

## Chapter 7

### Is it Good for the Jews?

#### The Jewish Response to *Crossfire*

Some will be queasy at the mere mention of the word "Jew." Others will question the literary exploitation of the thesis that a man may be moved to kill a Jew just because he is a Jew, although historical examples are not wanting.

—David Coleman to Richard Gutstadt, April 14, 1947

Despite the relative ease with which *Crossfire* was made (compared, for example, to the studio meddling with *Cornered*), questions about the reception of the film—by moviegoers, critics, and particularly American Jews—loomed large for the filmmakers. As RKO's vice president in charge of production and the sole Jew involved in the making of the film, Dore Schary had a great deal invested, both professionally and personally, in *Crossfire's* success. Though he certainly supported the film and applauded its political intent, he was particularly sensitive, perhaps more so than Scott and Dmytryk, to a potential public backlash. Even before filming had begun on *Crossfire*, the powerful and respected American Jewish Committee (AJC) voiced concerns and began actively maneuvering against the project. Concerned that this opposition would damage *Crossfire's* critical reception and box-office appeal, Schary decided to fight fire with fire and actively recruited support for the film from his allies at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

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Critical differences between the ADL and the AJC, particularly over the representation of Jewishness in the postwar period and over the efficacy of film as a tool for Jewish defense, powerfully shaped the Jewish debate over *Crossfire*. In the wake of the Holocaust, *Crossfire's* representation of the murder of a Jew by a violent bigot was particularly controversial, and raised significant questions about the public perception of the Jew in postwar America. Against this highly charged backdrop, both organizations subjected the film to intensive audience testing, invoking the "objectivity" of social science and the opinions of "experts" to buttress their essentially political reactions to the film. In fact, the artistic merits or structural problems with the film were often overshadowed by internal conflicts and interagency rivalry between the ADL and the AJC. *Crossfire* ultimately became a lightning rod in the competition between Jewish organizations for moral authority and political hegemony in the diverse Jewish populations concerned with anti-Semitism and Jewish defense.

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The Jewish debate over *Crossfire* was also an early salvo in the mass-culture critique that dominated the 1950s. The arguments marshaled against the film by the AJC, and particularly its reliance on "experts," clearly reveal both a distrust of

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the influence of mass culture on the values and attitudes of "ordinary" Americans and a contempt for the corrupting effects of popular culture on modernist art. In contrast, the defense of *Crossfire*, particularly by Dore Schary, offered a more populist vision of the value of film as both an educational tool and a democratic art form, reflecting a pragmatic faith in the intuitive responses and intellectual abilities of ordinary Americans—the "real" experts on mass culture. In this sense, the issues raised in the Jewish debate over *Crossfire* reverberated far beyond the question of whether or not it was "good for" American Jews.

### **Strategizing Jewish Defense**

The New York-based American Jewish Committee was the oldest and most prestigious defense organization in the United States. Founded in 1906 to protect the civil and religious rights of American Jews and to counteract the anti-Semitic attitudes and activities that emerged around immigration restriction and the work of the Ku Klux Klan and other nativist groups in the 1920s, the AJC was composed primarily of affluent, assimilated German Jews. Though its membership was small and exclusive, with its substantial wealth and contacts in high levels of government the AJC's influence far outweighed its numbers. Anti-Zionist and elitist in the 1940s, the AJC zealously guarded its position as the leading Jewish defense organization and resisted collaboration, particularly with leftist and Zionist groups. The AJC's patrician leaders, seeing themselves as American Jewry's "council of elders," eschewed mass political action and preferred to work informally through "discreet pressure and backstairs diplomacy." Their approach was formally articulated by Solomon Andhil Fineberg, the Director of the AJC's Community Services Department and author of several books on Jewish defense. "Accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative," the refrain of a popular song of the 1940s, neatly summarized Fineberg's philosophy. Known popularly as the "quarantine" or "sha sha" (hush hush) defense, the AJC strategy held that drawing attention to the prevalence of anti-Semitism and the activities of demagogues would only create a backlash by confirming and reinforcing anti-Jewish attitudes. Thus, Fineberg insisted, the best defense strategy was to ignore or downplay negative images or anti-Semitic incidents while publicizing positive images of Jews and instances of interfaith cooperation and collegiality.<sup>1</sup>

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Particularly during the 1930s and 1940s, other organizations, representing different constituencies and advocating different strategies, challenged the AJC's hegemony in the field of Jewish defense. The American Jewish Congress (AJCongress), founded after the First World War to provide relief to war refugees, was composed primarily of middle- and working-class Eastern European immigrants. Outspokenly Zionist and committed to mass action, the AJCongress was the most overtly political of the mainstream Jewish defense organizations. Its

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president, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, had the ear of President Roosevelt and was a vigorous proponent of plans to rescue European Jews from fascist persecution. The Jewish Labor Committee (JLC), founded in 1934 to represent Jewish organized labor in the antifascist struggle, was comprised primarily of Jewish socialist groups and labor unions, particularly in the garment industry. Advocating democratic socialism, though generally opposed to Zionism, the JLC represented half a million Jewish workers and was also influential within the American Federation of Labor.<sup>2</sup>

