

DIANA PINTO

The Third Pillar?

Toward a European Jewish Identity

In early March 1999, three weeks before the war in Kosovo began, I attended an international conference in Budapest on “Southeastern Europe: a new agenda for the twenty-first century”. The conference brought together leading spokesmen from the United States, Western Europe, and every country of the Balkans, including spokesmen from Kosovo. There were, of course, no Jewish topics on the program, for Europe no longer possesses a burning “Jewish Question”, and Israelis were not present. Yet the Hungarian keynote speaker at the conference, as well as the leading spokesperson in the world of Balkan think tanks, an equally impressive Turkish businessman involved in regional confidence building, and many NGO activists from the region, were all Jewish. These activists working for transnational dialogue, borderless harmony, and a more civilized European space would of course have recoiled in horror if someone had identified their initiatives as ‘Jewish’ or sought to define them as ‘Jews’ as a way of relativizing or perhaps even disqualifying their statements. A commanding Jewish presence thus remained invisible on the continent as though the very idea of saying publicly “as a Jew in Europe, I would like Europe to be, or to do, such and such” continued to be as an impossible proposition after Auschwitz, as it had been before—an identity sacrilege in our universalist and highly individualist democratic societies.

The presence/absence of so many Jews at the Balkan conference begs the two central questions of this essay. The first is internal. Can Jews in Europe today come together to constitute a significant ‘third pole’ for a postwar Jewish world mainly established in Israel and America? The second is external and more fundamental for our concerns. Can Jews in Europe today assert their active presence in a democratic continent coming to grips with pluralist and multicultural challenges? In brief, sixty years after the Second World War and the Shoah and at the dawn of the twenty-first century can one speak of or even imagine the contours of a new European Jewish identity, one which would be enriching and useful to Jews and non-Jews in Europe and around the world?

The answer in my opinion is ‘yes’, qualified by the proviso that identities take shape only if there are people who incarnate them, in this case Jews who feel equally at home in their Jewish and European roots. It is my belief that only now in the context of a democratic (or aspiring democratic) and reunited pan-European continent do we have the premises for such a new Jewish identity. Its rooting would have been impossible without two essential political and cultural transformations: the transcendence of the ideological divisions of this century based on communism and the slow coming to terms with the Holocaust on the part of Europe’s different countries regardless of their victorious, defeated, occupied or neutral positions during the Second World War. The road pointing to such a future European Jewish identity, however, is still fraught with controversy; highly complex (both within and without), and even counter-intuitive.

For a European Jewish identity to emerge a series of major conceptual obstacles have had and still have to be lifted. The most fundamental is historical, cultural and ideological: a profound (and not wholly unjustified) antipathy for the very concept of ‘Europe’ in a post-Shoah Jewish world dominated by American Jewry and Israel. These two identities were consolidated in the postwar period precisely by turning their back to Europe, the continent where two-thirds of European Jewry were murdered in the name of a racist, purist, and very ‘European’ ideal whose roots lay in a nationalist, anti-capitalist and traditional Christian

vision of the continent.

The second obstacle was ideological: only with the end of communism as a state ideology symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 could the two halves of the continent be reconciled and the Jews within them, with their multiple and clashing pasts be reunited as voluntary Jews. The third obstacle that had to be lifted was the silence that surrounded the Holocaust, comfortably cordoned off into the realm of private Jewish grief or placed on a lofty pedestal of the “unspeakable” far from the very real life and politics of the continent. The fourth obstacle could be found in the realm of inter-religious dialogue in particular with respect to Catholicism. Only when the Vatican recently recognized the State of Israel could one speak of a final normalization between Jews and Christians without which the past could not be transcended. The fifth obstacle that is slowly being lifted is the tension and suspicion which surrounded Western European–Israeli relations in the postwar period in particular after Israel’s Six-Day War in 1967, characterized by an infernal spiral of suspicion and disdain on the part of the Israelis toward Europe. Europeans seemed to be bogged down vis-à-vis Israel in a psychologically disturbed and most unhealthy blend of silence, guilt, *Realpolitik* considerations vis-à-vis the Arab world, misplaced international morality and legalistic punctiliousness all of which wrought havoc with the very idea of Jewish life in Europe.

Only with the lifting of these obstacles, can one begin to delineate the contours of any future-oriented European Jewish identity and can Jews calmly confront the challenges ahead both as Europeans and as Jews. Among the most important ones I would place the pluralist democratic challenge, the multicultural challenge, and the Jewish coming to terms with a new European cultural phenomenon: the Jewish Space. Only then could one imagine that Jews would feel at ease in their multiple identities as they address Europe’s own problems from a perspective that would no longer exclude a Jewish and transnational component: the missing voice in the Balkans conference.

The postwar ambiguity of the European Jewish reference

After the near extermination of European Jewry, most Jews in the world were convinced that Europe had become, after Auschwitz, the equivalent of post-1492 Spain: a continent with a spent Jewish past no longer harboring significant Jewish life. On this count, ideology seemed to back history.

Zionism, well before Nazism and the creation of the state of Israel, delegitimized a Jewish presence in incurably anti-Semitic Europe and prodded the return of all the Jews to their historic homeland, Eretz Israel. The very term “European Jews” was associated in Zionist minds with Jews who had all but forfeited their identity through the folly of assimilation, or with curbed, at times sycophantic, ultra-religious Jews who had gone to the gas chambers as sheep to slaughter. For Zionists, Europe and the Jewish people were incompatible.

American Jews shared, along with so many other immigrants to the New World, a similar reading of Europe as a continent of intolerance and injustice. They considered instead America as an exceptional land of tolerance and harmony, the equivalent of a “terrestrial Jerusalem”. As citizens of the most victorious and powerful country in the postwar period, American Jews did not consider themselves to be living in Diasporic exile, for Jews and Jewish life thrived freely in America. Zionism was for the “other” Jews of the world, including all those of Europe, not for America’s. Thus, the two poles of post-Holocaust Jewish life shared a common revulsion to Europe and a common belief that Jews had no business being on the continent of death.

This anti-European vision was also shared by most Jews in Western Europe. They

could personally feel at home in their respective Western European homelands (either because they considered their countries to be victorious, neutral or because of the role played by the resistance under German occupation). However, this did not prevent most Jews from condemning “Europe” as a concept and value, and failing to see how Jews could possibly live in the other countries of the continent. The stand was the same but the dividing line between ‘possible’ and ‘impossible’ countries for Jewish life shifted in function of the nationality of the Jews doing the evaluation. As for the Jews in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, they were initially perceived by world Jewry as the ultimate victims in the former God forsaken lands of *Yiddishkeit*. This was to be particularly true for trapped Soviet Jewry, since most Eastern European Jews had at one time or another the opportunity to migrate to Israel (either freely as in the case of Bulgaria and Romania in 1948 or through expulsion as in the case of Poland in 1968). The others who stayed behind, often because they were militant communists bent on building a new internationalist and antifascist world even in Eastern Germany, were perceived by Jews around the world as ‘former’ Jews, destined to disappear from the family album. In brief, they were viewed as central accomplices in the making of a postwar *Judenrein Europa*.

