same coin. Scholem attempted to glimpse through the veils of Jewish mysticism the cosmic dimension of the Jewish thrust in history; Benjamin struggled to discern through the eyes of a literary man the Jewish eschatological dimension in the civilization of the West, so poignantly expressed in his essay, "Poetry and History":

> . . . for the Jews, the future was not a homogenous and empty dimension of time. For within it, every second represented the narrow door through which the Messiah might enter.

Gershom Scholem had rejected the Diaspora and believed in the survival of Judaism only through the return to Zion, while Walter Benjamin, despite the advent of Fascism and Nazism, could not extri-

cate himself from the vision of Europe's universalism. They symbolize today's dichotomy between the vision of Judaism of the State of Israel and that of the Diaspora, especially North America and France.

Almost half a century after the Shoah and the establishment of the State of Israel, both these poles of Jewish life seem to contain the elements which, if allowed to surface in their diversity, will enable the House of Israel not only to stand and survive the vicissitudes the future might have in store, but help to shape the unfolding of history in the vision of the Covenant of Sinai.

The fulfillment of this vision rests on several premises.

A State of Israel, having found its universal destiny in the Jewish Mediterranean heritage, will reach a level where it can situate itself in its proper context with regard to Jewish spirituality and civilization, and thus establish a symbiosis with the other main centers of Jewish life, the communities of the United States and France.

A North American Judaism having come to the realization that the *shtetl* is not the genesis of its tradition, and having found the link of continuity with the civilization of the Golden Age of Sefarad, will simultaneously internalize the Mediterranean heritage as its own and thus acquire the vision of the universal dimension of Jewish history.

A post-Auschwitz European Judaism symbolized by the community of France, already deeply imbued with its Mediterranean heritage and having established the symbiosis between the two great traditions of Judaism, the Ashkenazi and Sephardic cultures, will not only serve as a model to the State of Israel but find common ground with American Judaism.

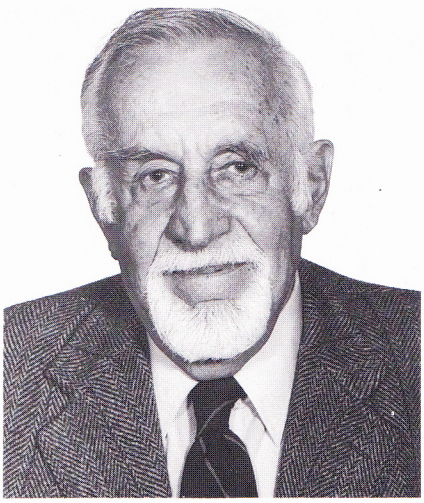
At this point, the three basic centers of Jewish civilization, each in its own right, will encompass the different facets of Judaism and will have achieved *Shlemut.*

As a Jew of Sefarad, a Jew of the Lands of Memory—our collective memory, however deeply it may be buried in our psyche—I believe that the Jewish people will recognize as a source of strength and inspiration for the future the very genesis of its destiny, namely the time when our forefathers, the Jews of the Mediterranean basin, created a civilization in symbiosis with other cultures that not only assured the survival of Judaism, but provided the West with much of its fundamental values.

sianic era—journeys of hope and despair, daydreams and nightmares, identity and crisis, landings and strandings on many shores, before culminating in an ultimate meditative dream about a Jewish Renaissance both in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel.

These memoirs and reflections were written by Robert Graziani-Levy in collaboration with Anne, his loving wife and inspirational companion. The portrait painted by his daughter, and reproduced as frontispiece, has captured an image of the spiritual radiance of her father's wandering and wondering mind.

Born into one of the *buenas familias* and having grown up in dual worlds—Sefarad and Ashkenaz, Europe and the Levant, spiritual and mercantile—and forced by events to abandon his dream of journeying through the scholarly realm and venturing into the labyrinths of industrial entrepreneurship, both a rationalist and a relentless dreamer, Robert Graziani-Levy survives in these pages as a scion to the House on the Hill of Pera and to the House of Sefarad.



ROBERT GRAZIANI-LEVI

LABYRINTHOS
6355 Green Valley Circle #213
Culver City, CA 90230

Jacket art: Scenes from the life of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915-975), Jewish statesman, physician, and advisor to the Caliph of Cordova. Wall painting by J. W. Watts. Photograph courtesy Beth Hatefutsoth, Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv.

LANDS OF MEMORY

Wanderings and Wonderments of a Sephardic Jew

Robert Graziani-Levi

Foreword by Moshe Lazar

I.
THE LAND OF THE DREAM
(Constantinople)

II.
THE LAND OF HOPE
(Paris, France)

III.
THE LAND OF REFUGE
(Río de Janeiro, Brazil)

IV.
THE LANDS OF ASHES
(France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain)

V.
THE LAND OF FREEDOM
(The United States of America)

VI.
THE LAND OF ZION
(Israel)

VII.
THE LAND OF JACOB'S TENTS
(The future of Jewish spirituality and culture)

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