The most direct challenger to the AJC's hegemony was the Chicago-based Anti-Defamation League. Though the AJC and the ADL were united in their commitment to American liberalism, anti-Zionism, and eventually, anti-Communism, there were, nonetheless, significant differences between the two groups that fueled interagency rivalries, particularly after World War Two. Founded in 1913 as an offshoot of B'nai Brith, the oldest Jewish fraternal society in America, the ADL primarily worked through local B'nai Brith lodges and Jewish community councils, and by 1942, it had a membership of 150,000. Like the AJC, the ADL represented old-stock German Jews, rather than the more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe; its constituents, however, tended to be middle class, rather than upper class, and the ADL's primary strength lay in the Midwest and South. Though both groups believed that anti-Semitism was a product of ignorance about Jews and Judaism and developed wide-ranging (and sometimes overlapping) campaigns to educate the American public and to counteract negative stereotypes, the more activist and grassroots ADL worked energetically to uncover and publicize domestic anti-Semitism. Viewing anti-Semitism primarily as a public-relations problem, the ADL leadership firmly believed that the "'calm voice of truth' was the most effective weapon against anti-Semitism," a stance that frequently clashed with the AJC's "quarantine" strategy.<sup>3</sup> The ADL's faith in the goodwill of ordinary Americans and their ability to "do the right thing" once presented with the "facts" about anti-Semitism also placed it at odds with the AJC's elitism. Though the AJC leadership certainly believed in educating the public about the dangers of anti-Semitism, they did not share the ADL's populist sensibilities, preferring to define themselves as power brokers or experts rather than muckrakers or grassroots activists.<sup>4</sup>

The Nazi campaign against the Jews, and particularly the revelations of the Holocaust, transformed the ideological underpinnings of Jewish defense work in the postwar period. In recent years, a number of scholars have harshly criticized the failure of both American Jews and the Roosevelt administration to do more to save Europe's beleaguered Jews.<sup>5</sup> Others, however, pointing to the complexities of the "politics of rescue," are more sympathetic in their judgments.<sup>6</sup> During the 1930s, American Jews themselves, though desperate to help the Jews of Europe,

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were divided on how best to respond to the crisis. While Jewish individuals and groups did speak out and organize for rescue, both internal differences and a general unwillingness to antagonize either the Roosevelt administration or the American public undermined their effectiveness. And, though Roosevelt and key advisers in the State Department *were* concerned, they ultimately capitulated in the face of widespread isolationism, opposition to expanding the immigration quotas, and general anti-Semitism. By 1942, when incontestable eyewitness-accounts of mass executions, gas chambers, and crematoria in Poland reached the Allies, the issue of rescue had become secondary to the need to win the war. Despite their personal anguish, Jewish defense leaders, even the outspoken Rabbi Wise, tended to acquiesce to Roosevelt's insistence that a decisive military victory was the best (and perhaps only) way to save the remnants of European Jewry.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, as historian Peter Novick forcefully argues, during the war, and even in the immediate postwar period, most Americans—including American Jews—did not perceive the Holocaust as a specifically Jewish experience. Though anti-Semitism was certainly recognized as a fundamental component of Nazi ideology, Jews were seen as only one group among many (whether political dissenters such as Communists, unionists, or clergy members, or such *Untermensch* as Poles or gypsies) persecuted by the Nazi regime. At the same time, the mass murder of Jews could not be separated from the vast, tragic carnage of the war, whether the millions of soldiers and civilians killed in both the Pacific and Europe, or the Japanese civilians incinerated in the atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, even before the liberation of the concentration camps revealed the full extent of Nazi atrocities, many American Jews, whatever their private feelings, were reluctant to dwell publicly on their "special victimization." The AJC was particularly concerned with the representation of Jews as victims. Following a national conference on American anti-Semitism in 1944, AJC leader John Slawson noted, "In an effort to arouse the conscience of the world, as the one possible means of alleviating the tragic plight of our brethren in Europe, we have had to publicize the mass atrocities committed by the Nazis. That was unavoidable." Now, however, Slawson felt that it was critical for defense organizations to shift the emphasis from victimization to the normalcy of American Jews: "Jewish organizations should avoid representing Jews as weak, victimized, and suffering. . . . There needs to be an elimination or at least a reduction of horror stories of victimized Jewry. . . . We must normalize the image of the Jew. . . . The Jew should be represented as like others, rather than unlike others."<sup>9</sup>

As historian Arthur Hertzberg explains, in the postwar period, "[t]he Jewish

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agenda was dominated by one desire, to expand the place of Jews in America. They wanted to be accepted by the Gentiles, not to confront them—at least not then."<sup>10</sup> In fact, American Jews were remarkably successful in realizing this goal. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews were generally considered a distinct race, biologically and culturally separate from Anglo-Saxons (the "real" Americans, according to the tenets of scientific racism) and fundamentally unassimilable. By midcentury, Jews had made the transition to "whiteness" and were defined, along with other "white ethnics," as Caucasian, under the new racial rubric of the three "great races of the world" (Caucasians, Negroids, and Mongoloids). Many diverse factors—including immigration restriction, the proliferation of mass culture, the racist ideology of fascism, and the Americanizing rhetoric of the New Deal and World War Two—were important in this transition. However, anthropologist Karen Brodtkin, in *How the Jews Became White Folks*, points particularly to postwar interventions by the federal government that helped to integrate "white ethnics" into the American mainstream, while reinforcing the segregation of African Americans and other "colored" groups. The low-interest government loans provided by the GI Bill and the Federal Housing Authority, for example, undermined the quota systems and restrictive covenants—the "gentlemen's agreements"—that had barred Jews from higher education and suburban housing for decades. Significantly, the racist application of these federal policies not only excluded most black Americans from the vaunted postwar prosperity, but also reinforced the "whiteness" and Americanness of Jews and other ethnics. By the 1950s, then, Jews were an integral part of the "imagined community" of Americans.<sup>11</sup>

Jewish defense organizations played a key role in redefining the place of Jews in postwar American society. Beginning in the war years, both the ADL and the AJC expanded their budgets, professionalized their staffs and operations, and embarked on a wide range of new programs. The ADL, in particular, increased its activities during this period, establishing regional offices in major cities on both coasts in an attempt to enlarge its traditional power base from the Midwest and South. In addition, the ADL moved its national headquarters from Chicago to New York City after the war, effectively signaling its challenge to the AJC.<sup>12</sup>

