

Trudy Gold | The Jews of Poland

- Hello to everybody, and welcome back. And over to Trudy and I... Yeah, looking forward to-

- All right, Wendy

- Another wonderful presentation, thank you, Trudy.

- All right, Wendy. Avoid the snow, darling.

- I will.

- Avoid the snow. Be Safe.

- Thanks.

- God bless.

- Take care, bye.

- Bye, bye. Okay, Shauna.

- [Shauna] Ready to go?

- Ready to go. Can we have the map, please, Shauna? Well, good evening, my time, to all of you. And of course yesterday I had to apologise, because what happened was unfortunately I ran out of time. And this is such an important subject, I'm going to take it more slowly. So I want you to remember that all these areas I've been talking about up until 1917 were under the control of the Tsars. When the revolution occurred, the two revolutions, one in March, then of course, the famous October-November revolution, depending on which calendar you're going to take, all these areas erupted into war.

*Slides are shared throughout the lecture.*

And you can just see at the side, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland, which I'm going to talk about on Thursday. And you will see that what happens is, and we've talked about the various wars, that Trotsky's Red Army held. And at the Peace of Riga, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania become independent states. So does Poland. More about that in a minute. But Ukraine disappears off the map. And the bulk of Ukraine goes into the Soviet Union. So the majority of the Jews of Ukraine, from then on, are under Soviet rule. So we will be spending my next few sessions, I'll be looking at the Jews of Poland on Thursday, and then the Jews of Lithuania, the Jews of Hungary. I'm going to look at the interwar period.

So please don't forget, this is Western Soviet Union. The Soviet Union stretches all the way to the Pacific. It's still one of the largest empires in the world. And please don't forget, those of you who are interested in politics, that the new Russian administration still has a dream of recreating the Tsars Empire. And of course who does Ukraine belong to? And politically, it's an incredibly sensitive area. Can we have a look at the next map, please, Shauna? Thank you, now this is for Thursday, but just so you understand, these are the borders. You can see here, Latvia, Lithuania, and of course you can see Poland itself, which is much expanded. And the last map, please? Shauna, right, this is Poland. And you'll see that much of the land that had been part of Germany has been swallowed up into the new Polish state.

And I know it's particularly interesting for many of you because many of your ancestors came from this region of the world. And once this lockdown is over, I promise you, I'm going to send proper maps to you all. I've got huge maps with huge details. I've tried looking online and in encyclopaedias, it just doesn't work enough. You need detailed maps. Those of you who are really interested in your heritage, that's what you need to scan, the detailed maps of these areas. So thank you very much, Shauna. And now let me get on with the presentation. We no longer need the screen, okay. Now obviously the situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union was very different from anywhere else in Eastern Europe.

Think about it, Poland chauvinist nationalism, the same thing, we've already seen what happened in the wars of Petliura. The same thing is going to happen in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. How do the Jews fit in? But the point about the Russian Revolution, it is an ideological revolution. And the ultimate goal was to produce the individual who is above all petty nationalistic divisions. What the dream was before the revolution was the creation of a single world socialist state. Now we've spent much time looking at the disproportionate number of Jews in the revolutions. These are Jews who have left their Judaism behind, usually within one or two generations. They are people who want to walk the world.

And as far as the Jews are concerned in the Communist Party, what they aim for is total assimilation. Let me tell you about the words of Karl Radek. Karl Radek was one of the most important revolutionaries. He was born near Krakow. And he was part of the negotiations at the Peace of Riga. And he said to the Poles, "Our country is seeking to liberate itself from the old Tsarist empire and in future, to liberate the whole world." And the response from one of the Polish delegates was quite interesting, "You are in love with a dream." And of course this kind of universalism was something that was very much part of many of these Jewish revolutionaries. They didn't want any kind of separatism. They saw nationalism as evil.

What they wanted to break down was all the barriers between peoples. Ironically, Radek, along with so many of these incredible idealists, and I think before the revolution occurs, and the terror, we can say they were idealists, he actually dies in May, 1939 in a labour camp on the orders of Lavrentiy Beria, very close friend of Stalin and the head of the Cheka. Now I'm going to read quickly for you from Isaac Deutscher, "The non-Jewish Jew." Now Antony Polonsky, who's one of the great experts on Eastern Europe, this is what he wrote, "Many of the

Bolsheviks were Isaac Deutscher's non-Jewish Jews. And what they had," and I want you to take this phrase on very, very carefully. I had a very good discussion with a friend of mine last night on this subject, and I hope he's listening, because I stayed up till 02:00 in the morning thinking about what he said. And certainly there is a messianism within the Bolshevik dream. And did it strike a chord within what Deutscher calls the non-Jewish Jews.

This is, I'm quoting now from Isaac Deutscher. Isaac Deutscher himself was a fascinating character. He was a Jew from Krakow. He was an , one of those incredibly learned characters. But the josh he gave in the synagogue for his bar mitzvah was whether the bird dropping in Tobit's eye, Tobit is a book in the Apocrypha, whether it was kosher or treif. And according to Deutscher, that led him away from the path of Judaism to a completely different world. And this is what he says of his great hero Trotsky. Trotsky was the author of "Permanent Revolution" and he had before him the vision of a global upheaval of mankind.

And he says, "Rosa Luxembourg and all their comrades vote for the universalist against the particular and the international against the national. And what they wanted was solutions to their time." So you're looking at, ironically, a group of dreamers. Now how did everyone regard the Jewish community? When the Russians, when the Soviet Union was formed, after the Peace of Riga, you now have the Soviet Union. And according to Bolshevik ideology, the Jews were not a nation. In fact during his conflict with the Bund, those of you who've studied this period will know what I'm talking about, back in Russia, the turn of the century, there were three interesting movements that attracted Jews. By far the most numerous was an organisation called the Bund. It had been founded in the back of a blacksmith shop in Vilna by a group of workers.

