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'The Street Scene Prologue': Holocaust Survivors, the American Nazi Party, and Exodus

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‘The Street Scene Prologue’: Holocaust Survivors, the American Nazi Party, and *Exodus*

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of History
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

Jason R Van

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Abstract

During the early 1960s when the American Civil Rights movement was beginning to gain momentum, another movement across the world was taking place to solidify the newly formed country of Israel as a sovereign state. To commemorate the foundation of Israel, American director Otto Preminger created the film *Exodus*, adapted from a book of the same name by Leon Uris. George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party, decided to take action by traveling throughout the country with his closest members to protest the film. Rockwell and his group of Nazis were outraged by the pro-Zionist depictions and the use of previously blacklisted screenwriters of Hollywood that were accused of being communist. This thesis will discuss the struggles of interpreting the First Amendment to the US Constitution, the conflict among American Jews on how to handle the rise of Nazism in America, and how the counter-protests gave a sense of validation to Holocaust survivors who faced their deepest fears. This thesis will also cover recent affairs and their relationship with the events that occurred in the early 1960s.

Introduction

In 1961, a political fringe group who called themselves the American Nazi Party were able to bring themselves to the headlines of newspapers by conducting a string of aggressive protests against a particular film, *Exodus*, that the Nazis claimed touted a pro-Zionist agenda. *Exodus* premiered in December of 1960 and featured rising Hollywood stars Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint. *Exodus* was directed by Otto Preminger, an Austro-Hungarian Jew who escaped Austria after it was annexed by Nazi Germany. The film is derived from the 1958 novel of the same name, written by Leon Uris. Preminger viewed the film project as a personal duty to exemplify the perseverance of the Jewish people. While *Exodus* contains accurate historical depictions and background, it is a fictional tale that could be construed as propaganda to garner support for the newly-developed state of Israel. The film is a story reminiscent of *Casablanca*, as both films share similar tropes such as surviving Nazi persecution, finding love, and persevering despite political strife.

Exodus became the focal point of the wrath of the American Nazi Party, specifically their founder George Lincoln Rockwell. Rockwell, a former United States service member during World War II and Korea. Rockwell became radicalized and enthralled by Nazi ideology while stationed overseas and his radical views led to a discharge from the Navy in a highly public affair that ended in a melee in front of news cameras in Washington D.C. His publicized military discharge familiarized Americans with Rockwell's name and would later be used as a tactic for gaining greater notoriety in an attempted political career.

After the release of *Exodus*, Rockwell and his Nazis decided to publicly picket the film at premiering locations throughout the eastern and southern United States. Rockwell used his controversial status with the media to his advantage by notifying news outlets of his protests

before they occurred all while making claims of a secret plot by the Jewish community to control the world. Rockwell's followers conducted two major protests in the cities of Boston and New Orleans paired with auxiliary rallies in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Along the planned picket locations, Rockwell and his Nazi followers made various stops along the way to stage rallies in public parks and at colleges in an attempt to gain young followers. The most noteworthy stop on Rockwell's self-proclaimed "Hate Tour" was in Montgomery, Alabama in May 1961, when he and his cronies put the *Exodus* pickets on hold to protest the famous Freedom Riders.

Media coverage on the national stage of George Lincoln Rockwell's protests encapsulates the brewing political climate during the early 1960s that set the tone for American understanding of Rockwell's actions. Articles in newspapers such as *The New York Times* would also display questioning of morality, the defense of utilizing the First Amendment to protect hate speech, and the greater ramifications of a public figure using the media to their advantage. The use of newspaper articles as a primary source not only provides valuable information in the form of historical reporting, but indirectly brings into focus the priority given to Rockwell's protests within the media. The method that the *Exodus* protests were delivered to the public via section placement, page number, and juxtaposition to other articles of news can bring insight to the cultural relevance of *Exodus* and the American Nazi movement as a whole during the sixties.

Jewish communities across the United States attempted to combat the pickets of *Exodus* by the American Nazi Party using a decades-old policy known as quarantine. This policy was created in cooperation with various Jewish civil rights organizations, such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) or the Jewish Community Council that created agreements with news media sources to not report on hate-mongering extremist groups. The quarantine policy had been

used intermittently since the late 1940s in an attempt to oust antisemitism by the ADL, but its effectiveness could be brought into question during the *Exodus* pickets as it had varying levels of success depending upon the city.

The disparity in the effectiveness of the quarantine could be attributed to Holocaust survivors whom had recently immigrated to the United States and vowed to never let Nazism take a foothold again. Prior to these protests, Holocaust survivors were viewed by the American public as foreign refugees and given little recognition. In an attempt to boast his anti-Semitic ideals, Rockwell unintentionally unified Holocaust survivors in the United States who would not tolerate his actions. Holocaust survivors defied the greater Jewish community's plan of quarantine against the American Nazi Party in order to execute their resistance in the face of their aggressors. The film *Exodus* was a catalyst for organized resistance against the American Nazis, which in turn validated the establishment of Holocaust survivors in the realm of American society.

Relevant Historiography

In order to understand the importance of fallout from the American Nazi Party's protests of *Exodus*, an examination of various historiographical pieces that transcend a single discipline must be examined. A brief study of Otto Preminger, the director of *Exodus*, is necessary in understanding Preminger's place in American history as a controversial film producer. Foster Hirsch's 2007 biography, *Otto Preminger: The Man Who Would Be King* is the most well-known biography of Preminger. By utilizing a plethora of interviews with family, friends, and colleagues in conjecture with Preminger's personal memoirs and autobiography, Hirsch creates a pragmatic story for readers to understand the scope of influence Preminger had on Hollywood in the 1950s. Hirsch's biography is not only dedicated towards Preminger but his

works as well. He dedicates an entire chapter to *Exodus* and the controversy surrounding it, which allows one to understand why the American Nazi Party decided to picket the film.

The film was considered controversial to anti-Zionists and anti-Semites because of a number of tropes that promote Judaism and the state of Israel. These tropes are examined by Omer Bartov, professor of Jewish history at Brown University, in his 2005 book *The Jew in Cinema: From The Golem to Don't Touch My Holocaust*. Bartov delves into the roles of Jews in film and how they were portrayed over the decades. *Exodus* created a new role for the Jew in film which was that of a hero, which was relatively unheard of prior. After understanding the archetype of the hero-Jew in *Exodus* it becomes clear how members of the Jewish community could feel empowered after watching the film.

The idea that Jews and Holocaust survivors could become empowered drew the anger of George Lincoln Rockwell and his American Nazi Party. The platform of racism, antisemitism, and hatred was covered extensively in *American Fuehrer* and *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity*; which also gives a methodical breakdown of how Rockwell was overwhelmed by Nazism and how his hate fueled him to build a network of racists through radical ideas. Simonelli takes the biographical approach with his research on Rockwell and traces Rockwell's steps through his downfall from war hero to hate monger. Simonelli uses vital sources such as Rockwell's autobiography and government sources to piece together Rockwell's life. As crucial as both these sources are to understanding American Nazism, both authors only touch the surface of the American Nazi Party's protests of *Exodus*. It is interesting to note the disparities between the two authors as they both mention the protests, but in different locations. This thesis will look to piece together primary and secondary source evidence to build a cohesive story of the *Exodus* pickets and the triumphant stand of Holocaust

survivors. One piece of evidence that will be explored and expanded upon is the Jewish policy of quarantine that Simonelli brushes on in *American Fuehrer* that was used as a tactic in an attempt to relegate Rockwell and the American Nazis into obscurity.

Outside of Simonelli's chapter on quarantine, historiographical research on this policy is scarce. The quarantine policy brings into scope the efforts of the Jewish communities and their attempt to control the media's approach to reporting on the actions of far-right extremists. The original idea for quarantine came in 1946 from Solomon Andhil Fineberg and his handbook on how to handle anti-Semites through the policy. The handbook, titled *Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers and Deflating the Professional Bigot* is pivotal in understanding the actions of the Anti-Defamation League and other Jewish community services while they prepared for Rockwell's arrival. The key method of quarantine involves coordination and agreements with media outlets to not report on extremists such as Rockwell.

A 2008 article from *American Jewish History* titled "Freedom for All? Blacks, Jews, and the Political Censorship of White Racists in the Civil Rights Era" discusses the strategies of implementing quarantine and the massive coordination efforts that were needed for it to be successful. The article does however not discuss the instances and reasoning behind the failed implementations of quarantine in Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans.

Though there are ample historiographical holes regarding the protests in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, but the same cannot be said of the protest in New Orleans. Lawrence Powell from Tulane University covered the affair in a comprehensive matter. His journal article titled "When Hate Came to Town: New Orleans' Jews and George Lincoln Rockwell" covers a broad range of issues from the inner-struggle of the Jewish community in the American South to the crescendo that was Rockwell's final protest of Exodus. Powell begins by

examining Jewish identity in the South and how Holocaust survivors threatened the peaceful assimilation that had been achieved. Powell goes on to discuss Rockwell's inflammatory tactics and his knack for riling up the public and notes that Rockwell's ten-year run as Commander of the Party eventually inspired other white nationalists such as Timothy McVeigh and New Orleans resident David Duke, precisely what the quarantine policy attempted to avoid. Powell is able to provide unique insight to the actions of New Orleans Jews and law enforcement by utilizing eyewitness testimonies, police reports, and memos from the New Orleans police department and the Anti-Defamation League. Dr. Powell's work has become the foundation on which this thesis is built and wishes to expand upon by contributing original research to not only the Exodus picket in New Orleans, but in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia as well as the role Exodus had in causing these pickets and the subsequent counter-protests.

Otto Preminger, The Director

By the late 1950s Otto Preminger, an Austro-Hungarian Jew who escaped to the U.S. after the Nazi "Anschluss" of Austria in 1938, had made a name for himself in Hollywood by directing cutting-edge films that, like Preminger, were not without controversy. Preminger had constantly run into trouble from the Motion Picture Association of America and their strictly enforced production codes of censorship. Films from the fifties such as *The Moon Is Blue* and *Anatomy of a Murder* were vehemently denounced by the MPAA for sultry language and dialogue used within the films. The outrage was what Preminger was looking for as the Academy Award nominations came rolling in. "As Otto had suspected and counted on, after twenty years of exerting an inordinate influence over the moral and visual content of mainstream American films, the Production Code Administration was ripe for a fall. All they needed to push them off their pedestal was a David with courage to sling a strategic stone at the Goliath of an outdated

document of censorship.”¹

The Motion Picture Association of America’s production code that was backed by conservative Evangelical Christian groups found itself in the path of Preminger’s next two films as well, as he looked to dismantle their gross overreach of power in Hollywood. The film *Carmen Jones* was the first film to use an all-Black cast, which was absolutely unheard of in 1954. *The Man With the Golden Arm* also drew the attention of the MPAA and its conservative backers as the film dealt with the difficult topic of drug abuse, which was another first for a Hollywood film. Despite threats from the managers of the production code, Preminger’s films continued to receive rave critical reception because of the taboo content that could not be seen in the home. Preminger’s personality “Otto was looking for a way to violate the Production Code,” and by doing so, he eventually helped dismantle it by repeatedly producing controversial yet wildly popular films.²

In the Spring of 1958, Otto was looking for a new project as his previous had failed due to production issues. While visiting his brother Ingo in his office, Otto took notice of a large manuscript of the novel *Exodus* by Leon Uris. Otto was intrigued by the novel and its premise so he took it home with him. “I read until five o’clock the next morning. I could not put the book down. Before halfway through I knew I had to make the movie.”³ Unfortunately for Otto, it was commonplace during the time period for authors to fund their research and work by selling the film rights to their manuscript to production companies before the work was written.