More importantly, however, in the postwar years both the AJC and the ADL moved away from a strict focus on Jewish defense toward a broader emphasis on "intergroup relations." As Leonard Dinnerstein explains, "The Jewish agencies assumed the position that antisemitism, along with other forms of bigotry, threatened American democracy and therefore posed a problem for the entire society, not merely one segment of it."<sup>13</sup> Drawing on what John Higham has called the "theory of the unitary character of prejudice"—the belief that anti-Semitism, white supremacy, and all manifestations of racism were part of the

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same phenomenon—Jewish defense organizations argued that "the security of American Jews was dependent upon the realization of full equality for all Americans." As Benjamin Epstein, national director of the ADL, explained in 1948, "'We approach life in America with the premise that the progressive development of a democratic society will bring with it for Jews, as for other groups, the freest and fullest development as individuals and as a community.'" Though some in the ADL criticized the retreat from Jewish defense, Epstein insisted, "'We are concerned with human rights, inter-group harmony; with fighting bigotry; with promoting equal economic, social and educational opportunities for all. These are pertinent contemporary applications of ancient Jewish ethical precepts.'" The AJC leadership shared this perspective, with an anti-Communist fillip: "Good will and understanding among racial, religious and national origin groups are of the utmost importance for the security and welfare of the United States, and for the protection of American institutions and the American way of life from the encroachments of totalitarianism both of the right and the left."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most important component of the professionalization of Jewish defense was the application of social science techniques to the problem of prejudice. Both the ADL and the AJC had eagerly embraced opinion polling in the 1930s, and after the war they relied even more heavily on social science to "analyze prejudice and develop a cure for it, mobilize public opinion against intolerance, and utilize the courts and legislative bodies to eradicate those discriminatory policies that could be controlled by law." For both groups, this new emphasis was not seen as a step away from social activism, but a step toward "action-research." They argued that "any positive effort to counter and conquer the hatred that can poison and destroy our society must begin in an understanding of why people hate, how their anxieties, frustrations and insecurities are exploited by hatemongers, and how the forces of good in our society can be mobilized to isolate and eliminate the disease of hate."<sup>15</sup>

The AJC, in particular, worshipped social science, especially after Dr. John Slawson became executive vice president in 1943. Slawson, who held a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University and had an extensive background in social service work, ardently championed social-scientific research. Under his leadership the AJC's Survey Committee, inaugurated in the mid-1930s, was transformed during the war years into a full-fledged Department of Scientific Research, chaired by Paul Lazarsfeld and staffed largely by European refugee intellectuals from the Frankfurt School, most notably Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno.<sup>16</sup> The Frankfurt School intellectuals were horrified by the lack of theoretical sophistication in American public-opinion research, particularly the naïve assumption that "whatever people responded when asked questions by survey researchers or when filling out questionnaires was important and to be

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taken seriously." This was the position that had been taken by the AJC's own pollsters in the myriad surveys undertaken during the 1930s to gauge public attitudes toward Jews and levels of support for anti-Semitic and fascist ideologies. By the late 1940s, however, under the influence of the Frankfurt School intellectuals, the AJC's Scientific Research Department was leading the charge for a more rigorously theoretical scientific method in social research.<sup>17</sup>

The collaboration between the AJC and the Frankfurt School intellectuals also precipitated a fundamental shift in the postwar discourse on prejudice away from Marxist analyses of class and social conflict to a model of prejudice as psychological pathology. The Marxist critique of Popular Front writer Carey McWilliams, for example, was enormously influential among left-liberals throughout the 1940s. In both *Brothers Under the Skin* (1943) and especially *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (1948), McWilliams argued that racism—particularly anti-Semitism—was a product of unequal class relations, an ideological tool by which economic and political elites maintained their hegemony.<sup>18</sup> Marxism also significantly informed the early work of Frankfurt School theorists Horkheimer and Adorno, particularly their collaborative projects, *Studies of Authority and the Family* (1936) and *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1947). Alarmed by the rise of Nazism, particularly Hitler's use of mass media, Horkheimer and Adorno applied a combination of Marxist and Freudian theory to the study of propaganda techniques and mass culture. By the late 1940s, however, influenced by their new American context and their affiliation with the more conservative AJC, they stepped back considerably from their earlier radicalism. Though there is a clear thematic continuity with their early work, their postwar perspective, emphasizing the psychological domination of the masses by the "culture industries," ultimately eclipsed the Marxist interpretations offered by McWilliams and others.<sup>19</sup>

Horkheimer was a leading proponent of this philosophic shift, and as the AJC's Director of Scientific Research from 1944 to 1946, his views significantly shaped the AJC's approach to Jewish defense. It was upon his advice, for example, that the AJC canceled plans for a picture album of Nazi atrocities in May 1945, for fear that overemphasizing "the atrocity story . . . might have an undesirable effect on the subconscious mind of many people." Under Horkheimer's leadership, too, the AJC sponsored a five-volume *Studies in Prejudice* series, exploring the roots of intolerance and the psychological appeal of totalitarianism to individuals. Three books in the series—*The Authoritarian Personality* by Horkheimer's collaborator, Theodor Adorno, and others; *Dynamics of Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans* by Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz; and *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* by Marie Jahoda and Nathan Ackerman, both AJC staff members—interpreted

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anti-Semitism through a psychoanalytic lens and helped to establish the decidedly non-Marxist psychosocial model of prejudice that dominated postwar thinking.<sup>20</sup>