They wanted better working conditions. They wanted a strike against Jewish bosses. And what they created was this extraordinary socialist organisation. What they wanted was autonomy. They wanted a revolution. They wanted to get rid of the evil Tsarist regime. And what they wanted was Jewish autonomy within the Russian Empire. They were responsible for a huge upswing in Yiddish culture, it's known as the glorious tradition. Yiddish was their language. It was the language of the Jewish people. It was responsible for Yiddish theatre. There were schools, it was a socialist organisation, but it was within the Jewish community.

Now there was also, of course, socialist Zionism. By 1898, a year after Herzl wrote "Der Judenstaat," Nachman Syrkin wrote the socialist Jewish state that what we're going to work for in Palestine, we want autonomy in our own country. We will recreate the Jewish state, but there will be social justice. And never forget, these are the characters who created the Kibbutz Movement, the Moshavim, they were socialists. You can make the case that the Kibbutz Movement is the greatest socialist idea of socialism in action that the world has ever known. So the third group were the international socialists.

And they said the Bund, well, in fact, one of the international socialists actually said the Bund are Zionists who suffered from sea sickness. Lenin said, "The idea of a Jewish nation," he said this during the conflict with the Bund, "the idea of a Jewish nation is false and reactionary. Are

the Jews nation?" You know, this is one of the conflicts that I'm sure many of you discuss with your families and think about. I've said this to you before, the great quote of Elias Canetti, "There are no people more difficult to understand than the Jews."

What are we? Are we a culture? Are we religious only? Is it our religion that defines us? Is it our culture that defines us? It's quite possible to be a Jewish atheist. Is it possible to be a Christian atheist or a Muslim atheist, posing the questions? Are we a people, whatever that means, or are we a nation? Today, the majority of Jews in the world actually live in the Jewish nation. When Ben-Gurion proclaimed the state, he talked about the recreation of the Jewish nation, and he said the law of return was absolutely at the centre that every Jew in the world who wishes has a right to return to be part of his nation. Now what does it mean?

Stalin, in 1913, on Lenin's request actually studied the nationalities in the empire. There were over 106 of them. And this is what Stalin thought, the report he gave back to Lenin. This is when they're all in exile. Actually I think Stalin was in Vienna at the time. "A nation should have characteristics." This is how Stalin defined nation, they should have common territory, common language, common economic system, and a common culture. And he said this, "The demand of national autonomy for Russian Jews is something of curiosity, proposing autonomy for a people without a future and whose very existence still has to be proved." He said, "Long-term, a fiction bereft of territory." Ironically, and it's important to state this, the Jews of the Soviet Union after the revolution are the third largest Jewish community in the world.

If you actually look, it's Poland, which I'm going to talk about on Thursday, then America and now Russia. Ironically, at this period, New York had just overtaken Warsaw as the most populous Jewish city in the world. Now ironically the fact that so many of the revolutionaries were born Jewish, they were internationalists, they'd thrown it all, now I'm not going to use that word after the discussion I'd had with Howard last night. They saw a different vision. And in many ways, it does, you could make the case, there is a sort of messianic thread, it's the dream of changing the world. Two of the most extraordinary figures in modern Jewish history are Trotsky and Jabotinsky. And they both spent a lot of time in Odessa. Trotsky believed, they were very similar. They were both firebrands. They were both brilliant.

They were both arrogant, both attractive in a very sort of cerebral way. Trotsky said, "I'm going to save the whole world." Jabotinsky said, "I'm going to save the Jews." And one of the great regrets of my life or is that there's absolutely no evidence that they ever met. And if they had, I'd love to imagine the conversation between them, because one was born in 1879, died in 1940. One was born in 1880 and died in 1940. And they were such similar personalities with different dreams. And tragically, both of their dreams, well, Jabotinsky died before the state was created. And of course he died fearing what was going to happen to his people.

But there's one other thing that I want to say on Jewish nationalism and the internationalists, this is from Simon Dubnow. Now Simon Dubnow is one of my favourite characters in modern Jewish history. His dates are 1860 to 1941. He was born in Belarus. He came from a very religious

background, traditional Yeshiva education in a tiny little shtetl in Belarus. And those of you who've travelled in that part of the world, and as I've said to you before, I've taught all over these places, you're really looking at a very primitive part of the world. He went to university, but then the Russian May laws stopped his university education. But he was a brilliant man. He travelled the capitals, he became a very important writer. And what is important about Dubnow is he recorded Jewish history. And this is what he said about the internationalists, "We shall never be forgiven for the share that the Jewish speculators of the revolution have taken in the Bolshevik terror. The Jewish fellow workers of Lenin, the Trotskys, the Uritskys, eclipse even him.

The Smolny Institute, the headquarters of the Petrograd Revolution is secretly called Yid Centre. Later this will be talked about and anti-Semitism will be rooted even deeper." Now Dubnow had a different vision for the Jewish people. And I'm just going to read to you something that he wrote because, you know, he's not much talked about these days. And I really think his ideas are very, very important. He believed in Jewish autonomism. He hoped that one day the revolution would happen and that there would be Jewish autonomy in Russia. But he was actually a very spiritual person. And this is what he said about the Jews, "Every generation in Israel carries within itself the remnants of worlds created and destroyed during the course of the previous history of the Jewish people.