Furthermore, across Europe, the majority of Jews also perceived themselves (through Zionist eyes) as a disappearing species. Vicarious Zionists justified their presence in Western Europe as a passing but vital phenomenon for the economic and political buttressing of a tiny and threatened Israel. They were confident that their children and future generations of Jews born in Europe would settle there. Assimilated Jews who were often married to non-Jews considered their “Jewishness” as a residual and passive trait with little intrinsic value, except for its diluted humanistic or ethical references. Communist Jews were, of course, militant internationalists who considered all religion and particularist ethnic identities (including the Jewish) as antiquated and useless. While the ultra-Orthodox Jews living in special enclaves in a few selected cities, above all London and Antwerp, were not interested in these essentially cultural debates and retained a crystal clear but exclusivist identity with no significant ties to the host countries or Europe *per se*.

The ambivalence of the links between Europe and the Jews was also prevalent among non-Jewish Europeans who more than willingly accepted the Zionist vision of the Jewish future being only in Israel. In this reading, Jews now finally had a homeland of their own. Therefore, it followed that those Jews who had stayed behind did so because they wanted to fully assimilate into their respective countries. On both counts, therefore, the birth of the State of Israel meant the end of the traditionally unsolvable “Jewish Question”, whether Jews could be integrated into Europe’s nations while keeping their identities. Israel’s exclusivist Jewish identity in effect confronted the ethnic or assimilationist definition of Europe’s own states and societies regardless of the ideological color of the regimes involved. Most postwar Europeans and most postwar Jews in Europe seemed to agree on one point: there could no longer be any significant collective Jewish life in Europe (beyond a religious identity). Such a life could only exist in Israel and to some degree in America, because of the number of Jews there. In Europe, Judaism was perceived as a past- and not as a future-related concept. In effect, Israel, in the eyes of many non-Jews, became a most useful ‘alibi’ in the evacuation of Jewish life from the European horizon.

The sea change of 1989

This rather comfortable state of mind both on the Jewish and the non-Jewish side came to an end, as so much else linked to the postwar period, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In the second half of the 1980s, Jewish life had begun simmering once more below the surface throughout Eastern Europe, as supposedly fully assimilated Jews and even more their postwar

children re-found their Jewish roots and identities inside the communist camp. Gorbachev terminated the decade-old state discrimination against Jews when he freed the most famous *refusnik*, Sharansky, and allowed, in the context of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, Jewish life to resume in the former Soviet Union. Simultaneously, he slowly liberalized travel and the right of all Jews to emigrate. In Eastern Germany, Hoenecker now sought in the wake of the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the *Kristallnacht* in 1988, to put ‘his’ loyal Jews to good use in his attempts to win the favor of the United States through what he considered its all powerful Jewish lobby.

Jews around the world, however, including those in Western Europe, assumed that the fall of the Wall would lead to only one outcome: the departure of all the Jews from the communist bloc and thus the final closing of accounts in the painful chapter of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Although hundreds of thousand of Soviet Jews did indeed go to Israel, many chose to stay behind and many even settled in Germany. Rather than turning into a definitive graveyard, Eastern Europe was suddenly aglow with a numerically small but qualitatively vital revival of Jewish life. Thus, the demise of communist regimes across Europe set the ground for an emerging European Jewish identity. For it was only when “captive Jews” were finally free to leave for Israel that one could identify and count the “voluntary” Jews who chose to remain willingly as Jews in their respective homelands and by ricochet in a renewed pan-European setting. These Jews were coming back to the fold out of forced or voluntary total assimilation, precisely at the same time as Jews in Western Europe were also dissimilating and taking on a more confrontational attitude toward their countries’ respective pasts during the Holocaust. They could pursue such an internal distancing with impunity because they were fully-fledged citizens of their respective countries and endowed with a self-confidence which their parents had lacked.

In the past decade international Jewish organizations, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Israeli cultural and social services, have played a leading role in sustaining Jewish life in Eastern Europe. These institutions have had as a priority to turn assimilated, communist Jews or those with Jewish parentage, into *bona fide* active Jews with an understanding of their past and culture and with a religious education. In the case of Israeli organizations there was also the added impetus to encourage immigration to Israel, especially in the former Soviet Union. Obviously, none of these institutions had a priority to foster a greater Jewish symbiosis with different national cultures; their task was to turn people with vague Jewish origins into Jews. Such a reconquest of an internal Jewish identity constituted the vital first step toward the emergence of a European Jewish identity whose parameters are more centrally defined by the surrounding democratic pluralist context and by Europe’s own cultural renewal. We are only at the beginning of this stage, one in which Western European as well as Eastern European Jews must confront the same challenges.

Constructing a European Jewish identity implies above all abolishing the new pecking order within European Jewry which replaced the old pre-Shoah order. In pre-Nazi Europe, Jewish ‘elites’ were those that were most assimilated, while the *Ostjuden* were perceived as ‘inferior’ and at times even threatening to Western European Jews because of their religious obscurantism, traditional life style and essential refusal of assimilation and modernity. The vast majority of the *Ostjuden* were exterminated during the Holocaust but it was their Judaism that appeared in retrospect to have been the most legitimate, along with its lay dialectical opposite, Zionism. Both had forcefully eschewed the hopeless illusion of Jewish integration or assimilation in European societies and the Shoah seemed to have justified them beyond appeal. The pecking order in the postwar Jewish world thus gave the highest status to the Zionists and, to a lesser degree, to the Orthodox, even though they were essentially perceived by others as guardians of a spent world. The great losers were the assimilated humanistic and

modern Jews that had predominated in Western Europe.

Positing a European Jewish identity implies paradoxically retracing one's steps backward and re-entering the lost world of humanistic European Jewry supposedly killed at Auschwitz to look for living embers rather than ashes. This is a major challenge. Postwar American Jews are convinced that they carried off the last spark of European Judaism into the terrestrial Jerusalem of the New World, far from spent Europe, and for most of the postwar period, it seemed undoubtedly so. Today, however, the surviving embers of the past are coming back to life in Europe itself, fanned by the winds of pluralist democracy and by the healing powers of history and with the help of American Jewish institutions. The comparison that comes to mind is with the California vines that were sent back to Europe after the phylloxera epidemic of the 1870s had destroyed Europe's most prestigious vineyards, so as to bring them back to life. The California vineyards themselves had of course originally come from Europe. European Judaism will be the product of a similar grafting.

Of course, Jewish life in Europe can only have a future if it is rooted in Europe itself and if it confronts its own very special challenges, first and foremost the legacy of the Holocaust. It can do so now precisely because the Holocaust is slowly coming to rest where it belonged from the start, not only in the circles of Jewish sorrow but above all on the shoulders of the countries and societies that abetted it; that is, not just on guilty Germany but on Europe as a whole.