At first glance, the postwar psychosocial interpretation seemed to suggest that prejudice was a pathological personality disorder, an individual mental illness that affected only a small portion of the population and could be "cured," presumably by intensive psychoanalysis, or at least contained by institutionalization or incarceration. In the postwar years, however, this psychological interpretation was grafted onto an older medical model that saw anti-Semitism (like other forms of prejudice) as a social "disease" or a "cancer" in the body politic against which citizens must be "inoculated." Thus, the postwar psychologization of prejudice lent the weight of scientific authority to the medical model, but it also suggested that the authoritarian personality itself was highly "contagious." This enormously seductive thesis was popularized in a wide variety of Hollywood films, particularly of the science-fiction genre, in which alien or monster "germs" threatened to invade the bodies or psyches of normal Americans, requiring the intervention of experts (usually doctors or government officials) to stem the invasion. By the 1950s, too, this model informed the Cold War theory of political containment: Communism, like racism, was contagious, and all Americans needed to be inoculated against the totalitarian germ.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, the shift from Jewish defense to intergroup relations and the psychosocial model of prejudice placed the leading Jewish organizations within the mainstream of Vital Center liberalism. Repudiating the radicalism of the 1930s and hailing "the end of ideology," this postwar liberal consensus embraced the "virtues of pluralism and interest-group competition, the superiority of Keynesian economics and a limited welfare state." Though they recognized the continuing existence of racism, class inequalities, and other challenges to New Deal liberalism, the Vital Center liberals agreed that "the problems of modern America were no longer ideological but technical and administrative, and that these could be solved by knowledgeable experts rather than by mass movements."<sup>22</sup> Gunnar Myrdal signaled the shift in mood in his 1944 study of race relations, *An American Dilemma*, remarking, "We are entering an era where fact-finding and scientific theories of causal relations will be seen as instrumental in planning controlled social change. The peace will bring nothing but problems, one mounting upon another, and consequently, new urgent tasks for social engineering."<sup>23</sup>

In the 1950s, of course, social engineering did eclipse social movements as the key lever to social change, and a profound suspicion of "mass man" superseded the Popular Front embrace of "the masses." In 1947, however, as the Jewish debate over *Crossfire* suggests, these issues were still hotly contested. Though the crisis of the war years spurred greater collaboration among the Jewish



defense agencies, their postwar relations were often highly charged. The AJC, in particular, resisted challenges to its authority and expertise by other—and in its opinion lesser—agencies. In the postwar period, the strategic differences between the ADL and the AJC, particularly around the issues of publicizing anti-Semitism and the application of social science to the problem of prejudice, fueled an interagency rivalry that profoundly shaped the Jewish response to *Crossfire*.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Debate over *Crossfire***

As early as the 1930s, defense agencies had been interested in working with Hollywood to monitor and shape the representation of Jews and Jewishness in movies. The studios, however, sensitive both to encroachments on their creative territory and to perceptions of Jewish domination in Hollywood, resisted the early overtures by the Jewish organizations. Though both the ADL and the AJC had offices in Los Angeles, there was no coordinated strategy for dealing with the film industry, and defense organizations responded on an ad hoc basis to challenge unflattering Jewish images in specific movies. With the rise of European fascism and increasing anti-Semitism at home and abroad, however, they began to pressure the studios to produce antifascist films. Realizing that more coordinated activity was needed, in the early 1940s, leaders in the Jewish community and the film industry formed the Uptown Committee within the Jewish Community Committee's Community Relations Council (CRC) in Los Angeles.<sup>25</sup>

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The Uptown Committee served as an informal clearinghouse, collecting and commenting on scripts that "in any way touch upon minority subjects of any character whatsoever or on subject matter dealing with Americanism or any form of Free World Propaganda." The committee was controlled by Mendel Silberberg, an entertainment attorney representing Columbia, RKO, and several independent producers, as well as a member of the national executive committee of the AJC. A handsome, wealthy, charming, and completely acculturated Jew—exactly the image the Hollywood moguls wished to project for themselves—Silberberg wielded enormous influence in both the film industry and the Los Angeles Jewish community. David Coleman was the ADL's official liaison to the film industry, and he shared an office in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel with AJC representative Leon Lewis. Though Lewis was assigned to monitor only 16mm documentary filmmaking, he also served as secretary to the Uptown Committee, a position that gave him entrée to leading Jewish producers, including committee member Dore Schary.<sup>26</sup>

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During the war years, largely satisfied by the representations of Jews and intergroup harmony produced under the oversight of the OWI, the defense organizations remained content to work within the structure of the CRC. However,

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in the summer of 1944, Richard Rothschild, the AJC's Director of Public Education and Information, contacted Silberberg to broach the idea of establishing a separate AJC monitoring organization in Hollywood. Silberberg and other members of the CRC discouraged this idea, pointing out that previous efforts in this direction had only created "confusion, conflict and ill-feeling."<sup>27</sup> Though the AJC apparently tabled the plan, in early 1946, David Coleman's decision to retire as head of the ADL's West Coast office sparked discussions of a possible merger of Jewish defense organizations working with the film industry. In January, Silberberg wrote to Slawson proposing that the ADL and AJC hire a single executive to manage all contacts with the movie studios. Though Slawson agreed to help in the executive search, he also indicated that the AJC planned to hire its own Hollywood liaison, and asked Silberberg to comment on Leon Lewis's qualifications for such a position. Alarmed, Silberberg reiterated his belief that multiple contacts would be counterproductive in their dealings with the studios. However, Slawson remained committed to an independent AJC presence in Hollywood, citing the AJC's history of success in the field of radio and suggesting that much remained to be done in the film industry. Pointing to the public relations value of *The Bells of St. Mary's* for Catholics, he argued that Jewish organizations needed to be more assertive in providing Hollywood producers with similarly uplifting stories about Jews. Though little substantive action was taken at the time, the release later in 1946 of *Abie's Irish Rose*, an "interracial" romance which offended many Jews with its stereotyped images, convinced the AJC leaders that they could not rely on the CRC to aggressively monitor the studios.<sup>28</sup>

