

Fritz T. Epstein, Ed., *The American Bibliography of Russian and East European Studies for 1966*, Indiana University Press (Bloomington & London) for International Affairs Center, Russian and East European Series, v. 40, Bloomington, Indiana, 1972, \$ 3.50.

We certainly regret that this appears to be the last volume of the bibliography published under the auspices and with the support of the Russian and East European Institute of Indiana University, for it is the only available reference work of its kind.

The work attempts to list books and articles about Russia and East Europe, published in the Western World in English during 1966. The coverage basically follows the pattern of the bibliography for 1965; but, in order to rectify a long-felt need, items by British and American authors published in languages other than English have been listed, if accompanied by an English summary. One innovation has been extended—the listing of reviews in Western European languages in the case of outstanding studies; also, occasionally reviews in English of pertinent foreign-language books have been included, when the review seems of particular interest. (Thus it can be assumed that all the more important reviews of 1965 and 1966 books in English in the Russian and East European field can be found in the bibliographies for 1965 and 1966).

Part One covers: The General Works on Soviet Union and East Europe; History; International Relations; Public Affairs, Law and Government; Economics; Philosophy, Ideology and Religion; Linguistics; and Literature and the Arts. Part Two lists: General Reference Aids and Bibliographies; Travel and Description; The Land; Archaeology, Demography, Ethnography; The Nation, Civilizations and Politics; History; The State; The Economic & Social Structure; and The Intellectual & Culture Life. Part Three is focused on: East Europe-General; East Central Europe (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland); and Southeast Europe / Balkans (General, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Yugoslavia).

If we are to criticize this compilation, one wonders whether only one reference appeared on Albania (p. 114). Why is Debussy listed in the Bio-Bibliography (p. 121), since his only connection with Central-Eastern-Balkan Europe is that a work had been published, entitled *Music in the Twentieth Century From Debussy Through Stravinsky* (p. 81)? We would have also appreciated more references showing the relationship of the American refugees and descendants to Central-Eastern-Balkan history.

Basically, however, this is a zinger of a reference book.

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Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation*, New York, The MacMillan Company, 1972, pp. xxxv+664.

In this justly celebrated volume, Professor Trunk analyzes the composition and activities of one of the most controversial sets of institutions of World War II—the Jewish councils of Poland and Belorussia established by the German authorities after they occupied those areas. The author presents the first systematic study of the councils and makes a valuable contribution to the exposition of totalitarian authority in the most infamous system of twentieth-century bureaucratic terror. Trunk delves far beneath the previously raised questions of Jewish collaboration in the holocaust. Moreover, while most of his descriptions apply to the major ghettos of Warsaw, Vilna, Lodz, etc., he describes in detail the application in smaller areas as well. Since the council principle developed in the Generalgouvernement

(Poland) and after June 1941 in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* and *Ukraine* (USSR) extended to other areas of Europe, his conclusions have general value. The author capably addresses himself to such problems as the composition of the councils, their historical context (whether Jewish or German), the moral question of collaboration and its alternatives, the possibility of resistance, Jewish reaction to the councils, and many, many others.

Trunk's chief sources for this work are preserved Jewish archives such as the collection of YIVO (Institute for Jewish Research in New York), and of the *Yad VaShem* institute and the Ghetto Fighters' House in Israel; memoirs; printed documents; and a unique survey of members of the councils and of the ghetto police forces, developed by Jonas Turkow and Yitzhak Alperowicz from 1964-1966. The author did not use extensively German sources, but the result proves that they would have been superfluous. Also he was unfortunately unable to deal directly with the vast archival material yet available in Poland; however, one can readily assert that this does not hamper his basic presentation and conclusions.