The Holocaust comes home

A European Jewish identity is becoming conceivable not only because Europe has transcended its ideological divide to become an open and potentially democratic space but also and perhaps above all because the taboo of the Holocaust is at last being lifted from the collective history of the continent. The Holocaust has at last spilled over beyond guilty black Germany and dark gray 'anti-Semitic' Poland to penetrate the identity and history of all other European nations, wreaking havoc with the all too facile, and not very useful, cutting lines established after the Second World War between victor, defeated and neutral nations; divisions that bore no direct link with the Jewish experience. From Norway to Turkey, from Portugal to Russia, the specificity of what happened to the Jews during the Holocaust is finally standing out with respect to the far more classical stories of war suffering, resistance, antifascist struggle and national liberation. Confronting the Holocaust across Europe means coming to terms not just with the ultimate symbol of Birkenau but with the far more prosaic multiple administrative, political, cultural, and economic measures that inexorably isolated and later cut off Jews from the rest of the population, turning them into pariahs before they became victims. It means analyzing the phenomenon of collaboration not in terms of a few prominent individuals but in terms of the heavy state and social structures that accepted to go along with anti-Semitic measures bureaucratically and 'normally'. It means comprehending the daily decisions and discriminations that paved the road that led to Auschwitz, refusing to turn the Holocaust into a quasi mystical 'unexplainable' evil, a black transcendence with no clear link to everyday life with its cortège of human weaknesses, ambitions and egoisms. This process has been gaining strength in the last two decades, as the last trials of collaborators shed new light on the Jewish specificity of the horror, while also showing how eager bureaucrats across Europe performed their own sinister tasks with postwar impunity. The trial of Maurice Papon, a high civil servant in Vichy France but also in the postwar period is perhaps exemplary on this count. The role played by neutral countries, most notably Switzerland but also Sweden, in helping indirectly the Nazi war effort has changed previously favorable evaluations of their wartime record. Similarly, in-depth studies on the anti-Semitic prejudices of heretofore victorious countries such as Great Britain (whose immediate postwar

coldness toward the survivors who wanted to reach Palestine undid its previous heroic stance in Jewish eyes), can be matched with the rereading of ‘nice’ little Italy’s own record towards its Jews starting in 1938, or Holland’s record of collaboration in the extermination of 80 per cent of its Jewish population. And historians are only beginning to delve into the dossiers concerning the occupied parts of the former Soviet Union, especially Belarus and the Ukraine where apparently collaboration with the Nazis against the Jews was not uncommon. For a long time Poland stood alone in a category of dark grayness which is now increasingly encroached upon by previously ‘white’ or clear countries. The outcome of all of this Holocaust research, internal questionings and confrontations with each nation’s war past has been most salutary for all, not just the Jews, for it points the way to a better understanding of the power of state enforced racism, and the dangerous reliability of administrations to follow orders and crush individual lives and group destinies with the utmost facility.

Thus, the Holocaust is expanding from the confined realm of Jewish grief to become a tragic chapter of Europe’s own history, Europe’s own genocide. In the process the victims are no longer perceived as intrinsic ‘foreigners’ whose surviving members then went ‘home’ to Israel, but as integral pieces, *qua* Jews of an open European continent. The spotlight placed on Jewish themes throughout Europe has had one primordial consequence for Europe’s own Jews. It has in a sense freed them from the existential burden of being the vestals of the Holocaust in the name of the murdered and on behalf of the survivors. With time the Holocaust should cease to be an abyss between Jews and non-Jews in Europe to become a bridge. Jews in Europe after all are the only ones who conjugate their verbs in the future within the continent. The descendants of the victims live their daily lives with the descendants of the perpetrators or the bystanders. Such a rubbing of shoulders in no way minimizes the horror of the past but it does lead to a more tolerant perception of how peoples and societies can change. If Jews can live voluntarily in Europe, it means that there is no essential historical and unwashable European ‘evil’ for which the only response can be Zionism. European Jews in this context offer the living proof that the Holocaust, while never being forgotten, can be transcended, and this stance more than any other, may set them apart from their Israeli or American cousins.

The “coming home” of the Holocaust to Europe has had only beneficial consequences for its Jews, lifting an oppressive silence and permitting long needed national debates to take place, not just along Jewish–non-Jewish lines. Its impact on American and Israeli Jews has been more ambiguous. In both countries Europe and the Holocaust have been frozen in the Jewish memory, and turned in the process into a founding moment of an alternative Jewish stance, based on a geographically transposable ‘never again’, with the enemy becoming either the Arabs, Europeans, or America’s blacks. Paradoxically, the Holocaust has become an identity-building moment for American Jews who seek to preserve some quintessential specificity vis-à-vis the WASPs with which they are increasingly identified (especially by America’s other minorities) in terms of power, economic success and status. The Holocaust is also replacing the optimistic nation-building Zionism of the early years in Israeli society as a new (this time defensive) common glue of identity to be shared by Israelis of all origins. The horrors of the Warsaw ghetto have now entered the consciousness of Ethiopian Jews as young Israelis embark on Holocaust tours of Europe, which show them very little life indeed. This is best exemplified by the “March of the Living” in the Auschwitz compounds.

Any future European Jewish identity will be anchored instead in the transcending of the Holocaust, by building such an identity through a dialectical approach to the Jewish European past: on the one hand, interpreting the pre-Shoah Jewish world in a positive manner (and not as a prelude to Auschwitz) but also perceiving to what degree the Europe of today is qualitatively new and better (because open and democratic) with respect to that same rediscovered past. Thus, in ‘Jewish Europe’, memory will not be frozen around the Holocaust,

nor used almost exclusively in order to square accounts with the past, but elastically and creatively reconstructed around positive poles. Furthermore, with time it will be increasingly reconstructed in tandem with the continent's majority 'others'. For Jewish life, as Europe confronts its increasingly numerous 'others', will take on an ever stronger emblematic quality with the integration of the Holocaust into the pasts of all nations. The difference with America and Israel on this count is crucial.

Europe's 'new Jews'

In the Israeli and in the American imagination, naturally enough, Europe's Jews today are perceived very much as the inheritors of the history and the weaknesses of their pre-Shoah forefathers whose civilization purportedly went up in smoke at Auschwitz. Yet nothing could be further from the truth for a series of crucial structural reasons. Today's Jews in Europe are qualitatively different and very much 'new' compared to those of the prewar past. First of all, in Western Europe, many are simply geographically new thanks to the important migrations of the postwar period. French Jewry was renewed through the arrival of North African Jews, above all from Algeria in the early 1960s. But the same was true for Italian Jewry that received Jews, as Great Britain and Switzerland, from Lebanon, Syria and Egypt, while the Scandinavian countries received Jews from Poland. Austria received many Jews from Hungary, while West Germany welcomed Jews from Poland, Hungary and Romania, and most recently and most spectacularly Jews from Russia.