Otto was eventually able to acquire the rights to *Exodus*, but not without the help of his brother Ingo; who by happenstance had been Leon Uris’s agent at the time of negotiation for the initial deal between Uris and MGM. The brothers went to MGM to negotiate a deal to procure

¹ Foster Hirsch, *Otto Preminger: The Man Who Would Be King* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2007), 198.

² Hirsch, *Otto Preminger*, 233.

³ Otto Preminger, *Otto Preminger: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 285.

the rights to *Exodus*, and Otto reminded the studio executives that the manuscript was quite controversial and it may enrage people in the Middle East enough to cause a boycott of MGM theaters. The studio was not willing to take such a risk, but Otto was as he could afford such a financial burden.⁴ The Preminger brothers were able to secure the production rights of *Exodus* for the initial price MGM paid Uris for the manuscript which was a mere \$75,000.

When news broke that Otto Preminger purchased the rights to *Exodus* from MGM, Leon Uris became infuriated. He felt the Preminger brothers had swindled him by concocting a scheme to cheat him out of his own work. Uris would hold these sentiments for decades as he posited in a 1998 interview with Foster Hirsch, “I got a royal fucking from the Preminger brothers, who were a couple of Viennese thieves. Otto was a terrorist- he’s Arafat, a Nazi, Saddam Hussein.”⁵ Otto could not wait to start working on *Exodus* but it had to be put on hold as 1958 proved to be a busy year for Preminger. He had prior commitments to shoot *Porgy and Bess* and *Anatomy of a Murder* before he could start working on *Exodus*. Both films fell in line with previous Preminger films that contained direct dialogue, harsh subject matters, and suggestive language. *Anatomy of a Murder* was temporarily banned in the city of Chicago for its use of inappropriate language, a ruling that was challenge by Preminger in federal court and eventually overturned.⁶

Exodus: The Film and Analysis

Preminger began working on *Exodus* in the summer of 1959 and needed the novel to be adapted into a screenplay. A dilemma arose because the most suited person to write an adaptation was Leon Uris. In the time between Preminger’s acquisition of *Exodus* and the

⁴ Hirsch, *Otto Preminger*, 249. Preminger produced *Exodus* independently which meant a boycott would have a lesser effect.

⁵ Leon Uris, interview with Foster Hirsch, June 19, 2002.

⁶ “Chicago Loses Bid to Censor Movie” *The Deseret Times*, July 9, 1959, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=8pQuAAAAIBAJ&pg=7156,1608730> (accessed September 19, 2021).

beginning of work on the film, the novel had become a sensational best-seller. The book had become the biggest best-seller in the United States since *Gone With the Wind*, so Otto knew he had to approach this project with devotion and attentiveness.⁷ Unfortunately, this was nearly impossible because of Preminger and Uris's personality clashes and their already quite volatile relationship. "Otto was pro-Israel, but he did not share Uris's hard-core Zionist stance, and in his film he was determined to modify the novelists' anti-British and anti-Arab bias."⁸ An armistice between the two would be short-lived as their ideas conflicted; Uris left the project and he never spoke to Preminger again.

With Uris distancing himself from Preminger, a new screenplay writer was needed. Preminger hired Albert Maltz to spearhead the writing. This was a bold and significant move because Maltz was known as one of the "Hollywood Ten", a group of Hollywood writers that were blacklisted by studio executives and the House Un-American Activities Committee under the suspicion of being communist during the intense years of the Red Scare. In 1947, the writers were subpoenaed by the House Un-American Committee (HUAC) and questioned relentlessly on supposed seditious activities. Maltz and other Hollywood Ten members were held in contempt of Congress for failing to answer questions in front of the committee. After the ruling of contempt for the Hollywood Ten, top studio executives met with the Motion Picture Association of America and a decision was made to fire and not hire any known communists.⁹

A month after hiring Maltz to write a screenplay, Otto visited him at his home in Mexico to check on his progress. To the dismay of Preminger, Maltz had not written a single line which was infuriating because filming had been scheduled for March of 1960. Ingo Preminger once

⁷ Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Leon Uris, 78, Dies; Wrote Sweeping Novels Like 'Exodus'," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2003 <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/25/arts/leon-uris-78-dies-wrote-sweeping-novels-like-exodus.html> (accessed August 4, 2021).

⁸ Hirsch, *Otto Preminger*, 321.

⁹ The MPAA created a Production Code as set of industry-standard guidelines to curb potentially obscene content that was prevalent prior to its inception in 1930.

again proved to be a savior to his older brother; he suggested using one of his clients, blacklisted writer Dalton Trumbo. Like Albert Maltz, Trumbo was one of the Hollywood Ten and forced to write under pseudonyms. That was however before taking on the *Exodus* script as Preminger had greater concerns than political accusations. “He was known as being speedy and reliable. From Otto’s point of view, Trumbo had another asset: he was not Jewish, and Preminger was hoping that he would tell the story of the founding of the Jewish state with more objectivity than Uris.”¹⁰

Despite Dalton Trumbo being one of the Hollywood Ten and blacklisted from all major film studios, Preminger had no intention of hiding the fact that he would break the blacklist. Trumbo was ignorant to this fact and assumed he would be writing under a pseudonym. In January 1960, while working in Israel, Preminger decided to go public with the fact that he had hired Dalton Trumbo to write the screenplay for *Exodus*. “He made international headlines for his gesture, which in effect would break the blacklist, was greeted by commentators as another one of Preminger’s courageous stands against intolerance and the forces of censorship.”¹¹ Preminger was the first in Hollywood to break the blacklist, which held for twelve years, but many would soon follow suit. Kirk Douglas quickly followed as he had also hired Trumbo to write the script for his epic *Spartacus* which premiered a month before *Exodus*. Douglas is often mistakenly credited as the individual to end the trend of blacklisting.

Trumbo and Preminger worked surprisingly well together considering Otto’s past reputation for being difficult. Trumbo accepted the constructive criticism and made the proper changes as they were needed to stay within Preminger’s parameters of toning down Uris’s biases. During an interview while shooting the picture Preminger opined, “I think that my picture is much closer to the truth, and to the historic fact, than is the book. It also avoids propaganda. I am trying to give both sides.” He continued to explain how Uris had a pessimistic attitude

¹⁰ Hirsch, *Otto Preminger*, 322.

¹¹ Hirsch, *Otto Preminger*, 326.

towards the British and Arabs and treated them as the enemies of the Jews.¹²

With the script completed and locations in Greece and Israel secured the next obstacle for Otto to overcome was casting. He wanted to keep the film as authentic as possible and wanted a Jewish man to play the lead role. During the Golden Age of Cinema the role of the Jewish character was depicted in a different light than what Preminger had in mind, as he again attempted to break through the barriers of constraint in Hollywood. Omer Bartov, professor of Jewish Studies at Brown University, posited on Preminger's idea of a heroic Jewish character in an interview. "As I understand it, Preminger (and Uris) were primarily concerned with giving a different, heroic face to the aftermath of the Holocaust. But as you suggest, he was also concerned with bigotry in the United States."¹³

Within the international film industry, the Jew was often either a victim or an anti-hero. The Jewish anti-hero was neither good nor bad but was also typecast as a character with misfortune or as stereotypical and clear-cut Jewish. "And it is true that his tramp seemed to be influenced by Eastern European Jewish self-representation as the eternal victims of misfortune, whose condition compels them to evolve a peculiar, bittersweet, ironic, and self-depreciating sense of humor."¹⁴

The largest role of the Jewish character in film in the early half of the twentieth-century was that of the victim. This role and stereotype developed during the inter-war period in central Europe when antisemitism sharply rose as they were blamed for the economic misfortune suffered by many during the Great Depression. American filmmakers and film studio executives, who were mostly Jewish, were aware of this and had to adjust. Omer Bartov points out in *The "Jew" in Cinema* that the 1944 film *Mr. Skeffington* was one of the first films that attempted to

¹² Gerald Pratley, *Cinema of Otto Preminger* (New Jersey: Castle Books, 1971), 162.

¹³ Omer Bartov, interview with author, February 10, 2022.

¹⁴ Omer Bartov, *The Jew in Cinema: From "Golem" to "Don't Touch My Holocaust"* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005), 224.

deal with antisemitism.¹⁵ The role of the victim has often been parodied yet critiqued by more modern directors such as Mel Brooks and Woody Allen in a manner that flaunts their overt Jewishness.

Omer Bartov discusses a third personality type for the Jewish character, one quite different from the previous roles examined. The role of the Jew as a hero is the model archetype for Preminger's character of Ari Ben-Canaan. "It was the scale of national humiliation, the bleak despair evoked by mass murder, and the shadow of genocide cast over the belief in goodness that generated the need to create the postwar heroic Jew."¹⁶ There could be no better choice of a masculine Jewish hero than Ari Ben-Canaan, for he was a modern-day Moses, leading his people back to the Holy Land.

The role of Ari Ben-Canaan was given to the rising star Paul Newman who had previously been thrust into the spotlight after his role in the 1958 film *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Newman fit the burgeoning Jewish hero role that began to emerge from Hollywood in the years after World War II. Newman himself was of Jewish heritage but broke the stereotypical mold of Jewish actors with his charmingly good looks, bright blue eyes, and chiseled physique. "But this grafting of an American-type hero onto the story of Jewish resurrection and nationalism was also related to the Zionist perspective."¹⁷ This new archetype for the role of the Jew had rarely been seen in film prior and Preminger recognized the possibility that the audience would not believe that Paul Newman was portraying a Jewish man. In order to assert the character of Ben-Canaan's Jewishness, he can be seen brandishing a bright chain with a Star of David that clung ever so closely to Newman's defined chest throughout the film.

The plot of *Exodus* revolves around four main characters and their relationships with

¹⁵ Bartov, *The Jew in Cinema*, 36. Mr. Skeffington revolves around a misfortunate character and his status as a Jew in the Weimar Republic and later Nazi Germany.

¹⁶ Ibid, 120.

¹⁷ Ibid, 190.

each other. The film opens to a colorful backdrop on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus where Kitty Fremont played by Eva Marie Saint, is admiring the scenery while on leave from her duties as a nurse. She volunteers at a Jewish internment camp on the island after hearing of the large number of sickly inmates. Paul Newman's character of Ari is introduced in a quite masculine fashion as he is exiting the sea after a swim; he dabs himself dry with a towel while meeting with a friend about planning an escape from Cyprus. Ari's plan consists of utilizing a freighter ship containing legitimate cargo to smuggle over six hundred Jewish refugees into the British Mandate of Palestine.

The characters of Karen and Dov are introduced in the next scene, both inmates of the Karaolos Displaced Persons camp. Karen and Dov are survivors of the Holocaust, and both attempted to cope in their own manner. Karen is quite down to Earth and caring, while Dov is bitter after suffering with the mental scars of Auschwitz, even blaming a Jewish doctor of being a Sonderkommando.¹⁸ Kitty takes a liking to Karen as her kindred spirit is reminiscent of Kitty's recently deceased daughter. Kitty decides to join the refugees on their voyage when she learns that Karen's father escaped the death camps and is living in Palestine.

Ari fulfills Bartov's proposed role of the Jew as a hero various times throughout the film but starts by defying the British military's demands of returning the refugees back to the shores of Cyprus. Ari organizes a hunger strike then tells the British officers that their freighter, *The Exodus*, is loaded with dynamite and he will blow up the ship, giving the British bad publicity on the world stage if they are not granted passage.

During this portion of the film there is dialogue that likened the Zionist cause to the American Revolution. While discussing the Jews' defiance of the British, Kitty doubts Ari and six-hundred men could take on the British army. Ari asks her, "how many Minutemen were at

¹⁸ Sonderkommandos were Jewish prisoners in the Nazi death camps that were forced to dispose of and hide the remains of Holocaust victims. They were often viewed as traitors by other camp inmates.