A generation in turn builds and destroys worlds in its own form and image, but in the long run continues to weave the thread that binds all the links of the nation into the chain of generations." He believed in the continuity from generation to generation of the Jewish people. Each generation in Israel is more the product of history than its creator. We go on, we carry all the history of the past. "We the people of Israel living today continue this long thread that stretches from the days of Hammurabi and Abraham to the modern period. We see further, for during the course of thousands of years, the nations of the world have borrowed from our spiritual storehouse and added to their own without depleting the source.

The Jewish people goes its own way, attracting and repelling, beating out for itself a unique path amongst the nations of the world." And this of course is the famous Simon Dubnow. I have his books on my shelf, his history books. This man of great vision, tragically, he was murdered by the Nazis in 1941. But what he said, what I think is so fascinating, what he said about Isaac Deutscher's "non-Jewish Jews," characters like Trotsky, they're trying to save the world. And is there a streak of messianism? You know, Moses Hess, the socialist thinker who was a colleague of Marx, he came from a very religious background.

He helped Marx with the first draught of "The Communist Manifesto" actually. And he believed that within Judaism itself is social justice. You know, all you have to do is to turn to the Book of Amos, the first of the prophets, where he says, Israel will be destroyed because we don't adhere to the principles of social justice. We grind the poor. We sell the needy for a pair of shoes. So you can make the case, and I think this is something that Deutscher argues, that there is almost this messianic tradition within some of these young revolutionaries. But of course when the revolution occurs, then there's going to be terror.

So I've given you some of the ideas, but then as my mother would always say, get to the tackless. So what they want is assimilation. And that is what is going to happen. Now there's a very large Jewish community in Russia. There's two and a half million Jews now under Soviet war. Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa become the centres of cultural life in Russia and Jews were incredibly well representative. If you look at the, what is going to be interesting about occupational patterns in the Soviet Union, they're on the editorial board of newspapers. They're out of all proportion at the universities. Hospitals, and also this is where they're different, they are very prominent amongst the Soviet officer class.

A disproportionate number of Soviet generals were born Jews. And of course under Soviet rule, anti-Semitism is outlawed. There are no divisions anymore where one people and educational opportunities increased extraordinarily under the Soviets. Now let's talk about the smashing down. Inter-marriage had been rare before 1917. In the secular Soviet world, it's going to be much more frequent. In 1926, inter-marriage in Soviet Russia was running at 21%. And in the Soviet Ukraine in 11%. By 1936, it's running at 41% in the Russian Federation and 15.3% in the Ukraine and 12.6% in Belarus.

And of course in the world of Belarus and in the Ukraine, it's far more the shtetler, the little towns, the little villages. And many of the Soviet leadership who were Jews who were married to Russian women, whilst many of the non-Jewish leadership, people like Chernyakhovsky, Kirov, Molotov, were married to Jewish women. Now linguistic assimilation, this is very important. If you're going to create one people, it's got to be language. In 1926, 25% of Jews gave Russian as their mother tongue. By 1939, 54%. Now Jews played an incredible part in developing Soviet culture. Like in America, they wrote most of the popular songs and were part of the social mobilisation that is part of all of Stalin's five year plans.

And when classical music again became part of the Soviet cannon, over 50% of the major performers were of Jewish birth. Now it's fascinating. So of course they're not into capitalism, but if you look at what I call the, medicine, law, if you look at the traditional Jewish occupation patterns, they're not going to be factory owners anymore. That's the state. But what they are, the only differences, as I said before, they're not in the capitalist world, but they're generals. So it's a great flood into the military.

Now of course, one result of Russification was a terrible generational conflict, which of course the Soviet regime very much encourages. You know, there are no Jewish schools anymore. It was Jewish organisations, the Yevsektziyas that's going to break down Jewish life in Russia. They don't smash all the synagogues, just as they don't smash all the churches. But if you want, remember, religion is the opium of the masses. If you want to live a good life in the Soviet Union, you do not be a practising Jew and you are not a practising Christian.

I used to teach in Russia before communism collapsed. The refuseniks, the extraordinary refuseniks. And when I went there, it was actually Hanukkah. And I'll never forget, they got me

to light the Hanukkah in the window. They're an incredible bunch of people. And basically they had one mohel for the whole of Moscow. And he was 82, can you imagine? And not only that, you can't get kosher food, it was just impossible. And this is the kind of bravery that these, so imagine what it was like. It's over, there is no difference between people anymore. So this is a poem by a man born Jewish Eduard Bagritsky. He was a very important poet of the Komsomol, the Russian authorities. And this is about his break with his family. It's translated of course, but I think it's still very powerful. Their love, but what about their lice-eaten braids?

The crooked jutting out collarbones, their pimples, their herring smeared mouths, the curve of their horse-like neck? My parents growing old in the twilight. Hunched backed and hard like beasts. The rusty Jews keeping shaking in my face, their hairy fists, "You outcast, pick up your miserable suitcase. You're cursed and scorned, get out." I'm leaving my old bed behind. Should I leave? I will. Good riddance, I don't care. You see, why were so many young Jews prepared to make the break with the past? Jews always identify with a social order that removes discrimination and that's what the Russians have done.

And also you can have a huge role in Soviet life. One of the other areas, of course Jews are very prominent in the upper echelons of the party, but also in the secret police. 20% of the members of the Cheka were Jews. And half of the 12 that run the department combating counter-revolutionary activity were Jewish. Now ironically, the fact that there were so many Jews in high positions in the party led to actions against anti-Semitism. Now I should mention of course, and I've mentioned this in a previous talk, that the great tussle after Lenin's death was for power. And Stalin, you know, Stalin had been on the lower echelons, but Stalin was a genius. Do you know what he was a genius at? Understanding the nature of power. Trotsky was the obvious successor, the man who created the Red Army, the commissar for foreign affairs. And I don't suppose you'll ever forget that photograph I showed you of him actually signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the German generals.