Equally important, those Jews who were the descendants of the long established pre-Holocaust Jewries of Europe were themselves transformed by historical events into a new type of Jew. The old assimilated Jewries of Western Europe may have retained a national loyalty but they could no longer muster the same kind of unconditional patriotism as in the past. This was especially true among the younger generations who were better informed about the grayness of their national antecedents. In Eastern Europe communism assimilated Jews forcefully, turning them into citizens like everybody else at the expense of their own often fragile identities. Postwar Polish Jews had little in common with their prewar predecessors, just as few postwar French Jews continued to be the equivalent of the assimilated 'Israelites' of the past. Furthermore, in France the survivors of the *Ostjuden* who had immigrated after the First World War and who were never part of the old French Jewish elites, have taken up their own identity in the postwar period with a vengeance, next to the Sephardi Jews. In countries with virtually no Jewish populations, such as Spain or Portugal, new Jews arrived who were a mix of German exiles, Ashkenazi immigrants from Latin America, and local Jews that often emerged from clandestinity, true Marranos, although the term was now also used to evoke Poland's 'new Jews'.

To these Jews must be added the relative cohorts of Jews stemming from mixed marriages and actively choosing to espouse a Jewish identity, whereas in the past they would have been nothing in religious terms or members of the majoritarian religion. These "half Jews" pose a most disturbing historical question. Indeed, many of today's active and voluntary Jews in Europe would not even have been born had their own parents not survived because they were the children of mixed marriages.

To this mix must also be added two other categories of Jews not from Europe: American Jews living as expatriates in Europe who played a crucial role in helping to set up voluntarist communities often of a liberal sort and taught the notion of grass-roots community organization; and Israelis abroad who have brought with them their own national culture but also a renewed interest in Hebrew literature beyond the religious texts.

If American Jewry with the opening of Eastern Europe has gone into an immense nostalgia trip for their roots in the world of *Yiddishkeit*, Jews in Eastern Europe, coming out

of assimilation, feel no similar need. Their search is for viable modern roots in the Judaism of their forefathers; for a useable as opposed to a mythical past. These 'new Jews' who are dissimilating both East and West are searching for a compromise. Unlike their prewar ancestors, they are not marginal insiders who in reality were outsiders, but true insiders who seek to keep an identity foot 'outside' by recuperating, or rather reinventing, a Jewish tradition and identity for themselves. They are living Jews, who are conquering for themselves places within civil society, no longer confining themselves in niches within the protective (or often stifling) structures of the state. One can no longer speak about Anglo-Jewry, French Jacobin Jews, or Jewish Italian patriots, or much less of old German Jews. What is emerging before us are new personae: Jews with multiple loyalties who are rather like free electrons in newly defined state and cultural perimeters. Theirs is an identity challenge that will no longer brook pigeon holing in the categories defined by the dominant Christian world or by the 'others' as had been the case throughout European history.

Toward a new America–Israel–Europe triangle

The third major transformation facilitating the creation of a European Jewish identity is to be found in the blurring of lines between American Jewry, Israel and a new Jewish presence in Europe. In the immediate postwar period the setting seemed starkly clear. Jewish life in Europe was finished. Israel constituted the future, along with America even though the two poles of world Jewry lived in an uneasy balance. American Jews had the security and the clout, Israelis the historical legitimacy and the universal 'meaning'. The latter needed the former but the opposite was also true. For American Jewry, Israel was a mission and an ideal, just as for the Jews living in prosperous Western Europe, who lived uneasily in a lost continent as sentinels against anti-Semitism and as vestals to the Holocaust. Jewish irritation and even hatred toward Europe did not need artificial cultivation. Occasions to display it abounded as a weak and fragile continent compounded all possible errors toward the Jewish State, particularly after its victory in the Six-Day War in 1967. Europe's interest in the Arab world, her need for oil, fused with a left-wing anti-Zionism grafted unto old anti-Semitic stances, and all of this in the midst of the ongoing silence over the Holocaust could only confirm the worst fears about the old continent that seemed to have understood nothing and learned nothing vis-à-vis the Jews. The only consolation to be derived from this sorry state of affairs was, to put it brutally, that fortunately there was no "Jewish Question" left to be solved in the God forsaken lands of Europe (which meant, for most of the postwar period, Western Europe—captive Soviet Jewry remained very much of a cause). Europe's Jews were peripheral and negligible quantities, second-class assistants in the great Jewish play unfolding in Israel and America, with the added misfortune of performing on a lateral and badly lit stage with an indifferent public.

In the last two decades, this black and white vision of each side of the triangle has become less clear cut, more open to reflection and even more relativized. American Jewry, so proud of its power, has turned inward to contemplate its own inherent Diasporic fragility: declining numbers, mixed marriages, a loss of commitment and ideals as its members moved up the social ladder. Members who are virtually disappearing into a WASP elite condition in the space of just three generations, from ghetto to national power. In the great multicultural jockeying for power, America's Jews stand uneasily among the power elite, having still barely recovered from the struggles and tensions of their relations with the black community after the initial honeymoon of the civil rights period. Europe's historical victims could not make a similar claim for 'victimhood' within the American body politic whose quintessential historical victims were either the American Natives dispossessed of their land and identity, or the descendants of the black slaves—the only group not to have come voluntarily to the New

World. In this context, one can better understand the recent American Jewish fixation on the Holocaust as a world historical event that could restore for them a sense of historical victimhood by proxy, one that could be enshrined in the very heart of the American liberal and democratic conscience—all the more easily that the historical culprits of the horror lay elsewhere, in Germany.

Similarly, Israel has also experienced a major transformation that has eroded its original ideological power, historical purity, and progressivism. As the most powerful country in the region, Israel has experienced the reality of state power with its concomitant *Realpolitik* choices, errors and injustices, in particular toward the Palestinians. Paradoxically, it has achieved its quest for normality and should not be surprised if it is treated as such in the international arena. More importantly, the tiny democracy in the Middle East has developed its own internal enemies in the ultra-Orthodox nationalist camp, whose beliefs are at the antipodes of social democratic Zionism, bordering on a Jewish version of ‘blood and soil’ fascism, religious intolerance and ethnic purity. Internal strife, deadly tensions, and a growing feeling that Israel, like all of the Western world, but Europe in particular, still had democratic lessons to learn, has given Israelis a new humility. A major role was played in this sense by the revisionist historians who underscored the inherent European-like ethnic nationalism that underlay the foundations of the Jewish State in its behavior to its historic ‘others’, the Arabs. In other words, Israel was much more a part of Europe than its Zionists ideology claimed. It too is having to retool its national identity to take democratic pluralism into account. Thus, its challenges are far closer to those of Europe at present. The gap between the old world and the new Israel is narrowing rather than expanding.

Furthermore, since 1989 Europe has begun to define itself in terms of democratic and human rights values and with respect to what should be its postwar specificity, national and historical reconciliation—all values that Israel also needs in the context of growing cultural, ethnic and political-religious cleavages, which eerily echo the historic battles for separation of church and state in European history. Suddenly the parallel could be drawn between the rights of Jews in different European countries and the rights of Israel’s ‘others’ including liberal lay or religious Jews in Israel itself.