Concord? Seventy-seven.”¹⁹ Kitty, who could be used as a metaphor for a naive American, realizes the refugees’ determination and vows to aid the Jews on their trek to Palestine.

Ari continues to flex his heroic Jewishness by taking Kitty on a scenic road trip to give her a history lesson of the land and the Israelites that occupied the land in ancient times. Ari notes that his reasoning was that, “I wanted you to know I am a Jew, this is my country.”²⁰ Ari’s Zionist stance makes him feel that it is his given right to take back the land of Israel. In the first half of the film *Kitty Fremont* plays a devil’s advocate as she questions Ari’s distrust of the Arabs. She tries to convince Ari that the Arabs are no different than any of the Jews who wish to occupy the Mandate. The plot continues to show the struggles of the newly arrived Jews into Palestine as they await a vote by the United Nations on whether or not to partition Palestine.

Numerous clashes occur between the Jewish Irgun and Palestinians who opposed the Jewish incursion.²¹ During these quarrels Ari is shot by British military police and Dov commits an act of terrorism after joining the Irgun by setting off a bomb at the King David Hotel. This scene was not included in Uris’s novel, but was inserted by Preminger as a method of portraying the fact that atrocities were committed by both Arabs and Jews.

Ari eventually recovers from his wounds by the hands of Kitty who removed a bullet from his abdomen. Their love is rekindled and she vows to stay by his side in Israel on the same evening that the United Nations voted to partition Palestine. The partition ruling angered Arab nationalists and their ex-Nazi leader who have constructed a plot to murder the Israelis and slaughter their children.

Dov quickly leaves to bring reinforcements to fight back against the Arabs and meets with Karen, who professes her love for him. Dov expresses the same feelings for Karen and

¹⁹ *Exodus*, directed by Otto Preminger (MGM Studios, 1960).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The Irgun were a Jewish paramilitary group that attempted to circumvent the law by taking Palestine by force rather than waiting for the U.N. to act.

vows to marry her once the fighting is over. Karen returns home but is kidnapped along the way by an Arab nationalist. While on patrol the next morning Dov finds Karen's lifeless body on the side of the road with her throat cut. Ari simultaneously finds his dear friend Taha hanged to death with a swastika and Star of David drawn with his blood on the wall next to his body.

These events lead to a monologue by Ari about senseless murdering, Jewish perseverance, and the outlook for the future of the Israelis followed by Ari, Kitty, and Dov boarding a truck to go fight in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Despite his best friend and a young girl being brutally murdered by the Arab extremists, Ari still carries with him a hope that both groups can live together in harmony and persevere any perceived cultural differences. Preminger claimed before writing the screenplay that he wanted to tone down the anti-Arab, anti-British, and pro-Zionist motifs that Uris had originally written, but it is apparent that Preminger could not cut out the Zionist viewpoints of the main characters. "*Exodus*, finally, is imbued with Zionist fervor. In the end, this powerful, important, and underappreciated film expresses the commitment of a Jewish director to a Jewish homeland."²² Removing an excessive number of Zionist tropes would have likely been a hindrance and a disservice to the character building that Preminger needed to have a thorough origin story for the state of Israel.

Exodus premiered on December 15, 1960 in New York City on the third night of Hanukkah.²³ Initial reviews were generally favorable and noted the cinematography, character development, and the inspirational story line. *New York Times* called *Exodus* "dazzling, eye-filling, nerve-tingling display of a wide variety of individual and mass reactions to awesome challenges and, in some of its sharpest personal details, a fine reflection of experience that rips the heart."²⁴ The film also had its share of detractors, mostly noting its slow pace and long run

²² Hirsch, *Otto Preminger*, 342.

²³ Michael Strassfeld, "Chanukah 1960," *Hebcal*, October 16, 2021. <https://www.hebcal.com/holidays/chanukah-1960> (accessed October 6, 2021).

time of nearly three and a half hours, but none of which opined over the pro-Zionist plot.

It would appear that reviews involving this matter did not appear until well after the film was circulated throughout the United States. The earliest negative review that critiqued not only the film, but other reviewers for glazing over the pro-Zionist plot came in the Spring of 1961. This coincidentally was at the same time the George Lincoln Rockwell was conducting his public protests of *Exodus*. The reviewer appears to take a stance against historical fiction used in the film to promote Israel by stating “*Exodus* is sacrilege. But let us not be sticklers for truth. I suppose it’s understandable that one doesn’t want one’s work cluttered up with a lot of facts, and one’s images with a lot of comparisons to what actually happened.”²⁵

The reviewer’s emotions are clearly against the promotion of Israel through the lens of Preminger’s tale, but *Exodus* was not the first nor last film in the historical epic genre to garner success. Wildly popular films in the 1950s and early 60s such as *Spartacus*, *Ben-Hur*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *The Ten Commandments* all follow the same pattern of utilizing historical figures or events and inserting fictitious glamorizations into the plots of the films. Hollywood has successfully mythicized such characters and seared their image into the minds of viewers by creating unique heroic characters that are admired and adored by movie-goers.

There is no evidence to suggest that Otto Preminger purposefully set a goal to mythicize his heroic main character Ari but other controversial films created prior have done so. David Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* effectively laid the groundwork in 1915 to create a mythic version of the Ku Klux Klan. The film was tremendously popular across the United States and is often credited with inspiring a twentieth-century revival of the racist hate group.²⁶ It was able to

²⁴ “Exodus Draws Crowd; Many Celebrities Present at Film Premiere Here,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1960. <https://www.nytimes.com/1960/12/16/arts/exodus.html> (accessed June 12, 2021).

²⁵ Gideon Bachmann, “Review: *Exodus* by Otto Preminger,” *Film Quarterly*, no. 14 (April 1961): 56-59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/121007> (accessed July 19, 2021).

²⁶ Maxim Simcovitch, “Impact of Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* on the Modern Ku Klux Klan,” *Journal of Popular Film*, no. 1 (1972): 45-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472719.1972.10661639> (accessed September 3, 2021).

rally dormant sentiments that were buried in decades past by depicting characters with struggles that were relatable to the viewer. A powerful correlation between the effects films have on the public are apparent and perhaps the detractors of the Zionist undertones contained within *Exodus* understood the potential power the film had over its observers. Far-right extremist groups such as the American Nazi Party wanted to quash pro-Zionist sentiment in the United States but the inspirational tale of *Exodus* had the potential to do the opposite.

American Jews, Holocaust Survivors, and the Quarantine

During the latter portion of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the United States received a massive influx of Eastern European immigrants. A large portion of these immigrants were Jews from the eastern borderlands of the Habsburg empire and western Russia and left for new lives in the United States due to political and economic instability in the region. Nearly two and a half million Jews came from Eastern Europe to settle into large American cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and New Orleans.²⁷

As a whole, this group of newly-immigrated Jews quickly understood that it was of great importance to assimilate into American culture in order to assure successful new lives. The assimilation movement coincided with a Jewish reform movement that was spearheaded by Jewish community leaders Rabbi Isaac Wise and Rabbi Max Heller. Both rabbis were credited with creating a more modern Judaism that was compatible with the American way of life. “First-generation American Jews at the time were obsessively self-conscious in crafting their cultural responses to the rhetorical question ‘What does American culture say?’ The maintenance of distinctively Jewish values and peoplehood, and the forging of an American Jewish identity, paradoxically demanded both separation from and assimilation into the broader American

²⁷ “From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” Library of Congress, September 19, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html> (accessed November 1, 2021).

society.”²⁸

Heller’s vision for the spread of reform Judaism had gone too far, as he believed it was leading to a gradual but steady loss of Jewish culture that had been long-preserved in Europe. Jews that resided in the South were particularly keen at assimilation; members of the synagogue in New Orleans were known to hold seafood boils on Friday evenings.²⁹ This pushed Heller and many others towards Zionism, or the idea that Jews should have their own homeland in the territory that was presided over by the British Mandate of Palestine; an idea that was pioneered by Theodore Herzl, a Viennese Jew. The movement grew large enough to advocate for an Israeli state to American policymakers. Hannah Arendt, Jewish immigrant to the United States and philosopher, opined on the Zion dilemma in 1944 when she wrote, “If such an agreement is not brought about, there is the imminent danger that, through their need and willingness to accept any power in the Mediterranean basin which might assure their existence, Jewish interests will clash with those of all other Mediterranean peoples.”³⁰ Arendt also believed that there would not only be conflict between the Jews and Arabs, but that countries of vast wealth would abuse the relationship with the Zionist state by only acting in their best interests.

Despite the geopolitical issues that were likely to escalate by creating a Zionist state in the Mediterranean, a solution was necessary after the Second World War where six million Jews were murdered by the German industrialized killing system and another two-hundred fifty thousand were displaced. Of the two-hundred fifty thousand, eighty-thousand made the decision

²⁸ Bobbie Malone, *Rabbi Max Heller: Reformer, Zionist, Southerner, 1860-1929* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 18-22. Wise responded to this conundrum by training reform rabbis that were modernistic and cosmopolitan in their ideas; which inadvertently led to a significant number of Jews advocating for a Zionist cause.

²⁹ Lawrence Powell, “When Hate Came to Town: New Orleans’ Jews and George Lincoln Rockwell,” *American Jewish History*, no. 4 (December 1997): 393. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23885627>. It is staunchly forbidden for traditional Jews to consume shellfish according to Kosher rules. This clashes with the long-standing tradition of New Orleans culture to hold crawfish or shrimp boils.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Random House, 1944), 133.

to emigrate to the United States.³¹ Before they could emigrate, the displaced Jews had to be repatriated in Allied-controlled Displaced Person camps that were dotted throughout much of occupied Europe. The main goal of repatriation was for displaced refugees to denounce Nazism and to pledge an allegiance to their new home country.

The refugees typically arrived through major American port cities, with New York City having the most Displaced Persons pass through. The decision on where to settle was not in the hands of the refugee but rather in the hands of where their sponsor lived. “There were the Holocaust survivors themselves, who had wishes but often little voice about their U.S. destination. The refugees’ destination was predetermined before they left Europe; every immigrant needed a sponsor willing to provide an affidavit, which promised that the newcomer would not become a public charge.”³²

Many of the volunteer sponsors were Jewish themselves, many of which lived in New York. This caused an explosion in the Jewish population of New York City, which drew the ire of many residents. The outcry became large enough for President Truman to create the Displaced Persons Commission in 1948 to spread the newly arrived refugees throughout the country.³³ Many of the immigrants eventually spread out to other cities and spaces where there was a Jewish presence, including large cities on the east coast. Some refugees relocated to the South and others to the Midwest, but the largest concentrations of Jewish immigrants remained in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

The volunteer sponsors were often monetarily motivated and their living accommodations for the refugees could be suspect at best. This often-caused survivors to

³¹ “Displaced Persons,” United States Holocaust Museum, 2020. 250,000 DPs decided to emigrate to the British Mandate of Palestine despite political unrest in the region.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/displaced-persons> (accessed October 3, 2021).

³² Beth Cohen, *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Jersey: University of Rutgers Press, 2007), 32.

³³ Cohen, *Case Closed*, 35.

frequently move locations which broke the continuity of their education and Americanization efforts. Renee Feller, a Czechoslovakian survivor of Auschwitz, arrived in America as a teenager to live with a distant aunt and uncle that acted as her sponsor. She recounts in her book on how they had no space for her in their one-bedroom Brooklyn apartment, and she was forced to sleep in a narrow hallway on the floor.³⁴

A large percentage of Jewish Displaced Persons came from Central and Eastern Europe where they had little exposure to American culture aside from the occasional meeting in the Displaced Persons camps. It became a topic of debate among the Jewish community, the assimilated and the new arrivals, on whether or not the refugees should adopt the American culture as their own. This would prove to be difficult as Holocaust survivors had their homes, families, religion, and their individual identity stripped from them by the Nazis. It was only natural for the survivors to cling to what little they had left of their lives before Nazi occupation.