The man who kept Russia safe actually, who won, ruthless, ruthless, ruthless, but not that politically astute. Because what Stalin did, after Lenin had his first stroke, he did a deal with Kamenev and Zinoviev, two other Jews, and they marginalised Trotsky and gradually Trotsky is pushed out of power. But Stalin, look, it's very complicated with Stalin. I mean, was Stalin an anti-Semite? How do you know when you're dealing with one of the greatest monsters that history's ever known? But certainly in power, he doesn't want anti-Semitism. And in fact, the regime produced 52 books in the 20s countering anti-Semitism.

In 1920, but also when, he didn't want to go too far, and there's a wonderful little incident that Antony Polonsky's uncovered. In 1924, it came to light that Lenin had a Jewish grandfather, a man called Israel Blank. He came from a shtetl in Belarus. And Lenin, it was secret. And Lenin's widow Krupskaya, she wanted it made public as a way of combating anti-Semitism. She said this, "it's confirmation of the exceptional ability of the Semitic tribe and of the extraordinary beneficial influence of its blood on the offspring of mixed marriage." Let me say, and she contacted Stalin about it twice in '32 and '34. Let me repeat it, because it's of its time, but it's

fascinating, "Confirmation of the exceptional ability of the Semitic tribe and of the extraordinary beneficial influence of its blood on the offspring of mixed marriage.

Now Stalin himself actually wrote in Pravda about anti-Semitism. This is an important document. National and racial chauvinism is a vestige of the misanthropic customs characteristic of the period of cannibalism. Anti-Semitism, as an extreme form of racial chauvinism, is the most dangerous vestige of cannibalism. Anti-Semitism is of advantage to the exploiters as a lightning conductor that deflects the blows aimed by the working people at capitalism. Anti-Semitism is dangerous for the working people as being a false path that leads them off the right road and lands them in the jungle. Hence communists, be they as consistent internationalists, cannot but be irreconcilable sworn enemies of anti-Semitism. In the USSR, anti-Semitism is punishable with the utmost severity of the law as a phenomenon deeply hostile to the Soviet system. Under USSR law, anti-Semites are liable to the death penalty."

All right, now this is very, very important. So as far as the Jewish population is concerned, by 1926, 400,000 of them are employed in the Soviet bureaucracy. But there were many of them that were living on charity. And ironically, that charity is coming from the Joint, it's coming from Jewish organisations. And what the Soviet bureaucracy did was they made special provision and requisition, large tracts of fertile land in the Ukraine for Jewish settlement, particularly in the Crimea. And they got money from the Joint to help with this. And also this is an interesting writer, Austrian writer called Benitzki, "Jewish tailors went down the mines, the shoemaker to the unexplored timber regions, the petty tradesmen to the oil fields in the metal factories of Dnepropetrovsk.

As an example, 10,000 Jews work to prepare sections of the new hydraulic dams. By 1932, 3/4 of a million Jews were actually swept into the industrialization effort. They're working for state wages. So what have I said? That the Jews are very important in the Russian middle class and the prejudice against them as a group was really, really frowned on. Having said that, many Jews did die in the Great Purges, but they died as enemies of Stalin. So it was very, very, very, very complicated. But I want to talk a bit more now about the destruction of Judaism, because what does it mean to be a Jew? It's Judaism they're going to attack. And the Yevsektziyas, the Jewish sections, the Commissariat for Jewish National Affairs were under a man called Semyon Dimanstein. Well, his dates are 1886 to 1938. He was the son of a peddler.

He studied at a Chabad yeshiva. 1904, like many other young people, he abandoned religion for revolution and he worked to translate the party programme into Yiddish and Hebrew. He was arrested by Tsarists and the usual story, Siberia, exile. And later on he worked his way up through the Communist Party and he becomes head of the Jewish section of the people's commissariat. He's a supporter of Stalin. And later on he's going to be removed, because he becomes critical of Stalin. And of course you don't criticise Stalin and he's going to die in the great purges of 1938. Ironically he's going to be rehabilitated by Khrushchev in 1955. So from a religious Jewish background, breaks away, supporter of Stalin, throws in his lot with the revolution, is responsible for being in charge of the breaking down of Jewish life in Russia.



And he's an old Bolshevik. The Jewish section is made out of Jews, but he recruit the people, or most of the people he recruited onto his staff were young revolutionaries. They couldn't speak Yiddish, they couldn't edit Yiddish newspapers. And they were very ignorant of Jewish life. Under the Soviets. Hebrew was a problem. Zionism is outlawed because that's nationalism. Hebrew is outlawed, but Yiddish isn't, because remember, there were lots of minority groups. They are allowed their folk culture, their folk culture. And that is Yiddish. And Yiddish theatre and later on Yiddish cinema is going to flourish in Russia. And also in the Russian world, many of the great filmmakers are Jewish or part Jewish.

I suppose the greatest of the Russian filmmakers for me is Sergei Eisenstein. And later on, once Hitler and Stalin go to war, he's going to head up the anti-fascist committee. So Jews are going to be very important in the film business, but they do allow, they allow both Yiddish theatre, Yiddish literature, but that's not the problem. So there's no longer to be Jewish old age homes, they're going to be state homes. They stop the providing of religious facilities in hospitals. They stop the old age Jewish homes before they're changed over being able to supply the patients with kosher food. They start giving pork in old age homes.