More prosaically, the Jews living in Europe no longer need to feel that they are the lone sentinels working on behalf of a lonely and fragile Israel. The country has become fully recognized, independent and strong with a technological lead that places it among the countries that count in the world. It has entered into ever greater partnership with the European Union, which is itself embarked on a quest for peace in the Middle East that no longer tilts the balance toward the Arab states against Israel. A major source of tension has been alleviated. Another reason for the changed setting is of course the fall of communism which brought half of Europe back into direct contact with the Israeli state. Slowly but surely, Israelis will also head back to Europe in search of their own political and democratic roots, but less with an American-style sense of nostalgia as with a sense of future-oriented priorities and *rapprochement* of their country with its natural cultural and historical hinterland.

The relativization of the three sides of the Jewish triangle is only slowly emerging today but it will have an undoubtedly crucial impact on future European Jewish life, in that it will disengage it from the need to be the equivalent of Israeli ambassadors abroad, in order to resume its own Jewish tasks on the continent. Israel will need a strong Diaspora in Europe not just as a messenger but far more importantly as a democratic and pluralist counterweight to the State’s own inevitable *Realpolitik* and political choices which can only lead to compromise with the ultra-religious camp. In this context, it will be neither in the interests of Israelis nor of European Jews to speak of poor or even ‘dying’ European cousins at the hands of a haughty, historically self-contained and self-confident Israel. The relationship will be mutually beneficial and reciprocal. In the future, European Jewry may well end up being a

point of equilibrium between the Israeli and the American poles of world Judaism.

Inter-religious dialogue

In the wake of the Holocaust, the Christian churches have slowly not only integrated Judaism into their own theology, but have also given it a commanding presence in the marketplace of spirituality. They are looking for Jewish ‘voices’ to nourish and buttress an increasingly open Christian world, while also expecting Jews to act as a third interlocutor toward the increasingly strong Muslim presence in Europe. This situation is so totally new that Jewish spokesmen have still not fully availed themselves of its opportunities. The result has been a strong Jewish hesitation to embark in the realm of inter-religious dialogue. One of the burning questions of the future will be whether Jews will be able to overcome their millennial suspicion of Christian moves towards the Jews, still perceived as indirect maneuvers toward the ultimate goal of conversion. Or should one accept at face value the profundity of the sea change in Christian outlook and extend a hand for a new type of inter-religious dialogue that will go beyond the simple (and hardly achieved) teaching of respect for one another? Here again, the Vatican’s decision to recognize the State of Israel, after the seminal work of the Vatican II in terms of the Jewish faith, played a seminal role in lifting one of the major postwar stumbling blocs in the Jewish mistrust of Christianity.

Paradoxically, the different transformations on the European stage outlined above can actually turn Europe’s ‘new Jews’ into the freest of all Jews with respect to the Holocaust past and the past in general. With time they should be in a position to share their concerns with other Europeans who are their logical historical interlocutors. The shared conflictual past, once out in the open, offers a vast array of creative tensions, identity solutions, and forward looking syntheses that neither the Jewish ethnic heterogeneity of Israel nor the increasingly multicultural American context can offer. With this perspective in mind, one should turn to the challenges that European Jews will have to confront in the twenty-first century in a remapped continent.

The challenges

The challenges we refer to here are of a political and cultural nature, and not in the spiritual arena. Jewish religious life interests us only insofar as its manifestations succeed or fail in espousing the leading values of our age, pluralist democratic tolerance. While the ultimate ‘internal’ Jewish challenge is to lead an integral and holy Jewish life, what interests us here are the far more terrestrial challenges of Jewish life inside the wider *polis* and in the cultural *agora*. These challenges exist everywhere, including Israel and America. However, in Europe, perhaps because they are spelled out for the first time across the continent, they take on a special significance and even symbolism.

Accustomed to millennia of discrimination and exclusion, followed by the maelstrom of emancipation and its apparent traumatic finale of the Holocaust, Jews in Europe have yet to come to terms with their condition as fully-fledged citizens of their respective countries able to pursue the Jewish identity of their choice in the freest possible manner. The three challenges that will confront them in the future are the pluralist democratic challenge, the multicultural challenge, and the Jewish presence in Europe’s growing Jewish Space. Meeting the pluralist challenge implies finding an equilibrium between the pluralist ideals of the outside world and the manifold incarnations of an often traditional and hierarchical Judaism; a Judaism whose internal equilibrium had been greatly facilitated in the past by the external unifying pressure of often hostile surroundings. Confronting the multicultural challenge implies reflecting on the political and cultural implications of a Jewish identity in Europe’s

historically laden nations. Should Jews become ‘outsiders’ prodding a new multicultural tolerance for their traditions and rituals? Should they invoke the same tolerance instead as ‘insiders’ dismantling from within millennial prejudices but in the name of equality rather than in that of special (as though ‘exotic’) treatment? The third and most difficult challenge is the Jewish Space: how should Jews approach and intervene in Europe’s growing Jewish Spaces, increasingly initiated, populated and even administered by non-Jews? The three challenges all stem from Europe’s own sea change: Jews are no longer a taboo topic; their past and the Holocaust are now evoked openly; their traditions are acknowledged, their presence held in esteem, but also banalized increasingly as one (albeit highly symbolical) aspect of a pluralist society. In brief, they must, *qua* Jews, rather than as individuals, define their own place in increasingly mobile societies whose past, as everything else, is in the process of being reinvented. The Jewish challenges we address here are in effect democratic challenges.

The pluralist challenge

Post-Holocaust Jews in Western Europe were able to live in dignity, because their countries allowed them implicitly what would have been unimaginable in the past. While being considered by all as impeccable citizens of their respective democracies, Jews were allowed the implicit right to multiple loyalties. They were free to express extremely strong ties and links to another state, Israel, while also engaging in constant and active contacts with Jews elsewhere in the Diaspora. They often held positions, for instance on Soviet Jewry, that were not at all compatible with the foreign policies and interests of their respective countries. As a proof of the radical newness of this implicit contract between Western democracies and their Jews, one needed simply to look at what was happening to the Jews in non-democratic environments. Jewish collective cultural and even religious life was considered dangerous and potentially traitorous in the right-wing authoritarian and in the communist regimes of the postwar period. Jews in Spain under Franco and in Portugal under Salazar had police files, limited community privileges and rights, and were surrounded by a taint of suspicion. Under communism, they were always at the mercy of the label of “Zionist” traitor; ideal candidates, despite the presence of stalwart communist Jews, for the charge of counter-revolutionary activity. In brief, they had no possibility of developing their multiple identities and therefore their Jewish commitment.