Aside from cultural and language barriers, Holocaust survivors also had to persevere through their personal trauma left behind by the Nazis. The phenomenon of survivor's guilt, brought upon by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and extensive trauma, led to strong feelings of depression, inner-turmoil, and suicidal thoughts. Author Beth Cohen discovered case files of individual Holocaust survivors in the Jewish Family and Children Services Archives and highlights various accounts of depression. A sixty-five-year-old woman wished that she was no longer alive because of the burden of guilt after watching her children die. She begged the agency to help her find work so that her mind would be occupied.³⁵ Other testimonies that Cohen gathered share the same story of guilt and loneliness but it is apparent that most survivors wanted to attempt to carry on despite their overwhelming depression.

³⁴ Renee Feller, *From Auschwitz to Zabar's: A True Tale of Terror and Celebration* (New York: Authorhouse, 2016), 27.

³⁵ Cohen, *Case Closed*, 120.

In an attempt to mentally heal, many Jews found methods of occupation to distract from their wounds which included activism and protection. The Jewish Anti-Defamation League (ADL) became the most popular with the survivor demographic as group meetings gave purpose to previously lost souls. According to the ADL website their mission is “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people, and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.”³⁶

The Anti-Defamation League was one of many Jewish advocacy groups that blossomed in the mid-twentieth century. The Jewish Community Committee and the American Jewish Yearbook worked collectively with the ADL; they would often hold meetings focused on methods of fighting antisemitism and racism and the education of those who are ignorant to such disparities. By the early 1960s these groups were quite aware of George Lincoln Rockwell, his Nazi Party, and the potential danger of their inflammatory actions. To help combat the evermore strident presence of Rockwell, these groups decided to enact their policy known as quarantine following his activities in New York City in 1960.³⁷

As early as 1960, Jewish community groups began reporting on the actions of the Nazis but had not yet found it dire enough to implement their quarantine policy, which would eventually be used to combat Rockwell’s actions. The policy of quarantine had been around since 1947 that was approved by every major American Jewish relations agency.³⁸ The memos and reports were often rather straightforward but deliver a precautionary tone. A watchful eye was kept on a national level and emergency plans were put in place in case Rockwell attempted to conduct an act of public violence against the Jewish community. Memos such were frequently passed forward, if they were of great enough significance, to local community centers and

³⁶ Jonathan Greenblatt, “Who We Are,” Anti-Defamation League, October 26, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/who-we-are> (accessed January 20, 2022).

³⁷ The policy of quarantine was created by Solomon Fineberg and outlined in his 1946 handbook *Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers and Deflating the Professional Bigot*.

³⁸ Robert Segal to The Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Boston, Memorandum, January 1961, Folder 1, Box 48, Wyner Family Collection, Jewish Heritage Center, Boston, MA.

synagogues to alert as many members as possible.

The quarantine policy was decided upon after Rockwell announced his plans to picket the premier showing of the film *Exodus* in New York. The theory behind utilizing quarantine was simple: public response and reporting by the news media on specific topics, in this case Rockwell, was to be held to an absolute minimum so that they may quickly fall into obscurity as they were not in the public's eye. The decision to enact quarantine was wildly popular among Jewish-Americans but was problematic for many survivors of the Holocaust. The newly arrived Displaced Persons and Holocaust survivors were not yet able to comprehend, not only big city politics, but the core dogma of the United States, which is the Bill of Rights. Lawrence Powell addressed the confusion with the American legal system by Holocaust survivors in his journal article "*When Hate Came to Town: New Orleans' Jews and George Lincoln Rockwell*" by positing, "The anger was not directed at Rockwell alone. They were also furious at their adopted country for having allowed Nazism to make a comeback. They viewed American politics through the lens of recent European history, and they were therefore baffled by the paradox that one should defend the free speech rights of those who would abolish free speech. The bewilderment only widened the rift between themselves and American Jews who had lived in the U.S. for generations."³⁹ For many Holocaust survivors, the trepidation caused by their forced trauma was too much to bear and action had to be taken to prevent a new rise in Nazism.

George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party

George Lincoln Rockwell was born in the suburbs of Chicago in 1918 into a family of vaudeville actors. He spent much of his youth splitting his time between Maine and New Jersey after his parents divorced. The divorce may have brought upon mental strains on Rockwell, who as early as seventeen years old, began displaying difficulty with authority figures. He began to

³⁹ Powell, "When Hate Came to Town," 404.

lash out at family members and teachers alike and even wrote about these accounts “Schwab’s demands were an outrage against all reason and I rebelled as I... rebelled at my Aunt Arline’s outrages against reason.”⁴⁰ Despite his contempt for authority and rebellious tendencies, George

Lincoln Rockwell was a bright student who wanted to attend an Ivy League school. After being denied enrollment at Harvard, Rockwell was sent by his father to attend another high school post-graduation. He had continued his same raucous tendencies by riling up students and instructors alike. “Rockwell learned other lessons at Hebron. He found that he could move people with words and that he could make others see the world how he saw it.”⁴¹ This led to Rockwell joining the university newspaper once he had been accepted into Brown University. While working for the paper he contributed writings and illustrations for his first two years at the university until his temperament began to get the best of him. During the end of his sophomore year, Rockwell continually had rage-induced outbursts that were directed at faculty and students that he believed were communists.

Rockwell’s frustration with communists supposedly infiltrating the Ivy League was a deciding factor in his withdrawal from Brown in March 1941.⁴² Subsequently, Rockwell joined the Navy as the shadow of war had begun to fall on the United States. While at the Naval Academy, Rockwell completed his pilot’s training and graduated just two days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Rockwell went on to serve during the Second World War as a senior aviator, most notably during the battle of Guadalcanal and the invasion of Guam.

After the war Rockwell entered the field of advertising and opened a semi-successful business in Maine. This was short lived as he often feuded with his two partners.

⁴⁰ Peter Merkl, *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right* (Pennsylvania: Westview Press, 1993), 205.

⁴¹ Frederick Simonelli, *American Fuehrer: George Lincoln Rockwell and the American Nazi Party* (Maryland: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 17. Hebron Academy was the post-secondary school that Rockwell was enrolled into by his father in order to raise his grades enough to be accepted into an Ivy League school.

⁴² Simonelli, *American Fuehrer*, 12.

Rockwell was bought out of his share of the company in 1949. “Rockwell’s flaw, however, was a chronic inability to see a project through and to stick with an idea, even a great one, long enough to reap the rewards of commercial success.”⁴³ Months after Rockwell left his advertising agency the Korean War escalated and he was recalled into service as a Navy pilot. “Lieutenant Commander Rockwell quickly re-adapted to a military regimen and was again the warrior in charge of his own destiny, in a man’s world where the enemy was right in front, easy to see, easy to engage.”⁴⁴

The recommissioned Rockwell was stationed in San Diego, California and assigned to train young fighter pilots for the war effort. “His involvement with the Korean Conflict bred in him an enduring hatred of communism and a paranoid fear that it would undermine the United States.”⁴⁵ There are varying accounts of the precise moment that George Lincoln Rockwell became politically radicalized, but all accounts agree that it occurred while he was stationed in California during the war. His paranoia led him to believe that General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of UN forces, was the country’s savior from communism and needed to be elected as President of the United States.

After being enthralled with the idea of Douglas MacArthur becoming President of the United States, Rockwell became involved in the 1952 campaign efforts. While out campaigning with other MacArthur supporters Rockwell met a woman that showed him newspapers that smeared the former General. She claimed these newspapers all had one thing in common, and that was that they were controlled by Jews. Rockwell was likely intrigued by these claims because he soon visited the local library in San Diego to investigate matters on his own accord

⁴³ Ibid, 20.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 20-21.

⁴⁵ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 9.

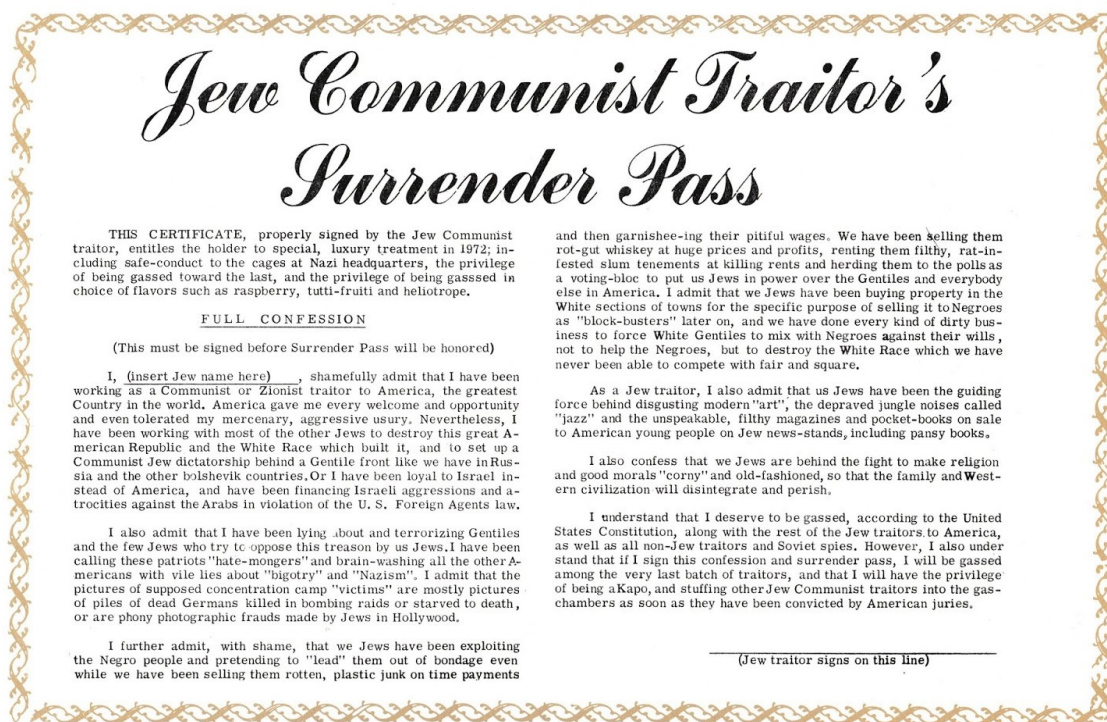


Photo 1: Jewish Surrender Pass Created by Rockwell in 1960. Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, American Nazi Party Monograph, Page 33.

and "he became convinced of the existence of a Jewish-communist world conspiracy."⁴⁶

Rockwell fell under the spell of the same false narrative that so many before him had. Soon after meeting the elderly woman in San Diego, Rockwell sought out a copy of *Mein Kampf* to which he referred to as "mental sunshine" that "brilliantly illuminated the mysteries of the heretofore impenetrable murk in a world gone mad."⁴⁷

Rockwell described his time in San Diego as eye-opening and likened it to a spiritual awakening as he was able to see the world in a light that few others were able to. He claimed in his autobiography, *This Time the World*, to have had a vision where he met Adolf Hitler and he professed growing concern for world-controlling Jewish activity.⁴⁸ It should be noted though, that Rockwell's account of spiritual awakening came nearly a decade later in *This Time the World* at a time when he was attempting to stress his self-perceived status as an American hero.

⁴⁶ Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 9. The Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy was perpetuated by Hitler and the Nazis to ostracize the German-Jews. The conspiracy revolves around communist Jews and their attempt to control world governments.