Do you know the horror that that caused for the really religious? You know, people committed suicide rather than give in to the Soviet regime. By the late 20s, they'd accomplished enough to actually no longer need the Yevsektziyas. So as I said to you, they didn't mind Yiddish. But if you look at the Jewish schools, they established Jewish schools in White Russia and in the Ukraine during the 1920s. The language of the school could be Yiddish, but the curriculum had to be strictly secular. You could have Yiddish journals, Yiddish newspapers, and in agricultural colonies, secular Yiddish culture is encouraged. Now the government furnished the Yiddish theatre and Yiddish Cinema with every technical aid, but it had to fit into Bolshevik ideology. So this is Alexandr Bezynenski who's a famous Russian Jewish poet of the 20s.

This is what he writes. "You know, I'm happy that I live my days recruited in the ranks of struggle and love, anger, pain and laughter. Like my brothers of the Komsomol, I love all things dear to me. Deeds and men, days and years, the timid work, the live pace of fields and factories." So this is the kind of, we are part of the world, we're part of the world of field, and we are part of the world of factories. But by 1939, Yiddish is spoken only a by a third of all Jews. There was a surprise development in 1926, the attempt create to an autonomous Jewish region in Eastern Russia. The Soviet officials were actually concerned over the infiltration of the Chinese into the province of Birobidzhan, which is just north of Manchuria.

They needed a buffer state in the event of a far eastern war. The area was rich in timber, it was rich in all sorts of natural resources, minerals, but an unbelievably bad climate. So what're you going to get there? Perhaps under the guise of national autonomy, a large number of Jews were settled there. And that's exactly what Stalin allowed, the setting up of an autonomous Jewish region. However, the climate was too harsh, it was too appalling. And by 1939, only 20,000 Jews had actually settled there. They were given all sorts of concessions to go there. Do you

see the ambiguity? Russia's ruling over 100 different national groups. Are the Jews a nation or Zionism is illegal, Hebrew is illegal, but we can have Yiddish culture. But the harshest measures are the assault on the Jewish religion. I've already mentioned some.

All religious groups in Russia were treated with contempt. Religious observers, as I said before, and please don't forget this, it's not prohibited, but they're denied any authority over education or philanthropy. If you think of the original, if you think of shtetl and if you think of the kehillot, who do you think decided who in the village, who in the town needed help? There's still money coming in from America in particular from the Joint, but the power is taken away from the Rabbonim. And when a synagogue fell into disrepair, it couldn't be restored. Cemeteries were created into public parks. Shabbat and Jewish festivals are abolished. Bibles were smoked up as cigarette paper. There was a league called the League of Militant Atheists. And their slogan, these are Jews, dethrone the heavenly Tsars as we have dethroned the earthly ones. We want no gods but the state. And in 1932, an anti-religious museum opened in Moscow, satirising what he called the stupidities of Judaism.

Now the Jewish communists of course were the worst. They're the ones that led the assault. They would do things, nasty things like preparing public banquets on Yom Kippur. And a whole generation grew up in this atmosphere. This is the gradual dissipation of Jewish life. But what is fascinating is they never really managed to eradicate it. And if you don't, my greatest, I suppose my greatest story that counters this, when Golda Meir visits Russia as the first Jewish ambassador, 50,000 young Jews came out to greet her. They never really managed to smash it, but this is what they're trying to do. 1927, Rabbi Schneerson, who was the leader of Hasidism in Southern Russia, he was arrested and condemned to death for, really, supporting Jewish crafts, and supporting Shabbat observants. And also he called for the Joint for help.

And he wanted religious autonomy. What happened was there was such an outcry, that they let him out and of course he went to America. Now what means did they use to influence young Jews against religion? Public theatre, amateur theatre groups, festivals, parallel to Jewish festivals, lectures and trials of Jewish institutions, making circumcision almost impossible. You know, if there are mohels, you can't circumcise. Ritual slaughter and something else, the invention of the red Haggadah. You know, and if you think of the traditional hand washing and blessing before the meal, it was changed into a political statement. Wash off the bourgeois mud, wash off the mould of generations. Do not say a blessing, say a curse.

Devastation must come upon all the old religious laws and customs, yeshivas and haturim that becloud and enslave the people. And in some red Haggadah, they had only to replace the God with October revolution. Listen, "We were slaves of capital until October came and led us out of the land of exploitation with a strong hand." Let me repeat this, "We were slaves of capital until October came and led us out of the land of exploitation with a strong hand. And if it were not for October, we and our children would still be slaves. Next year in Jerusalem is replaced by this year, revolution here, next year, or world revolution. And I'm sure you all, doesn't matter whether you are religious or not. If you're Jewish, you will have a Seder. And remember Dayenu?

It would be for us quite enough, even if they took something, but only let us trade, we will get everything back, and this would be enough. With this unsuccessful trade, if only there was no taxation, we would like to do away with it, and for us it would be enough. And of course young Jews are influenced to eat bread on Yom Kippur. This is a witness in Babruysk. She's talking about, this is a pious Jewish woman leaving a memoir, "On Yom Kippur eve, the Komsomol organised a demonstration with torches and posters saying, 'We don't need priests and rabbis.' And the demonstration was actually held in the house of study of the great rabbis, which was full of praying people.

For half an hour, speeches held forth," and I'm reading her account, causing trembling amongst the praying people. "On that evening, they posted notices in all the streets saying that many of the restaurants will be open to serve progressive youth." Okay, so by 1939, a lot had been done to attempt to eradicate the Jewish community in Judaism in the East. But something's now going to happen. And of course the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The foreign minister of Russia was a Jew called Litvinoff. At the end of 1938, he is replaced, all the Jews are thrown out of the foreign office, why? Because Russia is going to do a deal with Nazi Germany. Now if you want to know about the clash of ideology, this is Hitler at his most pragmatic.