Now that most of Europe is no longer under the sway of ideological regimes, Jews must confront the consequences of their newly found freedoms and multiple rights. The challenge they must confront is far more internal than external: how to develop in their communities the same pluralist tolerance that they have come to expect of the outside world. For if Jews are accepted with their multiple loyalties outside, they must now in turn accept multiple ways of being Jewish inside. It was in nineteenth-century Germany that Judaism’s modern Liberal, Conservative and Orthodox currents crystallized, while elsewhere in Western Europe, the Judaism practiced inside the official community structures was far more liberal than at present. The Holocaust undid in Europe most of this religious progress toward tolerance. Post-Holocaust Jewry in Western Europe huddled around their respective communities in a self-protective stance which privileged tradition over innovation in what was basically a traumatized collective survival. Unity was more important than internal pluralism when pursuing the only ‘legitimate’ postwar Jewish tasks, combating anti-Semitism and supporting Israel. Orthodoxy won the upper hand in postwar communities where many had lost the religious faith, and subsequently continued to exert its hold on traditionalist but non-observant Jews who rallied around Orthodox positions (which they did not necessarily personally uphold or follow) as a way of combating the younger generations’ religious apathy

and proclivity to intermarriage. The only solution seemed to be a traditionalist closing of ranks.

The current tensions which can be found in all Jewish communities across Europe between those who seek to maintain central Orthodox structures and those who seek a more pluralist expression of multiple religious identities reflects the transformation of European Jewry. Anti-Semitism and vicarious Zionism are no longer the mainstays of Jewish life on the continent. Jews express their “Jewishness” in other far more positive manners, be they religious or cultural, and in all cases voluntary. They no longer gravitate to their communities out of fear or in search of protection against hostile surroundings. On the contrary. They now bring the openness of their pluralist and even postmodern surroundings into their Jewish life and increasingly expect the two sides of their identities to conform.

As a result, most communities with a sufficient critical mass of Jews now have ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Liberal and even radical religious Jewish groups, as well as an equivalent amount of cultural lay Jews. All of these groups contest the legitimacy and hegemony of established community structures, which in response to the pressure of the ultra-Orthodox have strengthened their religious rigor. In what can be interpreted as the triumph of democratic individualism in Jewish life, ever greater numbers of Jews refuse to accept this trend and show no inclination to “kowtow” in front of their more Orthodox peers. The result has been internal religious wars that can no longer be hidden to outside eyes, and the splitting of communities which no longer feel sufficiently threatened by the outside world to cling together artificially. As with so much else, European Jews have espoused the American model of parallel Judaisms even when they lack the numbers and the clout. However, in the European context, such a pluralist choice has major political implications. Most of the official community structures of European Jewry were institutional inventions of the respective states whose rulers wanted to have one official Jewish interlocutor. Bringing pluralism into Jewish life implies transforming the very mental categories of the state with regard to religion, that is, bringing it into civil society and away from the vortex of power.

Democratic individualism and pluralism have thus penetrated the walls of the Jewish communities producing permanent cracks and divisions. Communities in the future can hope to remain united only if they transform themselves into umbrella-like institutions housing very different ways of being Jewish. The result, however, will be the end of the monolithic Jewish link to the state via a personality or a small group of men in power that has prolonged up to the present the medieval form of ties between a Jewish official elite and the state, society at large continuing to be perceived as intrinsically anti-Semitic and therefore dangerous.

Two other issues fall also into this pluralist challenge: the redefinition of the role of women and the inclusion of new types of Jews who in the past were neither considered Jewish by the religious authorities nor sought to define themselves as Jews. The debate over gender equality is destined to intensify as well as that surrounding the key question of “Who is a Jew?”. Jewish law proclaims that a Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother or someone who has converted to Judaism. Patrilineal Jews are therefore not Jews and must convert to enter Judaism. Today, such Jews are increasingly contesting this law and seek to be in the fold without conversion, not to mention an increasing number of persons with one or two Jewish grandparents, who in the past would have been most pleased to jump the line out of Judaism but who are now adamantly fighting their way in. On both counts the egalitarian and the voluntaristic assumptions of our respective societies are impinging on Jewish community life, for in democracies all walls are ultimately transparent. Maintaining an open but still coherent Jewish identity in an age of individual choices and commitments thus constitutes one of the greatest challenges to Judaism in an age when outsiders are increasingly tempted to ‘look in’ expecting to find the highest ethical values of their age represented even more powerfully

within the Jewish fold, in what can only be called a post-Shoah Jewish benefit of the doubt.

The multicultural challenge

As European societies increasingly take into account the many different types of 'others' in their midst whether they be older ethnic minorities or more recent immigrants, Jews will increasingly have to decide how they define themselves on a transformed continent. In an increasingly voluntary manner, Jews seem to cover all possible definitions ranging from British Lords to Turks in Germany. Paradoxically, in Great Britain, where the Jewish elites occupy the highest levels of power, many Jews feel comfortable with the idea of being part of a multicultural, even ethnic definition of Jewishness. The more Orthodox Jews even go so far as to feel closest to the Muslims in Britain with their dietary and educational imperatives, as they see themselves fighting the same particularist battles. French Jews on the other hand, as France itself, will not hear of any multicultural or minority status for themselves or for anyone else, for that matter. Swedish Jews have opted for minority status but not their Danish counterparts. Hungarian Jews refused to be labeled as a minority while the Poles have accepted it. Jews must thus come to grips with the power of the voluntary, often non-religiously defined Jews, while also positioning themselves within wider national debates. Sometimes the two converge in dramatically ironical contexts as, for instance, in Russia where Jews still have to fight against open traditional anti-Semitism in a population that continues to label as 'Jews' those they perceive as internal enemies, even when those under attack are not even Jewish or no longer think of themselves as Jews. The barely united continent thus contains a vast range of identity situations. Perhaps the most flagrant example of pre-modern categories meeting postmodern choices is taking place in Russia where until recently Jews, against their will, were identified as such in their internal passports. Now many are actively militating to keep this identity in the new passports as a way to ensure that they can profit from the rights given to national minorities.

One thing is certain. Across the continent, being Jewish has ceased to be, as with the old Western Jewish elites, a simple matter of private religious practice for otherwise undistinguishable patriotic citizens of a given nation. There has been a vast homogenization of Jewish cultural identity whose roots are to be found increasingly in ethnic references and not just in religious practice. The opening of Western Europe, including even the Mediterranean countries such as Italy to the influx of *Yiddishkeit* marks one of the great cultural transformations in the Jewish world, just as Sephardi references have entered mainstream Judaism. Jewish humor, cooking, music and life styles have taken on a planetary village quality, just as Jews of different stripes are now attached to world or regional movements whose loci are to be found both in America and in Israel. National Jewish traditions have been put on the back burner in the creation of a vast Jewish global village.

But can one really think of Jews as obvious members of a multicultural society? Can they be equated to Turks or North Africans or the increasing number of truly distant foreigners (such as for instance the Filipinos) to be found across wealthy and even not so wealthy Europe? Regardless of the actual status chosen by different Jewish communities across the continent, Jews will always remain impossible to categorize, for they are not only a religious or an ethnic group, but also a cultural group and in all three cases, they are hardly on the margins of their respective societies. If they are to be found as a compact group, it is rather in the upper strata of all European, including post-communist, societies, thus defying all the stereotypes of multiculturalism.