Against this backdrop of interagency rivalry and heightened concerns about Hollywood's representation of Jews, the AJC's Richard Rothschild visited Los Angeles in late February 1947. Learning of RKO's plans to adapt *The Brick Foxhole*, Rothschild became deeply alarmed at the prospect of a film in which a Jew is killed simply because he is a Jew, and immediately arranged a meeting with Dore Schary. Schary went out of his way to cooperate with Rothschild, inviting him to his own home to discuss his concerns about the film, and then meeting with him a second time in his office on the RKO lot. However, Rothschild was "unable to convince Schary of the dangers that he felt were involved," nor was he able to persuade Schary to give him a copy of the script.<sup>29</sup> While this intransigence probably added to Rothschild's anxiety, Schary surely resented being told how to run his own studio and how best to make a picture about anti-Semitism.

Several weeks later Mendel Silberberg stepped into the mix on behalf of Rothschild. He spoke to Schary and convinced him that Rothschild would use the script in a helpful way. Schary reluctantly agreed to send Rothschild a copy of the script, as long as he promised to keep that information quiet.<sup>30</sup> In the interim,

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however, on March 24, before filming had wrapped on *Crossfire* and even before he received the script from Schary, Rothschild visited the New York offices of the Motion Picture Producers Association (MPAA) to discuss "in general terms the application of the motion picture code to a number of pictures currently being produced in Hollywood on the so-called 'Jewish question,' including *Crossfire*." His contacts at the MPPA were not familiar with the film but promised Rothschild that they would look into it.<sup>31</sup>

Schary learned about Rothschild's interference on April 3, when PCA head Joseph Breen telephoned him to discuss a letter he had received from Eric Johnston, head of the MPPA, along with a copy of a letter written by Rothschild expressing his doubts about a series of films on anti-Semitism. Rothschild's letter named *Crossfire* as the film about which he was most concerned. Schary immediately telephoned Leon Lewis. Though he remained "personally cordial" as he confronted Lewis with his knowledge of Rothschild's "breach of faith," Schary was livid. He clearly believed that Rothschild had read the script by the time he visited the MPA and felt personally betrayed by both Rothschild and Mendel Silberberg.<sup>32</sup> 25

By this time Rothschild had indeed received his copy of the *Crossfire* script from Schary, though not perhaps the letter from Leon Lewis warning him of Schary's anger. One might think that Schary had misjudged Rothschild, except that upon reading the script Rothschild immediately shared it—against Schary's express wishes—with Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, president of the AJC. After a cursory reading of the script, Proskauer wrote to fellow attorney Ralstone "Shorty" Irvine, with whom he had worked on *United States v. Paramount*, the looming antitrust suit that would eventually destroy the studio system. Proskauer's letter lambasted *Crossfire*: 26

The theme of it is that a gang gets so fed up by hatred and murder a Jew just because he is a Jew, and then try to make it pro-Semitic by some mealy-mouthed statement that a Catholic could be murdered in the same way; but the apologia is like pouring rose water on a cancer. The net effect of this script, as I read it, is to spread a gospel of racial hatred culminating in murder.<sup>33</sup>

Proskauer closed with a plea to Ralstone: tell him who to contact to discuss making substantive changes to the film. Ralstone obliged, sending Proskauer's letter to a friend in RKO's New York office—Peter Rathvon, the very executive who had, only months before, agreed to extend the studio's option on *The Brick Foxhole*, gambling \$1,000 on the trio's enthusiasm.

Rathvon wrote to Schary the next day, on April 4: "Apparently there is a difference of opinion between you and Mr. Rothschild regarding the efficacy of this 27

picture and it looks to me as though I were getting in the middle between two opinions and I don't like it. I told Mr. Rothschild I would be glad to do anything regarding the picture which you and he might recommend, but that there should be agreement on what steps ought to be taken, if any." Instructing Schary to send Rothschild a copy of the final script, Rathvon warned that he had promised that Rothschild could "submit suggestions whatever suggestions he may have" directly to Schary.<sup>34</sup> Schary must have been furious, both with the AJC's covert machinations and with Rathvon's order to cooperate with them.

John Slawson, the president of the AJC, suggested that this was all simply a personality conflict, presumably between Schary and Rothschild: "Dick saw a number of movie people while he was on the Coast, and was received by all of them in the friendliest spirit of cooperation. His suggestions were seriously considered, and in no case other than the case of '*Crossfire*' was there any element of unpleasantness."<sup>35</sup> Slawson's obvious disingenuousness, as well as his approval and even encouragement of the covert maneuvering of his staff, consistently angered the Hollywood Jews and fanned the flames of the conflict over *Crossfire*.

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Schary was clearly feeling the heat. Rothschild's machinations had generated—within a single week—letters from both the MPPA and the RKO front office in New York. Either one could sound a death knell for *Crossfire*, which was still in post-production. Though the Breen Office had signed off on the picture, Schary couldn't have wanted them to take another look at the film for fear of last-minute edits that might mangle its intent or power. Second thoughts from the front office could be equally deadly, delaying the release of the film or even scrapping it altogether, if *Crossfire* were deemed too politically sensitive or potentially controversial. Schary had his own concerns about *Crossfire*, but to his credit, he decided to fight fire with fire. It is interesting to consider whether Schary would have gone to such lengths for the film had Rothschild and the AJC not raised the stakes by challenging him personally. Certainly, Schary supported *Crossfire* for political reasons, but he also relished a good tussle, as the competition with Zanuck and their race to release the first anti-anti-Semitism picture shows. The conflict with the AJC reinforced Schary's vision of himself as a smart filmmaker, a serious filmmaker, a daring filmmaker—as well as a liberal, committed, activist Jew. Certainly, Schary was the ideal person to go to bat for *Crossfire*. A Gentile might have caved in the face of the AJC's opposition. A different kind of Jew might have done the same. It is difficult, for example, to imagine Louis B. Mayer taking on the MPPA, the front office, and the largest and most respectable Jewish organization in America. Schary, however, in the face of such opposition, dug in his heels and refused to budge.