Trunk's central theme is the possible alternatives to the councils' behavior in the context of their historical development and contemporary circumstances. Although the author explicitly shows at the start of his book how the German authorities established the councils, he argues that this did not make them essentially a German rather than a Jewish phenomenon. They were based on the pre-war *Kehila*. His very last paragraph in the text (p. 575) states: «It follows from our study that the phenomenon of the Jewish Councils should be discussed in the framework of Jewish history, and not as a unique and queer episode . . . Despite all the differences of the Nazi era, as compared with other dark times in Jewish history, we believe that a historical comparison between the role of the *Kehilas* during the *Kantonist* era, for instance, in the first half of the nineteenth century in Czarist Russia, may prevent us from considering the Jewish Councils as a one-time phenomenon without parallel in Jewish history».

There is no doubt that the Polish-Russian model of the *Kehila* served the Nazis well in the implementation of their Jewish policy. They used it over again when they exported that policy, for example in the Balkans, where, as in Poland, natively existing community organizations served as the basis for the controlled Jewish communities. Yet placing the Jewish Councils in historical context, particularly Jewish historical context, enables Trunk to demonstrate clearly the fallacy of characterizing the council homogeneously as cowardly collaborationist tools of the Third Reich in the destruction of European Jewry—a fallacy to which many authors have subscribed. Councils and their members exhibited all types of human behavior—cowardice and courage, corruption and honesty, bestiality and humaneness, collaboration and resistance. Furthermore, the Jews' collaboration is most poignant after the fact because of their horrendous fate. Trunk points out that the attitudes and behaviors can only be judged fairly in the context of the times. He also draws parallels between Jewish collaboration and non-Jewish collaboration—a very important analysis if meaning is to be drawn from the events. This is not to say that the author excuses the Councils with such platitudes as «they did not know what was happening», for in many cases they did; but rather he tries to explain, not justify, their behavior.

The final solution was a step by step process for Jews, non-Jews, and Germans alike. Trunk constantly emphasizes the apparent futility of alternatives to cooperation with the German authorities. At the initial organization of the councils, the Germans refused to accept declensions to serve (a practice followed later also elsewhere). The community leaders eventually rationalized that it was better for Jews to select members than foreigners; for in those councils where the Germans did choose the members, they generally picked persons

who were unfamiliar with or detrimental to the community. As hardships increased, the council leaders argued that minimum resistance and petition rather than struggle would buy time, hoping that the end of the war would ultimately save the communities. The author mentions several times the factor that Jewish «optimism», the eternal hope for the miracle, influenced the councils' and their communities' general pattern of cooperation. In the largest ghettos: Warsaw, Lodz, and Vilna, the leaders (especially Mordecai Rumkowski of Lodz) pinned their hope on salvation through work —demonstrating Jewish usefulness to the Germans in order to delay the ultimate fate.

Even at the end when «resettlements» began, and the meaning of resettlement could no longer be hidden, the Council members rationalized collaboration in the selection process in the vain hope that a sacrifice of the part would save the majority, and that it was better for Jews to select Jews for annihilation than to have the strangers choose indiscriminately. Trunk points out the conflicting rabbinical opinions on this, the most controversial aspect of the Councils' activity. In the village of Kowale Panskie, after long deliberations in October 1941 (that is before «resettlement» but when killings of some Jews who were unable to work were going on) the local rabbis decided to follow German orders and make a list of all deportees noting «their ability or disability to work» because «according to religious law, a decree of the government is obligatory and must be obeyed». Trunk concludes that, although tangible records are rare, apparently after much soul searching, rabbis and community leaders elsewhere also made such considerations during resettlement annihilation (p. 429). In October 1941 a rabbi of Kaunas after nerve-racking deliberation concluded: «If a Jewish community (may God help it) has been condemned to physical destruction and there are means of rescuing part of it, the leaders of the community should have courage and assume the responsibility to act and rescue what is possible» (425). Although the Final Solution tactics worked out later at the Wannsee Conference (deportations to killing centers, the so-called resettlement) were not yet in operation, *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units) were. The authorities had already had three previous «actions» in Kaunas and the community leaders could surmise the consequences of their selection. Indeed the 9,000 Jews chosen were killed. The decisions of rabbis and leaders in Kowale Panskie and Kaunas contradicted a specific opinion given by the great rabbi, Maimonides (see below), but Trunk points out that it was not without Jewish precedent. In the *Kehilas* of Tsar Nicholas, Jewish leaders were obliged to select Jews for draft in the army— a spiritual death for the orthodox as it meant conversion. (The scholars of the past had also argued it is better to die than to deviate from the faith). The nineteenth century Russian rabbis had legitimately argued that it was better for the community leaders rather than strangers to select the sacrifice in order to avoid the loss of a prospective scholar (pp. 435-436).