If any of you who've ever had the misfortune to read "Mein Kampf," or I'm sure many of you will know much from your own readings, Bolshevism, evil Jewish Bolshevism, the greatest enemy of Nazism. The Nazis and the Soviets, in May 9, sorry, it's August. In August, 1939, the non-aggression pact. You know, Eisenstein had worked on an incredible film, "Alexander Nevsky," and you have the most incredible propaganda scheme where the Russ, Alexander Nevsky was a leader, a mediaeval leader of the great Russian people.

And it's the great battle with the Teutonic Knights, the German Knights. And if you haven't seen the film, get it, it's brilliant. There's this seed on the ice where the Teutonic Knights go under. It's Eisenstein making a pro-Soviet, anti-German propaganda film. And consequently what then happens is, of course his film is not shown, because there's going to be a deal. And what happens as the Germans invade from the West, Stalin invades from the East. Jews are accused of being Zionist agents. Rabbis are arrested. And I'm sure many of you know, those of you who have read Begun's memoirs. He fled to Eastern Poland. He was arrested and imprisoned in a Gulag. A very close friend of mine, the late great Robert Wistrich, his family came from Krakow. His father was a communist.

And when the Nazis came in, he had managed to put his wife and child, his older child in a car, they drove into Russia where he was imprisoned in a Gulag. And Robert was born after the war. So the point is, many of those Jewish communists who escaped in later on were under terrible trouble from Stalin. Now with the taking of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Soviets gained a million Jews. And ironically, during the 30s, many German anti-fascists had fled to the Soviet Union. And Stalin and Hitler did a real deal. Not only did Stalin provide Hitler with all sorts of resources, including oil, 570 of these anti-fascists, including many Jews, were taken to a bridge

at Breslau and handed over to the Nazis.

And so you've got a terrible situation in the Baltic states, which I will refer to next week, where there's oppression of religion and Zionism, and it led, ironically, to, on June the 13th, 1941, thousands of Jews from Lithuania and Latvia are deported into deepest Russia. The men went into camps, the women into exile. Ironically nine days later, this was June the 13th, nine days later, the Nazis invaded. So this appalling campaign of Stalin's actually saved their lives. And during the war itself, there were 500,000 Jewish soldiers in the Red Army. 200,000 of them died in battle fighting for Mother Russia. 100 of the great generals, heroes of the Soviet Union were born Jews, but their Jewishness was suppressed.

When does Stalin turn against the Jews? Well that really turn against the Jews, that's going to be 1948, 1949. You've got to remember that the Jews of Israel, when Israel was created, it was created by socialists. The Arab state surrounding Israel were feudal. Stalin thought he'd have an ally, or at the very worst, a neutral power. Russia backed the partition. In fact, the daily worker ran a great piece saying it's great Israel, little embattled Israel fighting feudal the feudal Arab world. He turns after Golda's visit. And that's of course when you have the Slansky trials, the doctor's plot. And then Russia is going to become deeply anti-Semitic. And one of the wickedest things that Soviet propaganda ever was to do was to start the notion of the Nazification of the Jewish state using Nazi language against the Jewish state.

And this really begins after, in 1952, Ben-Gurion does a deal with Adenauer. But I promise you, I'll spend a lot of time with you on that later on. But I wanted to to, although Stalin is such an incredibly difficult person to get a handle on, because it's Stalin, I would suggest that the best books on this are in fact, I would go for Simon Sebag Montefiore's two books on Stalin, "Young Stalin" and "Stalin." He's brilliant. He's done a brilliant job on it. And if you want to read Trotsky, well, who do you read on Trotsky? If you want to read Isaac Deutscher, or you could read Trotsky's own memory. Let me, his own autobiography. Let me just read to you Trotsky, my last thought before we turn to questions and comments. This is Trotsky in January, 1937. He's in exile in Mexico. Remember he'd always dreamed of international revolution.

Not nationalist Russia. "During my youth, I rather lean towards the prognosis that the Jews of different countries would assimilate and the Jewish question will disappear in quasi-automatic fashion. The historic development of the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. Decaying capitalism has swung over to exacerbated nationalism, a part of which is anti-Semitism. The Jewish questioners loomed largest in the most highly developed capitalist country of Europe, Germany." And then he says this, December, 1938, "The number of countries which expels the Jews grow, whilst those willing to accept them diminishes."

And he also says, "It is possible to imagine without difficulty what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of World War. But even without war, the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty the physical extermination of the Jewish people. And this, I think, is quite extraordinary, those comments. So I think I'm going to stop there, Shauna, and let's see what

questions we have.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: Yes, this is from Danny Wilson, "Trotsky's Jewish is interesting, as his first wife was Jewish."

A: Yes, yes, of course. His first wife, he married her in the prison in Lubyanka, which meant that you could get out of prison and go to a Siberian. Of course a rabbi married them.

Q: And this is from Sandra, "My 100 year old," ah, yes. This is, Sandra has been interviewing this extraordinary 100-year-old gentleman in London. And she's telling us his story, "My 101-year-old man was arrested in Regar in 1941 and spent six years in Siberia."

A: That's what saved his life. Dubnow was in Regar and was murdered. They didn't know war was over until two years later, ironically, it saved his life. His mother was deported from Vienna to Lodz Ghetto, never to be heard of again.

Q: This is from Paul Horads, "I have a Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz Haggadah from the 1970s. The word God has been removed from the script."