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Attempting an end run around the AJC, Schary turned to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for support on *Crossfire*. He arranged a screening of the film, on April 11, at one of the RKO projection rooms, for key players in the ADL and the Los Angeles Community Relations Council (CRC), the umbrella group charged with monitoring Hollywood's treatment of the "Jewish Question." The ADL's executive director, Richard Gutstadt, was already familiar with the project. Schary had outlined the story of *Crossfire* to him earlier in the year, during a visit Gutstadt had made to the RKO studio with Mendel Silberberg. In April, Schary again enlisted Gutstadt's support for the project; Gutstadt instructed David Coleman, former director of the ADL's Los Angeles office, to attend the screening and report back to him. I. B. Benjamin, who succeeded Coleman as the ADL's director in Southern California, was also invited to view the film at this first screening on April 11, as was Fred Herzberg, the executive director of the local CRC. Interestingly, an AJC representative, Ben Scheinman, chair of the local chapter, was also invited to the screening, but could not attend. Scott and Dmytryk also were present at the screening and, with Schary, stayed afterward to discuss the film with Coleman, Herzberg, and several others.<sup>36</sup>

After seeing *Crossfire*, Coleman reported back to Gutstadt that though "Jews will view the production with mingled emotions," he was "tremendously impressed" with the film. Arguing that *Crossfire* was not a "makeshift film built only to carry a burden of propaganda tamped in at every obvious crevice," Coleman pointed out that the film's message was, in fact, "heightened by well-sustained suspense, so that it moves rapidly and inexorably to its denouement, with all of the intriguing appeal that has made detective-story fans of poet and proletarian alike." Thus, he believed that *Crossfire* had great educational potential, and he strongly recommended that the ADL support both Schary and the film.<sup>37</sup>

After viewing *Crossfire*, Fred Herzberg wrote to Schary, suggesting ways that he and the others in the CRC might help lay the groundwork for a positive response to the film. David Robinson, the assistant national director of the ADL for the Pacific Coast, for example, had offered to present the case for *Crossfire* at the ADL's upcoming national conference and had requested supporting materials including a story summary and the actual text from two key scenes—Samuels's comments in the bar on the postwar scene, and Finlay's speech to Leroy. Herzberg himself offered to write to his contacts in various Jewish defense agencies and assured Schary that between himself and Mendel Silberberg, they could reach the "most important people." Clearly anticipating opposition from the AJC, he added, "I think it would be well to do something of this kind in order to break down the expected resistance in advance."<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly, the AJC—and Richard Rothschild, in particular—remained keenly

interested in *Crossfire*. Leon Lewis served as Rothschild's "informant" in Los Angeles, keeping him up to date on the screenings. "Dore is obviously very deeply worried about our attitude and is fortifying himself in advance against the criticism which you and I voiced," Lewis reported to Rothschild on April 17. He had learned about the April 11 screening from Fred Herzberg, who told him that Coleman and the other ADL representatives were "very pleased with the picture and thought it would be most effective in combating anti-Semitism." Herzberg had admitted that no one "had raised any question about the deeper psychological implications in the film, and that apparently no such thought ever entered their minds. I doubt whether it did his either," Lewis added snidely.<sup>39</sup>

Bolstered by the positive response to this first screening, Schary arranged for another showing of *Crossfire* on April 16, this time to a broader and riskier group of local dignitaries, including both Gentiles and Jews, most notably Rabbi Edgar Magnin, the powerful and popular "spiritual adviser" to the Hollywood Jews. Leon Lewis was not invited, a deliberate slight that Lewis attributed to Schary's personal resentment toward him, as well as to the fact that Schary did not want him to introduce the AJC position on *Crossfire* into the discussion. However, several prominent members of the local AJC were invited, including Walter Hillborn, Ben Scheinman, and most importantly, Frankfurt School intellectual Max Horkheimer, who had settled in Los Angeles after leaving his position with the AJC in 1946.<sup>40</sup>

From all accounts, the discussion following this second screening of *Crossfire* was markedly positive and the AJC position was not mentioned—even by AJC members. Though Horkheimer did express reservations that the film "contained a message to the unconscious that was not so clear as the message to the conscious," he also stated that the picture "was a courageous one and accurately mirrored the mind of the anti-Semite."<sup>41</sup> The following day AJC member Walter Hillborn wrote directly to Schary to say that he and his wife were "thrilled last night at *Crossfire*, both as entertainment and as a documentary drama. We should all be grateful to you, as I am, for the courage shown by the production and the purpose shown by the story." Hillborn's primary critique of the film was that Samuels's "peanut" speech, "with respect to the hates created by four years in the army," complicates the "pure" hate motive for the murder. Interestingly, Hillborn suggested that the picture is more compelling *when* the Jew is murdered simply because he is a Jew<sup>42</sup>—a marked break from the early position taken by Rothschild and others in the New York offices of the AJC.

Schary must have been overjoyed by this group's response to the screening. It must have seemed a triumph that *Crossfire*—once seen on the screen—had the impact upon viewers that he and Scott, Paxton, and Dmytryk had hoped.