But the challenge lies elsewhere. Can Jews really be perceived as multicultural 'others' when they were often at the very heart of their respective, even if often historically anti-Semitic, societies? Does the partial cultural dissimilation of the younger generations

amount to their claiming to be of a different culture? Hardly. Their dissimilation is rather the proof of how well integrated they really are in their own national contexts. Only ‘insiders’ can step outside. One of the major Jewish stakes across Europe today is to have their own Jewish history factored into the national histories of their respective countries. This demand makes sense because there was a Jewish history that was often ignored or even swept under the rug by the Jews themselves in their pre-Holocaust desire to assimilate. But this long historical presence as often symbiotic ‘others’ with clear roles inside the societies actually sets the Jews apart with respect to the new actors of the multicultural Western European scene who have no similar hallowed presence to harken back to. It also sets the Jews apart from the numerous ethnic minorities which had a homeland nearby, most often across the border.

Delving into the Jewish past in Europe thus becomes less an exercise in multiculturalism than in historical and cultural symbiosis—the very opposite of the current ideological fashion. One may ask European societies today to respect the Jewish ‘dignity’ and ‘difference’ but the essential lies elsewhere. The cutting edge is to make Europeans understand the degree to which their own culture was influenced by the Jewish presence, not just to stress its own separate dignity. Klezmer music may have become a code word for a separate Jewish ethnicity (even though even that music was in full symbiosis with the folk music of Eastern Europe). However, the real challenge today is to reflect on the Jewish component of many a Jewish contribution to universal culture, be it in the musical or literary worlds or in the great modernist avantgarde of the turn of the century. This is an important field whose ramifications extend to living Jewish culture today. Pigeonholing Jewish creativity in an ethnic sense is the easy way out. The true challenge entails evaluating the Jewish component of what can still be called ‘high culture’, unraveling the symbiotic threads, fostering new interactions, stressing creativity over predictability, in a complex juggling of identities.

Paradoxically, any Jewish claim to multiculturalism is strongest not in the ethnic but in the religious realm. For one needs to dismantle the all too comfortable, even ritual, references to the Judeo-Christian tradition. This overused adjective is in dire need of being revised to make sure that Judaism stops being considered as a qualifying, albeit still extant, but nevertheless “previous” chapter of Europe’s own Christian religious identity. The hyphen between the two adjectives must be interpreted as an equal sign not as an implicit arrow pointing to a final product in a chemical reaction. The challenge of presenting Judaism in its richness and complexity to a wider public is integrally before all Jews, who have been too used to regarding non-Jewish interest in Jewish matters with suspicion. In this sense, Judaism does present the ultimate multicultural threat to established Christianity if it were to reclaim what is its due in the construction of the latter religion (how many Christians know the Jewish origins of their most sacred holidays?) or, more importantly, to hold its own in the contemporary supermarket of spirituality.

Jews must confront the multicultural challenge head on because, despite its many attractive and even noble features, multiculturalism contains vicious seeds and perverse effects that can lead to a renewed marginalization of Jewish life in Europe, this time around in a self-imposed ghetto. In order to preserve their history and identity, Jews can neither allow themselves to belong to the assimilated majority nor to one of many multicultural minorities. Theirs is a Janus-faced position. Judaism in Europe predated both Europe and Christianity, Jewish history was co-present with European history in ways that resemble that of no other group. On this count, Jews cannot be compared to the Muslims, Asians, or Africans who now compose multicultural Europe. In terms of commanding respect as a minority, Jews can of course find common ground with members of other religions, such as the Muslims, but one must never forget that many Jews are lay and refuse a uniquely religious identity. For many of them, even when religious, the lay framework of their respective societies is a crucial

reference.

Jews 'belonged' on the European continent from the start, even though they were often internal outsiders whose presence was very much on the margins of European life and whose center of gravity remained steadfastly collective and inwardly oriented until modern times. Today it is the nature of 'belonging' that must be re-appraised, not its validity. This should be the Jewish battle for tomorrow's open Europe. And it should include a frank discussion of Jewish belonging to forces which inherently negated democratic pluralism, for instance communism. Ideally, Jews should serve as two-way plugs in redefining a wider notion of belonging for Europe's 'others', but in redefining it from within and not from without. The multicultural challenge therefore must be confronted in an enriching and not impoverishing manner. Jews should not lose the complexity of their insider/outsider identity in the process. On the contrary, they should present it as a model for other groups to follow even if they do not have as long a historical pedigree on the continent.

One final aspect needs to be mentioned. Jewish life contains its own multiculturalism. Major ethnic differences still exist, supplemented by religious differences and, increasingly, life style differences. Upper class Jewish elites have little in common with marginal Jews growing up in *banlieues* of Paris and powerfully portrayed in Matthieu Kassovitz' *La Haine*. The ultra-Orthodox share very little with radical liberal Jews, former communists with militant Zionists, traditionalists with lay Jews. Yet all must learn to live together if one can speak of a Jewish identity. How can Jews go 'multicultural' if they do not come to grips with their own internal multiculturalism first, and how can Europe go multicultural if it does not come to terms first with its greatest historical 'others' the Jews? Jews thus are central characters in this doubly binding challenge.

On the crucial question of the past, Jews should reclaim it by factoring themselves into it fully, rather than perceiving it as 'foreign' or hostile. To behave otherwise would be doing injustice to their ancestors and in a way confirming anti-Semitic notions that they never 'belonged'. The key to multiculturalism is to transform it into radical pluralism. But once again this means making peace with the very notion of Europe, for one cannot claim to belong to an entity which one still considers with ambivalence or repulsion. The challenge is to give it (i.e. Europe), a positive sense.

The Jewish Space

One of the results of the European sea change and above all of the Holocaust's 'coming home' to Europe's historical consciousness has been a major interest in Jewish themes in the non-Jewish world. This interest has grown exponentially in recent years. The result has been a plethora of publications on Jewish themes, novels and films written by non-Jews with Jewish characters in them (the most notable being of course, Roberto Benigni's *La vita è bella*), memoirs and histories, Jewish traditions ranging from the Torah to cuisine, Jewish jokes, Jewish museums, memorials, exhibits. Every corner of Europe is busy exhibiting the slightest Jewish traces in its past, whether they go back to more than two millennia as in Italy or to a 'mere' two centuries as in Sweden. This interest in Jewish 'things' which has no historical precedent in European history constitutes the greatest challenge of all for a European Jewish identity. First of all for a banal objective reason. There are not enough Jews across the continent to fill this growing Jewish Space by themselves. Unlike Israel which is its own vast Jewish Space or America in which the Jewish Space is filled by the Jews themselves in what can be called a sociological and cultural triumph, Jews in Europe are only one part of the Jewish Space. In Jewish study programs at the universities, in museums, in the realm of publishing, as well as in every other Jewish manifestation (except for religion) non-Jews will constitute the majority of the 'users' and even implementers of this space. Rather than

perceiving this reality as an impoverishment, Jews should consider this structural condition as a major positive challenge, indeed as a challenge unique to Europe. For it is only here that Jews must confront historically charged ‘others’, whose ancestors were very much present, if not always responsible, during the Holocaust and before that during the centuries of European anti-Semitism.