The argument contrary to compliance revolved around the opinion of the renowned medieval scholar, Maimonides —«... if the pagans should tell them (the Jews) 'Give us one of yours and we shall kill him, otherwise we shall kill all of you', they all should be killed and not a single Jewish soul should be delivered»— (p. xxxi). The decision of life and death is one reserved for the Almighty. In results the question proved to be of moral and philosophical value only as refusal to comply with the authorities had little effect on the outcome. Trunk documents cases where belated, on the spot resistance by Council leaders met with instant and cruel retaliation (e.g., p. 443).

Related to the communal decision of compliance or mass passive resistance and individual or mass defiance, was the alternative of active resistance. Since this policy was open at best to only a portion of the community members, those able to bear arms, the considera-

tion of the effect on the remainder of Jewish population weighed heavily on the decision. In consequence most Councils disapproved of armed resistance although a minority encouraged it and a few more were neutral. At the other extremity, a number of leaders, including those of the larger communities, actively helped the Germans ferret out and punish resisters. Trunk explores all these aspects in some detail. In retrospect the Councils' decisions appear grossly hypocritical, and even cowardly, for in the case of compliance with the authorities the leaders had argued that the sacrifice of a part to save the remainder was warranted. However, in the context of the time, reprisals for resistance seemed more certain. On the other hand, surely resistance threatened loss of the political control that the Councils held in negotiating with the Germans and administering the communities. This too in at least some cases affected the manner in which councils approached the problem. Trunk concludes that the decision to resist was an agonizing one even for those individuals who without the threat of reprisals against their friends and relatives would have made it readily (p. 461-462).

Yet resistance occurred at many levels and in many fashions. Its relative ineffectiveness demonstrates the weakness of the resisters rather than their unwillingness. The most effective resistance was in consort with non-Jewish partisans by individuals even though there were several instances when anti-Semitic partisans murdered their would-be comrades. All-Jewish groups either in the ghettos or in the forests, despite some successes, were at a distinct disadvantage. Mass spontaneous uprisings by entire communities is a romantic notion, entirely unrealistic. However, despite heroic efforts, which Trunk quite understandably treats more kindly than the Councils' methods of petition and hope, only a minority engaged in armed resistance.

The members of the Councils therefore appeared to play the roles of collaborators, if not strictly speaking to historians to whom the subjective quality of the label mitigates its scholarly usefulness, then certainly to the popular mind where history soon becomes myth. Yet in general the fate of the council leaders differed little from that of other members of the communities (pp. 324-326). If anything, they were in a worse position and more were killed before resettlement than members of the communities at large. The same is not true of the ghetto police, who as one might well expect had a worse collaborationist reputation than even the leaders. While only about twelve per cent of the council leaders survived, twenty-five per cent of the police did. Of the survivors of both categories only a few were brought to trial in Europe and Israel after the war for collaborationist activity, and although the courts found guilty the most brutal of the leaders and the police, there also was much sympathy among the judges for the plight of individuals obliged to do the German bidding.

Trunk has written a work that extends beyond the limited question of the mechanics of the Jewish holocaust. The destruction of European Jewry in the 1940's is one of the fundamental consequences of the fascist phenomenon. In it we see the unleashing of the naked amoral power of modern technology and bureaucracy—two of the elements of fascism. Trunk demonstrates how the working of that bureaucracy among the Jews turned the victims of authority into an integral instrument of the same authority. His results help us understand not only the application to the Polish and Soviet Jews, but also the parallel phenomenon in other parts of the continent, and among the non-Jewish occupied areas, as well. Indeed, he has contributed to the understanding of the more general question of bureaucracy itself.