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Apparently, though, Horkheimer had held back during the discussion, or he had a change of heart after having had time to think and discuss the film with others. Certainly, Leon Lewis had been eager to hear Horkheimer's response to the film and to discuss its implications. He "went over the situation" with Horkheimer the day of the screening and again the morning after, and reported back to Rothschild:

His reactions were what I thought they would be. He is convinced that the picture is a real danger. He tells me that he did not want to speak up at length in the discussion following the meeting because he did not know the people who were present and did not want to hurt Dore if it could be avoided. . . . I am meeting with Max later today to go over the script while the picture is fresh in his mind, to see what changes if any have been made, and to prepare a memorandum for submission to Schary, and as a report to you.<sup>43</sup>

Horkheimer did write up his notes on *Crossfire*, and he sent them to Schary on April 18, with a cover letter thanking him for the opportunity to view the film. In either a humble disclaimer or a reminder of his intellectual authority, Horkheimer added, "Although part of my life's work has been filled with the study of the socio-psychological mechanisms involved in such reactions, I am still giving you a one-man's opinion." Not surprisingly, since Horkheimer's own work had significantly shaped the psychosocial approach to anti-Semitism, his "individual" opinion largely reinforced the AJC's concerns about *Crossfire*. Many of Horkheimer's comments were quite positive; he thought, for example, that the film was "superbly acted and very entertaining." However, his privileging of "the psychological effect [of *Crossfire*] upon the simple theater-goer, particularly upon the adolescent" created grave doubts in his mind about the political and social efficacy of *Crossfire*.<sup>44</sup> That Freud was eclipsing Marx in his philosophical views is evident from Horkheimer's despair at the degraded state of modern civilization and his portrait of the human psyche caught in the grip of dark, unconscious forces.

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Overall, Horkheimer believed *Crossfire* was an "honest and sincere attempt to enlighten the public about the destructive nature of antisemitism." Nevertheless, he had doubts about the film's "educational value for the masses," and continued, "In my opinion there is a danger that this picture will do more harm than good." While he praised the "conscious message" in *Crossfire* as "well-meant and even courageous," he was troubled by the "unconscious message" in the film: "It is well-known that what people remember of a work of art depends on sympathies and antipathies which are often in contrast with the intentions of the work's creators and even the conscious wishes of the spectators themselves." According to Horkheimer,

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The unconscious message in this film could easily read that there are many people who do not like the Jews and that Jew-hatred is a very natural motive for killing a man. . . . Almost for the first time it is stated on the screen that there is a thrill in killing a Jew. The association between the ideas "Jew" and "killing" is made even stronger by the fact that the murderer is good looking, that his appearance is military and that he actually is a professional soldier. From the very beginning the audience will be induced to identify with him. In many respects and for many people the real hero of the film will be the murderer and not the detective.<sup>45</sup>

In *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno would argue that the excessive masculinity of the authoritarian male masked an underlying passivity and possible homosexuality. A seed of this analysis is evident in Horkheimer's reading of *Crossfire*: "[It] is based on profound psychological insight into the functioning of the mind of the antisemite. The way in which the guilty soldier behaves before murdering Samuels, the aggressive familiarity of the murderer, his bullying Samuels, his kind of homosexual rudeness and sadism—all this is masterly [*sic*] expressed." He pointed particularly to the contrast between the handsome virility of Monty and the unmistakable Jewishness of Samuels: "He looks like an intellectual and is characterized as an understanding, keen and benevolent man through his attitude toward one of the soldiers who feels low. There is no doubt that he is a Jew."<sup>46</sup>

Certain that audiences would identify unconsciously with Monty, Horkheimer believed that "[f]or the native spectator antisemitism dominates the scene." Thus, he believed that the anti-Semitic comments would "stick in the minds like slogans," while the film's "rational arguments" would be dismissed as mere propaganda. Horkheimer was not impressed by Finlay's speech to Leroy, which he described as the film's "propagandistic core." To him, the liberal propaganda in *Crossfire*—whether Finlay's speech or the insert that revealed Samuels's war record—sounded "apologetic and defensive." He added, "This is the more true since Samuels himself makes but a short appearance which is certainly not made more impressive by the fact that he looks like an intellectual. His high-brow remarks in the bar may well alienate an average audience. And then, the murderer is there and Samuels is absent—and, psychologically, the one who is absent is at a disadvantage."<sup>47</sup> For Horkheimer, then, the representation of Samuels was at the heart of *Crossfire*'s failure.

Upon initial viewing of *Crossfire*, Horkheimer had felt that the problems and potential dangers of the film could be overcome by minor editing. However, after "careful thought" and perhaps a conversation with Leon Lewis, Horkheimer became "convinced that the considerable dangers involved in showing this film cannot be overcome. . . . I am the more depressed about the result of my



thinking as I have the greatest respect not only for the producers and actors of this picture, but also for the veracity of its manifest content. It is an unfortunate fact that a work can be psychologically sound in itself and still be naïve with respect to its psychological effect."<sup>48</sup>

Ten days later, Schary responded to Horkheimer, asking him to consider the logical extension of his argument against *Crossfire*: "[I]f the murderer played in our picture exactly as he is was a Jew, and if he had killed a Protestant, would you contend then that we had made a good picture for the Jew, because we would have created a sympathetic character that the audience would have accepted, and because of that would they like the Jews because their sympathies would have been with the killer?" Noting that in two subsequent screenings nobody else had expressed Horkheimer's "psychological point of view," Schary argued, "Of course, I grant that it has still not played in front of a general audience. I believe, too, that we will receive criticism, but I expect that. I believe that any controversial subject will have a minority point of view." Schary subscribed to the notion that you have to break some eggs to make an omelette, but his examples are much more indicative of his political position:

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The atom bomb won a war and created attention. President Roosevelt brought a nation out of chaos and created his enemies. Lincoln led the nation in a struggle to free the slaves and set up southern prejudice. Our anti-Nazi films destroyed the [B]und, but didn't do away with Gerald L. K. Smith. I don't believe there is any psychological panacea to anti-semitism that will not leave in its wake, mental flotsam and debris. . . . This film will not reform anti-semites, but it should insulate people against the virus of religious or racial hate.<sup>49</sup>

Given the widespread use of medical metaphors in discussing anti-Semitism, Schary probably meant to use the word "inoculate" rather than "insulate." Certainly, he shared the prevailing view that anti-Semitism was a disease within the American body politic.