A: Yes, it's extraordinary. I think the most horrific of all those Haggadot was the one that those extremist Corbynistas wrote. You might know what I'm talking about. Where they sung the song, from the Mediterranean to the sea, Palestine must be free. Okay, Romaine, "Danger of messianic dream in translation for logical solution."

Interesting point, Robert Turner. Oh yes, please comment on human rights insisted by the League of Nations on Poland, Baltic sea. Yes, Robert, I'm going to talk about that tomorrow. I'm going to talk about human rights. It's a very important idea. Yes, and this is from Myrna Ross, "Dubnow's history of the Jews in Russia and Poland is well worth reading." Indeed it is. Did Stalin have a Jewish wife? One of his wives was Jewish.

Q: Ellie Chilton, "How really Jewish were these Jews that reached the upper echelons of power?"

A: Define Jew for me. Ellie, this is the perennial question. They had left it all behind. They saw themselves as international people to save the world. Perhaps they had with it the messianic dream of a better world. But the point was they were seen as Jews. And this is one of the problems with Jewish identity. It's self-definition. It's how the outside world defines you as well.

Q: What was Eisenstein's movie called?

A: It's called "Alexander Nevsky." It's absolutely wonderful. It's quite a slow movie. I once saw it on the big screen with the most wonderful score. Who wrote the score? Was it Prokofiev? I can't

remember. Anyway, it's brilliant.

Q: This is from Livia. "You have described the anti-Semitism that was prevalent in Europe and Russia due to Christian theology, nationalism, and socialism. Today we still see much anti-Semitism in these places. Do you have any thoughts about current manifestations of anti-Semitism?"

A: That's an interesting one. I'm going to quote you great Rabbi Sacks, "First they hated our religion, then they hated our race, now they hate our nation." Anti-Semitism is a product of the world of monotheism. You've asked me a huge question, Livia. I will come back to it and at some stage, I will give another lecture on the history of anti-Semitism. 'Cause I think it's quite important. Are there any other, what else have we got? You're such a lovely good bunch of people.

Q: Oh, this is from Michael. "Could it be said that leftist Jews have been a destructive force for their nation ever since the beginning of Bolshevism?"

A: Look, it's a very complicated story, isn't it? Yes, Michael, yeah. Could it be said that leftist Jews have been, it was Prokofiev. Thank you, thank you, Prokofiev, "Alexander Nevsky." If you can see it, it's marvellous.

Q: Right, David Septon, "Was Israel's anti-use of the judicial reaction to Russia's anti-use of Hebrew?"

A: No, it's actually even more ideological than that, David. The reason Hebrew, Hebrew was the language of our glorious past. Yiddish is the language of the diaspora. They wanted to recreate the Jews of the Maccabees. There's an extraordinary poem by Bialik after the Kishinev pogrom where he says, "You were once the people of the Maccabees, the seed of the saint, the signs of the lions." It was almost as though the diaspora had downgraded the Jew. There's a seriously big issue here that we must address it sometime. You know, after the Shoah, Abba Kovner said, "We will never again go like sheep to the slaughter." I really find that very troubling, because they didn't actually.

But that did become the mantra of certain strands of Zionism. And it's almost, what is the Jew? What is the Jew? Are we the peer? You know, you can make the case that after the destruction of the Second Temple, I've mentioned this to you before, who are the heroes? Bar Kochba and ben Zakkai. Bar Kochba with a flaming sword, he failed. Ben Zakkai has himself smuggled down to Jerusalem in a coffin. He goes to the Roman emperor, general, Vespasian, who later became emperor, and he begs him to let him set up a study centre. He creates the beginnings of what the Rabbonim called the portable homeland. Was it almost a passivity of the diaspora that saved the Jews? We were once an incredibly warlike people.

And in the end, if you look at the resistance in the war, it's not just the Warsaw Ghetto and

Sobibor, there are so many examples of resistance. But what is the Jew? Can we get it right?

Q: Could I repeat the two books that I mentioned?

A: I mentioned Simon Sebag Montefiore's "Stalin" and "Young Stalin." And I mentioned Trotsky's autobiography "My Life." And I also, the first chapter of "The non-Jewish Jew" by Isaac Deutcher is very good. Name of the Russian film is "Alexander Nevsky."

Q: Please elaborate on special Jewish charities.

A: This was the Joint. It's a very important Russian charity that helped in, Jewish charity, Joint is a Jewish charity based in America that helped in Russia.

Q: What is the first name of Dubnow?

A: Simon Dubnow.

Q: How did Hitler make a pact?

A: This is an interesting question, Leonard or Helen.

Q: How did Hitler, opposed to communism, make a pact with Stalin?

A: Pragmatism, he's going to conquer Europe. He doesn't want to have to fight a war on two fronts. His biggest mistake was the invasion of Russia. I believe that Jews has their in identity of Jews on their identity paper in the USSR, and is that correct? Yes, Jay, yes, of course. It's contradictory. It's crazy. No mention of Yevtushenko, that will come much later on in the course. I've got up to 1939, remember? Babi Yar, when we come to the show, let me explain what Wendy and I are trying to do.

Because Jewish, you know the Isiah Belin, the tragedy of the Jews, too much history, not enough geography. When I'm teaching Jewish history, we go from country to country and the way Wendy and I thought would be sensible was to chunk it in time, sort of, so that I'm taking you up to 1939. We will then go to America up until about 1880. Then we will look at the Jews of the Arab world. Then we will look at the Shoah.