⁴⁷ George Lincoln Rockwell, *This Time the World* (Pennsylvania: Liberty Bell Publications, 1961), 81.

⁴⁸ Rockwell, *This Time the World*, 67.

Other accounts of Rockwell's proverbial fall down the rabbit hole of political extremism seem more sensible as it appears to occur more gradually. After this self-proclaimed enlightenment, Rockwell began to change as he saw it his duty to expose the communist-Jew plot.

At the conclusion of the Korean War Rockwell was relegated back to reserve duty in the Navy and he needed a source of income for his new family. He relocated back to Maine where he created a monthly periodical publication that was geared towards the wives of servicemen named *U.S. Lady* in 1955. History repeated itself for Rockwell though as he and his business partners clashed and he soon sold out in order to move his family to Washington D.C. It was in Washington D.C. that George Lincoln Rockwell was able to insert himself into the political circuit as an organizer for a far-right conservative action group.⁴⁹ He felt by working with politicians and conservatives in positions of power, he could bring the issue of the Jewish conspiracy into the public's eye.

While working for a political action group in 1958 Rockwell met Noel Arrowsmith, a socialite playboy who also carried with him political beliefs of national socialism. Arrowsmith convinced Rockwell that no good Nazi hides in the shadows and that it was imperative to come into the public if he wanted to become successful at his goals.⁵⁰ Arrowsmith gave Rockwell the opportunity to come out as a Nazi by offering to financially support his anti-Semitic cause. Arrowsmith purchased Lincoln Rockwell a home-base in Arlington, Virginia directly across the Potomac River from the Lincoln Memorial and furnished the home with printing equipment; this enabled Rockwell to freelance his own propaganda to spread his messages of hate.

The official organization of the American Nazi Party began in February 1959 with six of Rockwell's leadership division. During this initial meeting the group created and published an introduction that included seven "fundamental, absolute, and timeless truths" that mostly

⁴⁹ Simonelli, *American Fuehrer*, 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 26.

consisted of anti-Semitic rhetoric.⁵¹ The main core of Rockwell's American Nazis consisted of: Alan J. Welch, Matthias Koehl, Robert Allison Lloyd III, and John Patler. Each member was given a different military-styled rank with different duties. Specific duties may have included creating and spreading propaganda material or recruitment.

By the summer Rockwell and his associates had begun protesting Jewish influence on the United States government in front of the White House. Only days later a group of racist extremists that were linked to Rockwell were apprehended after a synagogue had been bombed in Atlanta. The newspapers and FBI implicated Rockwell as the main suspect but no charges were filed.⁵² This led to further provocation by the American Nazi Party by flaunting swastika flags from their Arlington base. By late 1959 Rockwell not only brazenly displayed Nazi regalia but he created numerous public episodes in order to gain as much media attention as possible. An FBI monograph on the American Nazi Party notes the flagrantly racist acts that were conducted by party members under the guise of protest. "Rockwell strives for the shocking, the repulsive, and the horrifying to gain public notice. Using such props as gorilla costumes, blackface, and over-sized noses." They carried signs reading "Free Our Brothers" and "We Equals Want Civil Rights."⁵³

Rockwell's brazen acts were not meaningless as he had various goals in sight. His approach to gaining media attention was beginning to work as he shifted his focus towards anti-Semitic rhetoric that he thought would get him elected as Governor of Virginia by 1966. George Lincoln Rockwell's eventual goal was to attain the Presidency by 1972 in order to fulfill Adolf Hitler's Final Solution. Rockwell's full ambitions included radical changes to the structure of society and government of the United States. His first goal was to create amendments to the

⁵¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *American Nazi Party Monograph* (Washington, DC, 1964), Page 21.

⁵² Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 11.

⁵³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *American Nazi Party Monograph*, 31.

Constitution that would establish a National Eugenics Commission. The second step was to liquidate treasonous Jews, which in Rockwell's estimation was around ninety-five percent. The third step involved the mass deportation of all people of African descent back to the continent of Africa by providing each family with a \$10,000 stipend to aid in their resettlement.⁵⁴

Rockwell's ambitions were exemplified in an interview with *Playboy Magazine* reporter Alex Haley. "I think, therefore, that we should take the billions of dollars now being wasted on foreign aid to Communist countries which hate us and give that money to our own [expletive] to build their own civilized nation in Africa."⁵⁵ Haley continued to professionally disprove Rockwell's racial stereotypes that he circulated, which appeared to irk Rockwell to the point of blaming "Jew anthropologists" for starting the Civil Rights Movement. He also claims that it is a Jewish plot to promote race-mixing of white and black people in order to have a firmer control over both races.

The most gut-wrenching portion of the interview includes Rockwell's thoughts on the Holocaust; which in his opinion, was fabricated by Jewish American soldiers after the war.⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that Rockwell does not deny that Jews were imprisoned by the Nazis, but rather that they were not tortured and sent to the gas chambers. He also reiterates the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy and how it was utilized by Jews to further their sphere of influence.

By the early 1960s the scope of the Holocaust and Nazi war crimes as a whole were still being processed by the American public. Adolf Eichmann, the mastermind behind the Final Solution, was not tried until 1961 and many sinister details of the death camps were not publicly circulated prior to the trial of Adolf Eichmann. George Lincoln Rockwell had a head start on the

⁵⁴ Ibid, 16-17.

⁵⁵ George L. Rockwell, "Alex Haley Interviews George Lincoln Rockwell," interview by Alex Haley, *Playboy*, April 1966, <https://alexhaley.com/2019/09/10/alex-haley-interviews-george-lincoln-rockwell/> (accessed April 6, 2021).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

horrific details in the Eichmann trial and was able to pedal his Holocaust denial conspiracy. This conspiracy has been long-standing within radical political groups and has even carried over into the twenty-first century.

To spread these ideas, Rockwell's cronies picked up production of printing propaganda that included pamphlets, brochures, and leaflets that could easily be distributed. Propaganda had been circulated by nearly any means necessary; by mail, posting leaflets on parked cars, and even by public speaking at the park. The aforementioned typical methods of spreading propaganda were utilized but ANP members also got creative in their twisted point of view. One piece of propaganda listed the Jew Communist Traitor's benefits after they had surrendered themselves and acknowledge their treasonous plot against the United States. Another unique method was Rockwell's own music label cleverly named Hatenanny Records which produced racist mockeries of popular jazz and folk songs. Others pieces of propaganda spread false racial stereotypes, specifically about African-Americans. According to FBI statistics, the American Nazi propaganda had reached most of the United States; as far west as California.

The rapid spread of such shockingly hateful propaganda was partially due to Rockwell's recruitment campaign policy that involved giving speeches at colleges and universities throughout the country. The long-term effectiveness of this scheme did not yield the desired results, but by challenging the brewing Civil Rights Movement's goals while blaming Jews for America's troubles, the seed of hatred could easily have been planted within the impressionable minds of college students. It was reported by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* following Rockwell's *Exodus* protest in Philadelphia in February 1961 that the American Nazis had recruited a number of anti-Zionist Muslim students to distribute advocacy fliers around scores of college campuses along the East Coast. The report claims that the Nazi literature urged Nazis and

Arabs to join together to demonstrate against the film *Exodus*.⁵⁷

If not campaigning at colleges, Rockwell would often give outdoor speeches that were in the public domain, most notably public parks. He would often set up a small stage and podium that was positioned between Nazi flags and large picket-like signs that depicted a message. Rockwell had planned a public speaking session during the July 4th celebration in Union Square in New York City in 1960, but his permit was denied by the park's commissioner with the support of the mayor two months prior to the planned date. Rockwell sued with the backing of the American Civil Liberties Union after the New York State Supreme Court upheld the ruling. The case was taken all the way to the New York Court of Appeals by 1961.

The New York Times reported after the conclusion of the case that sided in Rockwell's favor. "This ruling was set aside in a 4-to-1 decision by the Appellate Division. Justice Charles Breitel wrote: 'There is no power in government under our Constitution to exercise prior restraint of the expression of views unless it is demonstrated on a record that such expression will immediately create injury to the public wheel.' New York's highest court unanimously affirmed this decision."⁵⁸ The final entry in the newspaper article mentioned the fact that the mayor still protested despite the court's final ruling.

Similar Nazi-like spectacles were put on display only twenty years prior in what has now been dubbed *A Night at the Garden*, a Nazi gathering of over twenty-thousand supporters in 1939 just weeks before Germany invaded Poland. The imagery was strong and attempted to sway American support to the Nazi cause. A large painting of George Washington was used as the centerpiece behind the main podium while other banners displayed swastikas and American

⁵⁷ "Three Rockwell Supporters Arrested in Philadelphia Demonstration." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 3, 1961. <https://www.jta.org/archive/three-rockwell-supporters-arrested> (accessed April 12, 2021).

⁵⁸ "Supreme Court Backs Rockwell on Right to Speak in City Parks." *New York Times*. November 14, 1961. <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/11/14/archives/supreme-court-backs-rockwell-on-right-to-speak-in-city-parks.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed June 9, 2021).

eagles that were fashioned to hold a swastika. Many supporters can be seen giving the “*Sieg Heil*” and even at one point cheering the beating of a Jewish man, Isadore Greenbaum, who had rushed the stage. With twenty-thousand sympathizers and supporters in the Manhattan area alone, there were sure to be many others nationwide that held their sentiments close to their chests even after the conclusion of the war.

Regardless of Rockwell’s attempt to rekindle Nazism in America, he was dismissed by many government officials who thought he was no more than a two-bit racist who only wanted the attention of the press. The Jewish community, especially Holocaust survivors, however were quite aware of the American Nazi’s attempted presence within the political spectrum and decided that it was worth determining a widespread solution on how to deal with their demented ideals.

The Protests and the Response of the Media

The American Nazi Party held a string of protests against Otto Preminger’s film *Exodus* in various cities across the United States that began in the winter of 1960 and ended in the summer of 1961. The national media’s reporting on the protests varied greatly depending on the location of the event which has proven to be problematic when attempting to find primary sources via American media outlets. This disparity was due to the Anti-Defamation League’s quarantine policy and each individual city’s willingness to follow the approach. The effectiveness of the policy of quarantine, like the media’s coverage, also varied greatly from city to city.

George Lincoln Rockwell’s initial protest of *Exodus* occurred in New York City on the night of the film’s December 15, 1960 premiere. In the case of this protest, there was essentially no news reporting of the event via any well-circulated sources. The lone report of the evening

regarding *Exodus* came from *The New York Times* and explained that the initial showing was in front of an at-capacity theater that included celebrities such as: Otto Preminger, Adlai Stevenson, and Leonard Bernstein.⁵⁹ This report was published on page forty-four with a juxtaposition next to a review of the film. The picket was likely viewed as insignificant because Preminger notes in his autobiography that he was told of the Nazis' presence, but paid the message no mind; he was much more concerned with the donors who paid \$400 a ticket to raise money for the Weizmann Institute of Science.⁶⁰

There is however an internal memorandum from the ADL Boston office, dated January 13, 1961 10:30 a.m., that describes the details briefly. The memo reads, "When Rockwell picketed 'Exodus' in New York, the Police Dep't had the picket line moved a few blocks away on the basis that they were hindering foot traffic. They did not carry placards 'Kill the Jew', but sign on 'Fight the Communists'. They did not wear swastikas. They were picketing because of Dalton Trumbo."⁶¹

It is plausible, in conjuncture with quarantine, that there was no reporting on the situation due to the lack of a shock factor since Rockwell did not don his typical brown shirt uniform and swastika. Rockwell's initial *Exodus* protest focused on Dalton Trumbo and his supposed communist beliefs which was not in 1960 to oppose. Rockwell did not receive the public outrage that he desired and likely decided to shift his focus of his protests from anti-communism to antisemitism in order to prove his point that Jews were untrustworthy traitors by nature.⁶²

⁵⁹ "Exodus Draws Crowd: Many Celebrities Present at Film Premiere Here," *The New York Times*, December 16, 1960. <https://www.nytimes.com/1960/12/16/archives/exodus-draws-crowd-many-celebrities-present-at-film-premiere-here.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed April 22, 2021).