Yet if Jews now live in Europe in a voluntary manner it means that they share a series of complex affinities with these ‘others’ and it is this link which must be deepened and turned into a creative dialogue, beyond the current wars for memory that have made the headlines of all the Western press in the last decades, and in the last five years in particular, around such burning topics as Swiss banks and Nazi gold, reparations, spoliations, etc.

The coming to the fore of Jewish themes in our pluralist democratic societies has thus opened the way for ever larger Jewish Spaces, in particular in countries that carry the ‘presence of the absence’ such as Spain, Portugal, Poland and above all Germany. There the Jewish absence is an integral part of the national histories and as such can easily lead to a museum type vision of dead or expelled Jews, the equivalent of putting so many *menorahs* on a shelf. Only living Jews can turn the Jewish Space into a locus of creativity, one that can powerfully contribute to a future oriented Europe. The difference is quite simply that between taxidermy and biology.

Jewish Spaces across Europe need to be predicated on the past, but a living past that is no longer read as so many steps on the road to Auschwitz. Rethinking pre-Holocaust European Jewry implies respecting their highly creative lives and considering them as full of meaning and lessons for us even today, and all the more so for the future. The Jewish Space can only acquire meaning as a living space at the very heart of all identity stakes. It cannot exist without Jews but neither can it exist only with them, for the Space is not the equivalent of a community. It is an open cultural and even political *agora* where Jews intermingle with others *qua* Jews, and not just as citizens. It is also the place where even a few Jews can obtain the highest resonance, since it will carry their voices and identities much further than their sheer numbers would allow, further into the very core of their respective societies. It is also the place where debates should emerge, where opinions can be confronted, tensions resolved or first of all brought out in the open because the Jewish Space could not exist without a democratic pluralist space. It is its crown jewel, perhaps a useful model for other ethnic, religious, cultural spaces that must still come into being. The Jewish Space may be the first in a long array, the first because of the extensive and historical presence of Jews on the continent.

The space is destined to grow and to even take over the more concrete and predictable (even if highly polemical) Jewish Spaces such as museums and memorials. For it is a virtual space, present anywhere where Jews and non-Jews interact on Jewish themes or where a Jewish voice can make itself heard. It will be a way of being and of living and not a way of commemorating death through the Holocaust. It goes without saying that this space is open to all; it is controlled neither by Jews, nor by non-Jews, but rather it is a meeting point. Jews must learn to navigate in it just as their non-Jewish interlocutors do. Out of these interactions new symbioses will be born, new identities composed while older ones can also be strengthened. Perhaps even new Jewish identities can emerge from the voluntary ‘rubbing of shoulders’ with others. To succeed, however, such a Jewish Space will require calm and self-confident Jews, well-versed in their own traditions and ideals, not defensive and frightened Jews who behave as if Jewish life in Europe were a zero-sum game of winning and losing sides.

Jewish religious and community life will not depend on this space nor on interactions with non-Jews, even though even this stance must be qualified. Jewish social and educational activities and now increasingly cultural life is financed to a large extent by non-Jewish

institutions, be they the state, the European Union, or local level government. At the crossroads between the past, memory, patrimony, and religion, youth or women's activities, Jewish life is rightfully perceived as one manifestation among others of national life, meriting *ad hoc* financing according to the projects. The neutral participatory role of the state or of other collective organs has uncontestedly strengthened the Jewish Space but also internal Jewish life (for instance the European Union of Jewish Students). Jews no longer subsist in isolation through internally financed projects. Jewish life is not an island.

However, it is in the Jewish Space that Jews *qua* Jews (as opposed to Jews *qua* citizens) will interact with their non-Jewish peers. It is therefore not surprising that the tectonic plates of identity clash above all in this space, as proven by the major debates surrounding the Berlin *Mahnmal*, the autonomy of the Jewish Museum in Berlin or by the series of well-documented clashes over the Carmelite convent and, subsequently, the crosses at Auschwitz. One of the unsolved question in the struggle is indeed whether Auschwitz is a Jewish Space. The clashes that have characterized Jewish and non-Jewish struggles over memory address, sometimes in an awkward manner, essential issues of universality. The challenge Jews must confront in the future are Judaism's links to the 'others'. In an age of universal human rights, of international references to democracy and to the respect of cultures, Judaism cannot close itself off from the world in the name of a hallowed specificity. Could it be that in its identity push toward Orthodoxy and self-reflection, it may actually be failing to assume its rightful place in the *agora* of peoples? Could Judaism too preoccupied with its own internal clashes fail to open up, now that for the first time the outside world is genuinely open to it, to meet the 'others'? Should one confront the terrible possibility that Judaism could only be strong in exile, in captivity, in oppression and when it was held in derision by the others? It is up to the Jews to make sure that such a reading is powerfully condemned and above all not turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Toward a European Jewish identity?

Whether such an identity will really crystallize depends ultimately on the continent's own Jews. The internal and external challenges are all there waiting to be seized creatively. However, no amount of American and Israeli intervention and funding can make such an identity exist if it does not possess and develop its own dynamic. During this past decade as Europe embarked on its own sea change, international Jewish support was crucial to the establishment of new communities, to the rebirth of Jewish life especially in Eastern Europe, and to the financing of encounters. Now that the Jewish actors of the new Europe are gradually putting themselves in place, the ball will be increasingly in the European camp, a camp defined in the largest possible sense, one that by no means excludes but instead welcomes Jewish contributions from elsewhere. In this context it is significant to see that the heirs of the old German Jewry to be found mainly in the United States but also in Israel are increasingly attracted to the growing Jewish Space in Germany. They come to it not only for the sake of their own past, but very much as an international Jewish stake for the future. The past is now coming back to life in Germany whereas it had been preciously preserved in exile, whether in New York or Jerusalem, most notably through the Leo Baeck institutes. The prognosis so far seems good. Everywhere throughout Europe 'new Jews' from Portugal to Russia are developing their own symbioses, agendas and cultural life. Never has the timing been more propitious both in terms of the interest of the outside world and the possibilities of the world within but with one proviso. Jewish life can fully blossom in an open Europe only if Jews learn to master the fear of freedom in order to develop a Judaism which no longer has to face debilitating external constraints.

European Jews in the future if they are to flourish must not, above all, be guardians of

a static and finalized pre-Holocaust heritage. They must not become the museum keepers of world Jewry. They must cease to think of themselves as a dying species, obsessed with declining numbers. Rather, they should infuse Jewish life in the numbers they have and welcome inside the Jewish ranks those who want to join the Jewish people. By spreading Jewish religious values, history, philosophy and ethics, and culture (well beyond its facile ethnic components), Jews should take on a leading role in Europe's coming to terms with itself. The invisible voices at the conference on the Balkans should at last feel free to express their own multiple identities and values. The ultimate victims of yesterday have become Europe's most impressive postwar success story. They are increasingly towering over the crossroads of the continent's past, present and future, very much on center stage. May we, Europe's 'new Jews' have the collective wisdom to use this symbolic power with openness, modesty and justice.