So we go forward in chunks. And Yevtushenko and Babi Yar of course is the Shoah. And when we come to the Shoah, of course there will be many different strands we will look at. Please explain why Stalin became anti-Semitic as a result of meeting Golda Meir. It was nothing to do with Golda. When the ambassador of Israel arrives in Russia, 50,000 young Jews come out to greet him, greet her. Zionism is not dead in Russia. That was the problem for Stalin. Not because of Golda.

That's why, you see, they're not loyal to the Russian state. Are Jews loyal to the Russian state? No, they're not. That's where it becomes problematic. "I understood my grandfather left Poland because of the pogroms, but in Linwood it was said it was economic migration, true or false?" Ah-ha, this is one of the debates amongst the young Turk historians today. It's a mixture of both. Look, there between 1881 and 1914, Poland is part of the Russian empire. There was appalling poverty. 40% of Jews were on poor relief. There was also internal migration and there was also pogroms. I think I would actually, who I think is best on this. Let me think about it. Because this is really young historians arguing about it. I think it's a mixture of both. I didn't know this, Benny, last thing Stalin was listening to when he died was Maria Yudina, a Jewish pianist. '

Q: And this is anonymous, I love it, "To what extent was the rationale for saving the world explicitly based on Dicken and Lom?"

A You see, this is the point. These are the questions I wish I could answer. I don't know. I really puzzle about it. Is there something in the Jewish history? I mean that's why I brought Dubnow in today. Can I comment on the doctor's plot? I promise you, that's 19, in the early 50s. We will look at all of this.

It's all going to be, you know, I'm going to try and keep to time scale. I'm going to spend a lot of time on Soviet Russia post-1945. So obviously we'll be looking at it. But as I said, we had to make a decision how to do it. So the decision we made was to go up in decades. That's why on Thursday I'm looking at the Jews of Poland and then next week I'll be looking at the Jews of Lithuania, the Jews of Hungary, in the interwar period. I'm stopping in 1939. But we come back. Arlene Beer, "Dubnow exhorted fellow Jews to write it all down, scribe," yes, yes, yes. Felix Schaaf, my great friend. He said, because he lost everybody really.

And he said, he was the chap I told you whose family, his grandfather's a rabbi . He said the only comfort he can have is that we do write it all down. We are the people of the book. Where are the maps you promised? I hope you saw them at the beginning. Mr. Baxter. Will I be speaking about Jews of Poland on Thursday? Yes, Rafael is saying congregation of Jews in Moscow to meet Golda was spontaneous. Weren't Jews in the Soviet during the Purges? Yes, they were. One of them Stalin's closest friends, Kaganovich, died in his bed. "I thought the Jews were excluded from the professions under the Tsars," in the main they were.

But we're not talking about the Tsars. We're now talking about Russia. We're now talking about under Soviet Russia. I think, have we got any more questions, Shauna? Or have I dealt with them all?

- [Shauna] I believe that is it.

- Wow, anyway, thank you. I love your questions. It shows that you've really. You know, I cannot tell you how impressed I am with our group. The fact that we're international, the fact that we've got ideas coming from all over the world is absolutely special. And can I thank those of you



who've been sending me stories of their families. They are absolutely fascinating. And remember when you tell stories, they're not in the books. That's why I've said to so many of you, if you haven't recorded, record. You know, it depends on what you're experiencing. I'm not just talking about the darkness. I'm talking about experiences about Anglo-Jewry, South African Jewry.. You know, anybody's experiences add to the picture. I mean, I didn't, I'll tell you a funny story that I only found out, because I was friendly with Robert Wistrich.

He was born, he came to England in 19, he was five years old, so he came to England in about 1953. And his father sat up, he was a doctor, set up practise in the Kilburn High Road. And he lived at 24 Oxford Road, Kilburn. And when Robert was about eight, a couple of people from the Zionist organisation came 'round to announce that that was the home of Israel Zangwill and Theodore Herzl came to visit him in London. And that's where political Zionism was born. Well, I found that out because of the blue plaque and Robert. And there never was a blue plaque in the end, so, you know, write everything down. I found out so many interesting things from your letters. So keep 'em coming, if you don't mind.

But even more than that, write your stories down. I mean, I dunno what's happened to the rest of the world, but what I do know is that we have now locked down, so goodness knows how long that will be. I've just, why did Russians agree to lose their religion? Well, they didn't really have much chance. In the late 1800s, what area was actually covered at the Pale of Settlement. Okay, is "The Court of the Red Tsar" a good reading? Yes. Excellent, now this is from Bernie, "What area was actually covered in the Pale of Settlement?" I hope you, you know, I have in my house the "Atlas of World History." If you've got children and grandchildren, buy the map books, because it's not the same looking online.

Okay, close your eyes. Imagine the whole of the Russian Empire all the way out to Manchuria. In the West, think what is today, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. That was the Russian Empire and most of the Ukraine, that was the Russian Empire. It covered over 106 different national groups. It covered a fifth of the land surface of the globe. The Jews lived in the west of it and by Tsarist edicts, they were confined to the Pale of Settlement, Jews, right. If you send your story to Judy Ferrera, she will forward the email to me, all right? Okay, in South Africa, I had a J on my passport, wow.

Okay, a follow-up email, Judy and I will eventually be sitting down and upgrading the bibliography. Give us time. Judy is absolute, she's not online today, but Judy is absolutely snowed under, I mean, we never expected that our lockdown would grew like topsy, but it has. So Joe, so bear with us. We will do it. Kaganovich built the subway. Thank you, Jonathan. Okay, I think we finished, haven't we, Shauna? Shauna?

- Yes, we have. Yes, I think we have.

- Thank you, Shauna, for the maps. I'm going to try and do better with them. And I'll see you all on Thursday. God bless all of you, bye.