⁶⁰ Preminger, *An Autobiography*, 172. Preminger arranged the premiere to take place in New York to benefit the Weizmann Institute that was run by Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel.

⁶¹ Sam Katz to Robert Segal, Memorandum, January, 13, 1961, Folder 2, Box 48, Wyner Family Collection, Jewish Heritage Center, Boston, MA.

⁶² Simonelli, *American Fuehrer*, 119. Rockwell followed Michael Barkun's Christian Identity philosophy that notes Jews as the offspring of a love affair between Eve and Satan.

Rockwell's approach to his next protest, which was scheduled for Boston, varied greatly from his first protest of *Exodus* in New York. Rockwell's intention was to create an uproar with the public and to pin the blame on the Jewish community. The first step in causing outrage was to notify news outlets of his plans to picket the film. A reporter for the *Boston Globe* by the name of Gordon Hall was contacted by Rockwell or one of his storm troopers on Saturday January 7th and Hall quickly spread the news to other papers, WMKX radio station, and the Jerry Williams television program.⁶³ By the time the ADL memo had been circulated on January 10th, news of Rockwell's arrival had spread throughout the city.

Though the *Boston Globe* and other media outlets in Boston initially reported on Rockwell's planned arrival to the city, local papers abided by the quarantine and did not report on the picket of *Exodus*. Local media outlets sent letters of support to the ADL Boston office pledging their support to "not print anything concerning Rockwell's visit unless it should result in a major news development."⁶⁴ The Jewish Community Council also sent out a list of guidelines, which followed Solomon Andhil Fineburg's *Checkmate for Rabble-Rousers*, on how civilians should handle the Rockwell situation, most of which focused on de-escalation and the avoidance of Rockwell's followers.

The outrage of the public proved to be too much and the quarantine policy failed miserably in Boston. A crowd numbering in the thousands convened in front of the Saxon theater on Tremont Street around 2:30 p.m. in anticipation of Rockwell's arrival. Counter protesters carried signs that read "In Memoriam, Buchenwald ", "No Nazi Dictator", "Hitler was Also a Lunatic", and "And Insult to the American Dead of World War II." The Holocaust

⁶³ Robert Segal to Isadore Zack, Memorandum, January 10, 1961, Folder 2, Box 48, Wyner Family Collection, Jewish Heritage Center, Boston, MA. Gordon claims to have notified Robert Segal, head of Boston ADL but Segal refuted those claims.

⁶⁴ Win Brooks to Robert Segal, Letter, January 13, 1961, Folder 2, Box 48, Wyner Family Collection, Jewish Heritage Center, Boston, MA.

survivor protesters were soon joined by college students and members of the Socialist Party. This counter-protest was also planned in advance as fliers were posted throughout town to join the Jews in resisting the American Nazi Party.



American Jewish Historical Society, New England Archives

Photo 2: Anti-Nazi protesters in Boston, MA at the premiere of Exodus. Source: American Jewish Historical Society, January 15, 1961. Wyner Collection, Folder 4, Box 48, Page 1.

**To the
WORKERS, STUDENTS, NEGRO AND
JEWISH PEOPLE OF BOSTON**

According to the Boston Sunday Globe of January 8th the

AMERICAN NAZI PARTY

is planning to put a picket line of 20 Uniformed labor - hating, White Supremacist and Jew-hating members on a picket line at The Saxon Theatre. They want to stop the showing of the motion picture "Exodus".

Are we going to allow a Hitlerite monster develop in the U. S. — To put all minority people "in their place"? To destroy the Trade Unions? To wipe out our freedoms? To terrorize all progressive thought?

Nip this monster in the bud — NOW! Tomorrow may be too late! The German people paid for their passivity.

The picket line is scheduled for this coming SUNDAY, JANUARY 15th at 1:00 P.M.

JOIN A COUNTER-PICKET LINE OF FREEDOM-LOVING AMERICANS.

NOTE: Be on guard in case the Nazis change the day or time of their picketing.

Auspices

Socialist Workers Party — Young Socialist Alliance

BOSTON LABOR FORUM — 295 HUNTINGTON AVENUE

American Jewish Historical Society, New England Archives

Photo 3: Anti-Nazi flier that was passed around Boston, MA in the days leading up to the ANP protest. Source: American Jewish Historical Society, January 15, 1961. Wyner Collection, Folder 2, Box 48, Page 63.

The picketers who were on the side of Rockwell and the counter protesters began shouting at one another from across the street. *The New York Times* elaborated on the escalation in the Monday edition with a headline stating, "American Nazi Stoned in Boston." The article continued with the story, "The crowd surged forward a few minutes after Rockwell arrived, hurling stones and eggs at him." The article also explains how the police took the Nazis into custody for their own safety because of how unruly the mob had become. They were later driven

to Logan International Airport and escorted out of the state.⁶⁵ The article was posted in the Lifestyle section of the paper and essentially buried on page twenty-two. It was positioned at the top of the page with a photograph of the American brown shirts, but more attention-grabbing advertisements for films starring John Wayne and Peter Sellers overshadowed the piece. *The New York Times* may not have implemented the quarantine policy for Rockwell's second protest, but the discreet placement of the story could have been nearly as effective.

The *Harvard Crimson*, the Harvard student newspaper, delivered a similar story but shed light on more specific details from the point of view of college students who arrived at the picket because it was "the only way we can protest against what they stand for."⁶⁶ The article also gives precise numbers; nearly one-third of the counter protesters were former refugees from the Nazi camp system. The piece also expresses that city government officials made the call to have Rockwell escorted out to avoid his achieving his goal of having the public view Jews as violent. "Rep. Julius Ansel spoke to the crowd over the public address system. 'We have won a victory for decency and freedom.'"⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that the *New York Times* article on the same subject matter failed to mention the large number of anti-Rockwellians in attendance, but Photographs 2 and 3 validate the claims made by the *Harvard Crimson* that, "The crowd of 500 anti-pickets, composed mainly of refugees from Nazi concentration camps, college students, and labor unionists, sent up a loud yell and descended on the khaki-uniformed men wearing swastika arm bands as they emerged from a car near the theater."⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "American Nazi Stoned in Boston," *The New York Times*, January 16, 1961.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1961/01/16/archives/american-nazi-stoned-in-boston.html?searchResultPosition=1>
(accessed March 29, 2021).

⁶⁶ Roberts, Steven. "Students, Refugees, Unionists Riot As American Nazis Attempt to Picket Showing of Film 'Exodus' in Boston." *The Harvard Crimson*, January 16, 1961.
<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1961/1/16/students-refugees-unionists-riot-as-american/> (accessed May 3, 2021).

⁶⁷ "American Nazi Stoned in Boston," *New York Times*.

⁶⁸ "Students, Refugees, Unionists Riot," *Harvard Crimson*.



American Jewish Historical Society, New England Archives

Photo 4 : Spectators of the brewing riot in front of the Saxon Theater in Boston, MA. Source: American Jewish Historical Society, January 15, 1961. Wyner Collection, Folder 4, Box 48, Page 19.

The quarantine had failed miserably in Boston due to the lack of cooperation by Holocaust survivors and their allies. The ADL quickly realized that their approach to quarantine was deeply flawed. An ADL memo written by Isaac Franck did not put the blame on Holocaust survivors but on the organization itself. “We mislead people when we tell them Rockwell is shaking the foundation of democracy. If we say he is a greater menace than he is, then we are going to make him that. This guy is a mosquito; he is no menace, a political nonentity.”⁶⁹ In hindsight it would be nearly impossible to contain the rage of survivors who had to revisit the greatest horror of their lives by seeing Nazis parade through the streets of America. The original stance on quarantine made Rockwell seem like a larger threat than he realistically could have

⁶⁹ Isaac Franck to Robert Segal, Memorandum, January 18, 1961, Folder 2, Box 48, Wyner Family Collection, Jewish Heritage Center, Boston, MA.

been, which in turn signaled their survivor instinct as they felt the Rockwell issue could not go unaddressed.

The Boston protest gave Rockwell precisely what he had wanted, notoriety and publicity. It empowered him enough to schedule another picket of *Exodus*, this time in Philadelphia. The protest was announced by Rockwell to the media to take place on February 1, 1961; which is curious because on January 30th, Martin Luther King Jr. gave a civil rights speech in the city. The Philadelphia Police Department likely saw what occurred in Boston and were more prepared than their cohorts as mounted officers, detectives, and K-9 units were present.⁷⁰ Unbeknownst to the public, Rockwell himself would not join the protest of *Exodus* in Philadelphia, but a handful of his followers arrived donning their inflammatory regalia. The offensiveness of the signage was also more significant than in Boston, as now signs depicted messages such as “America for Whites, Gas Chambers for Traitors” and “Bring Back Auschwitz.”⁷¹

The news reporting on the *Exodus* protest in Philadelphia was rather scarce as major outlets such as *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Examiner* did not pick up the story. Lesser known smaller newspapers such as *Philadelphia Daily News*, *The Plain Speaker*, and *Wilkes Barre Times* were the only newspapers on the East Coast to cover the protest. The *San Francisco Examiner* and *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* were the only well-known media sources to publish a report of the events.

Philadelphia Daily News gave the story of the protest front page news but reported in an odd manner. The headlines for the story read, “A Melee That Wasn’t in the Script” and “Supporting Casts Proves Arresting at Film Premiere.”⁷² This particular newspaper appears to make light of the situation and even brushing off the counter protest by creating gag titles that

⁷⁰ “A Melee That Wasn’t in the Script,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 2, 1961, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/184986551/> (accessed February 1, 2022).

⁷¹ Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 8.

⁷² “A Melee That Wasn’t in the Script,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, 1.

parallel the showing of the film. The article does go on to explain that most of the sixty-seven people arrested were students from Temple University, fifty underage high school students, and three American Nazi Party members. The author of the article seems to give one last jab at humor by referring to the event as “The Street Scene Prologue to *Exodus*.⁷³ Despite this story being at the forefront of the newspaper’s reporting, the report itself seems to lack professionalism and even sheds the counter protesters as the aggressors. The main page of the article contains photographs of American Nazi Party members being detained but a significant portion of the article goes towards telling of youth aggressor, Jules Christine, who arrived to the picket with multiple firearms, rotten fruit, and a sign that said “Gas All Nazis-Rockwell.”⁷⁴

The Plain Speaker and *Wilkes Barre Times* reported on the protest, but as opposed to *Philadelphia Daily News*, these two gave a more straightforward approach to their reporting. Both papers delivered the report in a very similar fashion. *The Plain Speaker* presented details on how the skirmish was initiated. “The scuffle broke out when police spotted an auto with five young men who allegedly were carrying rocks and eggs.”⁷⁵ The position of this report in the *Plain Speaker* is of interesting note because it is directly next to comic strips of Dennis the Menace and The Lone Ranger. Both newspapers however, named the Nazis as the aggressors in the protest and went as far as to name all of the Party members involved and that Rockwell was not present at the recommendation of Philadelphia police detectives.

The *San Francisco Examiner* titled their page six headline “Philadelphia Foils Raid on ‘Exodus.’”⁷⁶ They also tell of the car of young men carrying rocks and eggs with them, but were derailed by the police on the scene. This newspaper brings a different perspective on the story

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *The Plain Speaker*, February 2, 1961, 12. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/61208646/?terms=%22george%20lincoln%20rockwell%22&match=1&e=wronguser> (accessed February 1, 2022).

⁷⁶ “Philadelphia Foils Raid on *Exodus*,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 2, 1961, 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/458632080/> (accessed December 3, 2021).

than the East Coast papers as they claim that the “Scuffling broke out as police tried to push back the hundreds of spectators.”⁷⁷ This article appears to also lend the blame towards the young anti-Nazis as the antagonists as they brought with them items to incite a riot.

The *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* appears to give the most straightforward yet pithy approach to their report of the ANP’s Philadelphia demonstration. The article is positioned on page three of their daily reporting on Jewish-focused affairs. The article states that three ANP members and sixty-four others were arrested when a clash broke out in the streets in front of the Boyd Theater’s premiere showing of *Exodus*.⁷⁸ The news excerpt, unlike the previous that were discussed, listed the criminal charges and bond amounts for the ANP members and the three anti-Rockwellians that were not subsequently released.

All three of the Nazi Party members were held on charges of rioting, inciting a riot, and conspiracy to breach the peace that came along with a \$10,000 bond which came as a surprise because the typical fine was only \$30.⁷⁹ Of the anti-pickers, only three were held longer than a few hours on charges that centered around concealed weapons and inciting a riot.

After the picket of *Exodus* in Philadelphia, Rockwell’s path becomes somewhat clouded for a time. From mid-February until May of 1961, reporting of the American Nazi Party’s tour of *Exodus* protests is essentially non-existent. It could be assumed that Rockwell put his hate tour on hold while dealing with judicial and financial issues stemming from his divorces and his public antics, but there is secondary-source information from reliable scholars that mentions another protest which was held in Chicago, Illinois. The only obtainable primary-source evidence comes from the January 16th edition of the *New York Times* on page twenty-two. “Four

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ “Three Rockwell Supporters Arrested in Philadelphia Demonstration,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 3, 1961, 3. <https://www.jta.org/archive/three-rockwell-supporters-arrested-in-philadelphia-demonstration> (accessed April 4, 2021).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

pickets demonstrated against the movie 'Exodus' in the Loop today but were driven away by a jeering crowd of 200 patrons waiting to see the film."⁸⁰

Lawrence Powell wrote, "At the turn of the year Rockwell mounted a picketing campaign in selected American cities against the newly released film *Exodus*, a box office hit recounting the founding of the state of Israel. Carefully pre-announced, often by flyers declaring 'He is Coming' or 'We Are Back,' Rockwell's appearance in company with a handful of armbanded storm troopers triggered major riots in Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia"⁸¹

Hasia Diner, Professor of History at NYU, wrote a similar synopsis when she stated, "In Chicago, the same controversy flared, and contrary to the community consensus, survivors picketed Rockwell, as they did in Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington. They carried signs reading 'Remember Auschwitz.'"⁸² Her findings are consistent with other authors and professors of history including Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke who alluded to the ANP protest in Chicago and its organizer, Matt Koehl, a protege of George Lincoln Rockwell.⁸³ An investigation of their footnotes yields either information that is stored in private collections or sources that are already utilized within this thesis.

Despite some historical gaps regarding Rockwell's picketing tour of *Exodus*, it is well-documented that in May 1961 Rockwell planned to drive to New Orleans to protest the film. He purchased a Volkswagen minibus to make the trip South through a racially tumultuous part of the country. The Volkswagen dawned a custom paint job with inflammatory phrases such as "The Hate Bus", "We Hate Race-Mixing", and "We Hate Jew Communism."⁸⁴

⁸⁰ "American Nazi Stoned in Boston," *New York Times*, January 16, 1961.

⁸¹ Powell, "When Hate Came To Town," 397-398.

⁸² Hasia Diner, *We Remember With Love and Reverence: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2010). 212.

⁸³ Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, 15.

⁸⁴ Joe Scherschel, *Nazi Hate Bus in Virginia, 1961*. Photograph. Getty Images. May 19, 1961.



Photo 5 Rockwell (right) and his storm troopers in front of the Hate Bus.

Source: *Timeline*

The Hate Bus left Virginia for New Orleans on May 20th and Rockwell was immediately shunned of his requests to stop and speak in a city park in Charlotte, North Carolina. The mayor himself denied the Nazis a permit.⁸⁵ Rockwell's Lieutenant, John Patler was leading the excursion and sent various telegrams to various cities for pleas to speak in public along the way. The *Charlotte Observer* article, although short, sheds light on the decision for the Rockwellites to drive to New Orleans. The article is positioned next to two stories regarding the rioting in Montgomery, Alabama where the now famous Freedom Riders provided an enormous spark to the beginning of the Civil Rights movement.

There was great concern among civil rights activists working towards desegregation in Alabama that the American Nazi Party would bring more violence and rioting to their

⁸⁵ "American Nazis Hate Jews, 'Race Mixing'," *Charlotte Observer*, May 23, 1961.
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/619971932/?terms=%22george%20lincoln%20rockwell%22&match=1>
 (accessed December 19, 2021).

desegregation efforts. There had already been enough bloodshed and fighting for the state of Alabama to call in the National Guard and Army and the Nazis would only add to the problem. Rockwell had notified government officials in Montgomery of the intention of his underlings to stop and preach their hateful agenda to the public but their attempt to provoke an already tightly-wound city was thwarted by the US Army and the Alabama State Police.

The Montgomery Advertiser reported on the matter despite larger sociopolitical issues in the city limits. The article titled “Nazi Party Dispatching ‘Hate’ Group” is juxtapositioned directly in between photographs of Freedom Riders, rioting, and the military response. The photo descriptions tend to place the blame for the riots and unruliness on those fighting for their civil rights. The article quoted Rockwell as requesting police protection from “negro hoodlums.”⁸⁶ Patler and the rest of Rockwell’s crew were under heavy surveillance over the entire course of their time in Montgomery and were only allowed to stop for gasoline and a photo-op.

The hate bus left Montgomery for New Orleans without any incident. Major news media sources such as *Newsweek* and *Time Magazine* reported on the unrest caused by the backlash originating from the Freedom Riders. *Newsweek* reported in their May 29th edition about the troublesome civil rights activists but omitted the presence of the American Nazi Party. *Life* was the only magazine to capture photographs to document the ANP’s attempted protests of the desegregation efforts by the Freedom Riders.

Though no pickets of *Exodus* nor greater incidents occurred in Charlotte, Atlanta, or Montgomery, New Orleans would prove to be different. The city was arguably the largest racial powder keg in the South of the early 1960s. Corrupt and openly racist political leaders in the New Orleans area, such as Leander Perez, had stoked the coals of racial hatred for decades, but their status quo had been challenged in the early sixties; most importantly by Ruby Bridges and

⁸⁶ “Guardsmen, U.S. Marshals at Strife-Torn Area,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 22, 1961. <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/256792586/> (accessed December 14, 2021).

her successful attempt at ending segregation in New Orleans' public schools just months before Rockwell's planned protest. The night before the confrontation Judge Perez held a rally in which he condemned Zionist Jews and perpetuated Judeo-Bolshevik propaganda.⁸⁷ There is no evidence to suggest that Perez was a supporter of Rockwell but Rockwell often boasted of a wealthy donor in the New Orleans area. In addition to these racial tensions the Freedom Riders planned to ride through New Orleans which had government officials and civilians in a state of heightened concern. New Orleans Mayor Chep Morrison publicly stated that New Orleanians could handle their own affairs without outside intervention and that the Freedom Riders, the Nazi Storm troopers, nor their troubles were welcome to the city.⁸⁸

Despite the warnings from Mayor Morrison, Rockwell and the other ANP members advanced towards New Orleans, but decided to stop at Fountainebleau State Park on the north shore of New Orleans to hold a recruiting rally, to which they were denied entry and closely monitored by police.⁸⁹ The pressure of police presence became stressful enough for the driver of the "Hate Bus" to attempt to evade their police tail which led to their careening into the sides of the Causeway Bridge, which was reported by the *New Orleans States-Item*.⁹⁰

The impending presence of Nazis was not the only concern of the mayor as his concerns over the reaction by Holocaust survivors was at the forefront. Along with various racial issues occurring in New Orleans in 1961, it was also a tense time for Jews and Holocaust survivors because of the highly publicized trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the orchestrators of the Holocaust. The trial caused an uptick in antisemitism in the city where it was not uncommon to see bumper stickers that read "I Like Eich" which played off of President Eisenhower's

⁸⁷ Glenn Jeanson, *Leander Perez: Boss of the Delta* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 225.

⁸⁸ New Orleans Public Library Archives, Document, Folder 1961, Page 17, Chep Morrison Collection.

⁸⁹ Powell, "When Hate Came to Town," 413.

⁹⁰ "New Orleans Gives Chilly Reception to Nazis," *New Orleans States-Item*, May 24, 1961.

campaign slogan.⁹¹ In conjecture with the mayor's office, the New Orleans branch of the ADL quickly enacted its quarantine policy, but it would prove fruitless as the stored rage and emotion of Holocaust survivors reached the surface.

While the ADL and NOPD met, a group of Holocaust survivors met at Ralph's Butcher Shop in the Irish Channel neighborhood where they decided that they would take action against Rockwell. "The anger gave us courage to fight," says Felicia Fuksman, a Lodz ghetto survivor. 'And this time we were in a position to fight back.'"⁹² The press also decided to shun the quarantine policy, likely because of the headline-worthy outcome of the showdown.

The Times Picayune, the largest newspaper in New Orleans during the twentieth-century, claimed that Rockwell wanted to picket in New Orleans because of his financial backers in the city, who he never publicly named, and spun the report to make it appear the police escort was present to provide protection.⁹³ The reporting by the *Times Picayune* could be justified that their views fell in line with Mayor Morrison's idea that New Orleans could solve its own issues without outside interference. It is possible that they did not want to exacerbate the scale of the matter for larger national newspapers to pick up.

There was no mention of Holocaust survivors nor anti-pickers present at the premiere of *Exodus* that was shown at the Civic Theater in downtown New Orleans; which only strengthens the aforementioned hypothesis. The article from May 25th focuses on the law-breaking Nazis and their challenges to the law and order of the city, though the reports did not give such detailed accounts. Various articles from May 25th to May 30th give accounts of Rockwell and his men being imprisoned in the NOPD jail and their unanimous decision to stage

⁹¹ Powell, "When Hate Came to Town," 401.

⁹² Ibid, 405.

⁹³ "American Nazi Party Head Flies to N.O.," *Times Picayune*, May 24, 1961. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uno.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1223BCE5B718A166%40EANX-12D2E52A36050379%402437444-12D09A44D7BBC9E6%4019-12D09A44D7BBC9E6%40> (accessed January 3, 2022).

a hunger strike in order to gain greater media attention.

The New York Times published a handful of articles regarding Rockwell's protest, mostly of which reverberate the *Times Picayune's* reports. Their articles did however shed more light on the situation for the public to understand the frustration with Rockwell. The ANP brought signs with them that were similar to prior pickets that read "America for Whites" and "Gas Chambers for Traitors." It was interestingly stated that "No charges were filed against the Nazis, but a police spokesman said they probably would be booked in a statute outlawing acts that 'might alarm the public.'" It also noted a comment by Governor Davis that Nazis are not welcome.⁹⁴



Photo 6: George Lincoln Rockwell being fingerprinted after his arrest in New Orleans. Source: Timeline.

From May 26th to May 31st the *New York Times* wrote about the detained Nazis in much more detail than the *Times Picayune*. On May 26th it was reported that the Nazis were dealt a

⁹⁴ "10 Nazis Seized in New Orleans; Rockwell-Led 'Hate' Group Tries to Picket *Exodus*," *The New York Times*, May 25, 1961. <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/05/25/archives/10-nazis-seized-in-new-orleans-rockwellled-hate-group-tries-to.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed March 18, 2021).

\$500 bond in conjunction with a public statement by New Orleans District Attorney to deter other members of the American Nazi Party from coming to New Orleans.⁹⁵ By the next day the *New York Times* reported that Rockwell and his jailed followers had engaged in a hunger strike to protest their detainment. “An Orleans Parish jail spokesman said Rockwell and his men had refused food since 4 P.M. yesterday. The jailer said the group was ‘polite and courteous,’ but that the Nazis maintained they were not hungry.”⁹⁶ It was also announced in this story that the Nazis’ trial had been set, all with misdemeanor charges after being booked into the Parish prison.

May 31, 1961, was the final publication in the *New York Times* regarding the *Exodus* protest in New Orleans that detailed Rockwell’s release from jail. “The leader of the American Nazi party left jail on bond today and told his still imprisoned associates that they could end their five-day hunger strike.”⁹⁷ The *Times Picayune* reported on the same matter and noted that immediately after his release Rockwell dashed to a local steakhouse to indulge himself. He was interviewed shortly after and refused to disclose who posted his bail.⁹⁸ Both newspapers left major gaps in reporting as neither mentioned the counter protest by the group of Holocaust survivors nor the community-wide struggle on how to lawfully engage the Nazis. Lawrence Powell’s journal article is a necessary piece of historiography, based on various newspaper reports, despite their flaws, to understand the urgency of the situation by the Holocaust survivor community.

⁹⁵ “11 U.S. Nazis Remain in Jail in Louisiana,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 1961, <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/05/26/archives/11-us-nazis-remain-in-jail-in-louisiana.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed June 12, 2021).

⁹⁶ “10 Nazis Stage Hunger Strike Against Arrest in New Orleans,” *The New York Times*, May 27, 1961. <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/05/27/archives/10-nazis-stage-hunger-strike-against-arrest-in-new-orleans-rockwell.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed June 12, 2021).

⁹⁷ “Rockwell is Freed; Hunger Strike Ends,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 1961. <https://www.nytimes.com/1961/05/31/archives/rockwell-is-freed-hunger-strike-ends.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed November 16, 2021).

⁹⁸ “Nine Nazis off Hunger Strike,” *Times Picayune*, May 31, 1961. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uno.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1223BCE5B718A166%40EANX-12D2E52E8E81E8B7%402437451-12D09A46567F053F%4029-12D09A46567F053F%40> (accessed December 2, 2021).

Powell conducted interviews with a number of witnesses and attendees of the protest including police superintendent Giarrusso who “had 35 to 40 patrolmen to the vicinity of the theater alone, ‘We had them all over the place,’ he admits.”⁹⁹ Interviews with local Jews give an emotional edge to the story that is not a part of the newspaper reporting. Shep Zitler, leader of the Jewish leadership in New Orleans was at a loss as he believed it would be impossible to stop the Holocaust survivors from killing the Nazis. ““They got a little bit scared. These Goddamn refugees, maybe they're going to start killing. That's all we need in the city of New Orleans. These crazy people just might do it. What can we do?””¹⁰⁰ Barney Mintz was quoted by Powell saying, ““There was no way of discussing anything with them. They were going to beat the hell out of Rockwell and his men with baseball bats. They didn't care what the law said. In my opinion, they didn't have the sophistication and the understanding of what our constitutional rights were.””¹⁰¹

For the survivors, they were able to express their extreme dissatisfaction with the presence of Rockwell and the ANP but luckily were less quick to act than the NOPD. If not for their apprehension, serious injury or death was a likely end result. There is however a more storybook ending as the survivors saw the arrests as a victory. “As for the new Americans, they bought tickets for that evening's performance and went inside and watched the movie. Their role in the controversy was a deeply satisfying experience, one they still talk about with great animation. They had confronted a specter that had destroyed their families in the Old World. And, perhaps just as important, they had forced the local community, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, to take them and their experiences seriously.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Powell, “When Hate Came to Town,” 415.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 410.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 409.

¹⁰² Ibid, 415-416.

The Aftermath and Conclusion

A 1963 episode of *The Twilight Zone*, a television program that utilized science-fiction to provide social commentary on public affairs, highlighted the rise and fall of Rockwell's state of mind and personal ideology. The episode titled *He's Alive* depicts a fictional Rockwell-like character who is guided by a mysterious figure on how to rise to notoriety while utilizing tactics that shock the public and dehumanize others. The mysterious figure, who turns out to be the ghost of Adolf Hitler and the embodiment of hate, leads the character down a path of self-destruction that leads to his death. This episode of the *Twilight Zone* serves as a warning for future generations to be wary of those who use hate and division as a social platform.

The episode of the *Twilight Zone* proved to be reasonably accurate as the *Exodus* protests may have been Rockwell's defining moment. After his departure from New Orleans and acquittal of the charges he and his members faced, he began to slip out of the public view and into obscurity. This was not for a lack of effort as he later attempted a partnership with the Nation of Islam and a run for the governor of Virginia, both of which failed. On August 25, 1967, Rockwell was assassinated while leaving an Arlington, Virginia laundromat by his lieutenant John Patler.¹⁰³ Rockwell's death was the beginning of the end of the American Nazi Party as afterwards it changed names and leadership numerous times.

Rockwell's message of hate, division, and prejudice carried on through his successor, Matt Koehl and his Mid-western associate Frank Collin, who in 1977 organized an anti-Semitic protest much like the *Exodus* protests in Skokie, Illinois, a suburb that contained a great number of Holocaust survivors. The event became known as the "Skokie Affair" and has become a paradoxical example for protecting hateful speech under the First Amendment. Though the

Nazis' right to protest was protected by the U.S. Constitution, so were the rights of the Jews who

¹⁰³ Simonelli, *American Fuehrer*, 274. Patler had been excommunicated from the ANP after Rockwell had accused him of having Bolshevik tendencies just weeks before the murder.

showed up in droves to counter-protest.

These counter-protesters had a level of privilege of assimilation and equality that had not yet been gifted to Holocaust survivors that protested Rockwell in 1961. “Jewish life in America started to reach the pinnacle that it reached later, between 1950 and the 1970s, Jacobson added, citing gains that were made against housing and employment discrimination, among other factors.”¹⁰⁴ Unlike their predecessors, the anti-Nazis in Skokie had the overwhelming support of the general public, while in 1961, in New Orleans, the Holocaust survivors was a mere afterthought. The ANP won their court appeal to protest which was lampooned in the 1980 film *The Blues Brothers*. The scene is brief but iconic as the main character Jake exclaims that he “hates Illinois Nazis” moments before running the goose-stepping Nazis off the road and into a stream.¹⁰⁵

Rockwell’s sentiments carried well into the 1990s when David Duke, known white supremacist and KKK leader, ran for governor of Louisiana. Duke had referred to Rockwell as “the greatest American who ever lived.”¹⁰⁶ His run for governor was initially a tight race with Edwin Edwards, but was crippled by Anne Levy, survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and resident of New Orleans. “Duke nonetheless represented a political cancer that would continue metastasizing until a moral counter movement drove him into remission. But such a movement was unlikely to emerge until the antidemocratic agenda at the core of his movement was unmasked.”¹⁰⁷ Anne Levy saw Duke’s run for governor as a direct threat to her core life experience as he constantly denied the Holocaust’s severity and called it a Jewish conspiracy.

It was not her first time being exposed to Nazis in New Orleans as Anne’s father was one

¹⁰⁴ Meghan Keneally, “Skokie: The Legacy of the Would-be Nazi March in a Town of Holocaust Survivors.” ABC News. June 22, 2018. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/skokie-legacy-nazi-march-town-holocaust-survivors/story?id=56026742> (accessed February 12, 2022).

¹⁰⁵ *The Blues Brothers*, directed by John Landis (Universal Studios, 1980.) 25:33.

¹⁰⁶ Tyler Bridges, *The Rise of David Duke* (Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 1994), 13.

¹⁰⁷ Lawrence Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke’s Louisiana* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 463.

of the anti-Rockwellians present at the May 1961 *Exodus* protest. “I was only a teenager and too young to attend, so my father would not let me go,” Anne Levy recalled about the *Exodus* pickets.¹⁰⁸ By the 1990s Anne was old enough to stage her own protest; she proved to be a thorn in the side of Duke by publicly accosting him, most notably on the steps of the Louisiana State Legislature building and at the University of New Orleans. Edwin Edwards would go on to win the election dubbed “the Lizard versus the Wizard” with an astounding twenty-two percent lead over Duke.¹⁰⁹ On August 11, 2017 a Neo-Nazi rally called Unite the Right took place in Charlottesville, Virginia as a reaction to the removal of Confederate-era statues within the state. The rally careened out of control and became a deadly brawl as anti-Nazis tussled with white nationalists in the streets. “It’s clear that the story of Rockwell and his ilk didn’t end when he did, a half-century ago.”¹¹⁰ The riots were hard proof that radicalism and racism is still alive and well within the United States. The closing monologue by Rod Serling at the conclusion of the *Twilight Zone* episode *He’s Alive* remains relevant well into the twenty-first century as he stated:

*“Where will he go next? This phantom from another time, this ghost resurrected from a previous nightmare. Any place, every place, where there’s hate, prejudice, bigotry. He’s alive so long as these evils exist. Remember this when he comes to your town. Remember it when you hear a name called or a minority attacked or any blind unreasoning assault on a people or any live human being. He’s alive because through these things we keep him alive.”*¹¹¹

Though there was no clear victory for Holocaust survivors, the response to Lincoln Rockwell’s pickets of *Exodus* were pinnacle events in American history, even if relatively forgotten. The counter-protests gave survivors the opportunity to gain notoriety and respect among American Jews and Americans as a whole; standing up to Rockwell and the American

¹⁰⁸ Anne Levy, Interview with author, February 18, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Thomas, “Edwards Defeats Duke in Louisiana Landslide,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1991. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-11-17-mn-386-story.html> (accessed February 8, 2022).

¹¹⁰ Lily Rothman, “The Lingering Legacy of American Nazis,” *Time*, August 25, 2017, <https://time.com/4913445/american-nazis-rockwell-skokie-charlottesville/> (accessed January 9, 2022).

¹¹¹ The *Twilight Zone*, “He’s Alive” *Paramount Plus* video, 51 minutes, January 24, 1963.

Nazi Party was a method of revenge, the absolution of survivor's guilt, and the rebirth of a new life for many survivors. They were able to prove to Americans that they were not simply a number but human beings with the will to prove their self-worth. Otto Preminger and *Exodus* just so happened to be the catalyst that ignited the spark. The anti-Nazi demonstrations in 1961 also proved to be a nexus of human rights and civil rights as it was an omen of things to come later in the decade. After the overall failure of the quarantine policy in the case of the *Exodus* protests, the ADL adjusted its outlook to include advocacy for social change through non-violent confrontation to "ensure fair treatment for all."¹¹² Many survivors of the Holocaust were able to find a new purpose in America, which was to stand up for freedom and an appropriate Holocaust memory; countless survivors became allies and activists for the Civil Rights Movement after the downfall of George Lincoln Rockwell and his inflammatory public outings.

¹¹² "Confront Discrimination and Secure Justice," Anti-Defamation League, January 2022, <https://www.adl.org/what-we-do/discrimination> (accessed April 20, 2022).

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Vita

In 2018 Jason Van transitioned from a career in the culinary arts to a career in the classroom, returning to earn a bachelor's degree after a long academic hiatus. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of New Orleans with a bachelor's degree in history and secondary education in 2020. He immediately returned to the University of New Orleans for graduate work. His research interests include Nazi Germany, the World Wars, and Cold War diplomacy.