Luckily for Schary—and for *Crossfire*—the ADL response to the preview screenings was far more positive. David Robinson, assistant national director of the ADL, and his colleague I. H. Prinzmetal, who both saw the film with Horkheimer on April 16, were very enthusiastic. As Robinson wrote to Schary, "I did not sleep much the night I saw the picture . . . am all for it. I think you have done a remarkable job, and I believe that box office appeal which this film will create is due to the merit of the picture itself." "It is my opinion that the picture *Crossfire* represents the most progressive step that has yet been made in the field of Jewish public relations," Prinzmetal enthused in a letter to Fred Herzberg. Noting that "the propaganda is so closely interwoven with the dramatic action that the audience is not conscious of any lesson," Prinzmetal added, "It opens the door to other

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motion pictures all of which should do much to point out the undermining effects of race hatred to our democracy." Robinson, who was scheduled to meet with the ADL leadership in New York the following week, assured Schary that he would everything possible "to insure ADL co-operation in securing, as Mendel Silberberg so well suggested, a cushioning of the public to receive this tremendously important and well done film."<sup>50</sup>

Schary clearly reported to Peter Rathvon on the positive results of these preview screenings, and finally, Rathvon backed Schary and *Crossfire*. From Los Angeles, he wrote back to Shorty Irvine at the end of April, after the film had been screened by the bigwigs:

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I feel quite confident that the picture will have approval generally of the organizations. Mr. Richard Rothschild, whom I saw and whose description of the picture caused Proskauer's uneasiness, has apparently antagonized a number of people out here [in Hollywood] and his judgement is not considered valid. . . . I don't think you need to do anything about this further other than to tell Proskauer if he inquires that we are proceeding with the greatest care and that I will hope to arrange for him to see the picture in the East at his earliest availability. This does not mean, of course, that if he doesn't like it we are going to withhold or change it.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, a number of small but interesting revisions were made to the final print of *Crossfire* in response to the criticisms voiced by the preview audiences. For example, in the scene in which Finlay confronts Ginny, she tells him that her real name is Esther Goslav, a line taken directly from *The Brick Foxhole*. The ADL viewers felt that this gave "the impression that she is Jewish," and the line was deleted from the final version, perhaps because they objected to portraying a Jewish prostitute in the film. Members of the audience also objected to the ending in which Monty is trapped in the alley and gunned down by an emotionless, gum-smacking MP. David Robinson was particularly concerned that "anything which would create sympathetic audience reaction in favor of so despicable a character would be a most unfortunate thing." To address these concerns, Paxton rewrote this scene and the ending was reshot so that Finlay warns Monty to stop running, and then shoots him from the window. Though the ADL audience praised the film's the representation of Samuels as "just another guy . . . neither particularly good or bad," they believed that the evidence of Samuels's war record needed to be strengthened, and Schary agreed to insert a close-up shot of the report from the War Department. Fred Herzberg, for one, felt "the result should be potent."<sup>52</sup> Though Schary continued to run previews of *Crossfire* for "expert" audiences as well as "ordinary" moviegoers in two sneak previews in mid-May, no other changes were made to the film. Significantly, most of the changes resulted from the first screening for the ADL on April 11, and Schary remained adamant in his refusal to change the film to placate the AJC.

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## The Battle of the Experts

By this time, *Crossfire* clearly had become a lightning rod for the diverse communities of "Jewishness" embedded in the AJC and the ADL, and in the historical recasting of Jewishness in the wake of World War Two and the Holocaust. Mendel Silberberg now launched into a diatribe against the AJC at the mere mention of *Crossfire*, while John Slawson continued to feign innocence, protesting publicly that he could not understand why everyone was so upset with him. At the same time, however, he and the AJC continued to maneuver, both against the film and against the ADL members who supported it. The AJC clearly hoped to prevent *Crossfire's* release or, failing that, to force radical changes that would bring the film into conformity with their own perspective on the correct representation of Jewishness and the proper use of film to combat anti-Semitism. 46

In May 1947, the ADL leadership, with the support of Schary, decided to subject *Crossfire* to the analysis of its own "experts" in order to challenge the AJC's criticisms of *Crossfire*, particularly Horkheimer's charge that audiences would unconsciously identify with the anti-Semite rather than with the spokesmen for liberalism and tolerance. Frank Trager, the ADL's national program director, spearheaded the project, in collaboration with "an outstanding evaluation expert with a national reputation," Dr. Louis Rath, director of research at the New York University School of Education. The AJC leadership did not respond well to the project. When Trager first announced his plans to the AJC, John Slawson sniped at him for violating the spirit of interagency collaboration by undertaking an independent study of *Crossfire*. However, he clearly was more concerned with the ADL's challenge to the AJC's social scientific expertise and professionalism. The AJC, after all, commanded a star fleet of social scientists: 47

Now, you know very well that the AJC maintains a Scientific Department and has equipped itself with a testing service utilizing the best opinion testers in America as consultants, having as its chief consultant on [the] problem of testing, Paul Lazarsfeld. A substantial portion of the staff of this department is concerned exclusively with the continued evaluation of pro-tolerance materials in the form of films, radio programs and print.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, while Trager was laying the groundwork for the ADL's audience-response survey, the AJC went on the offensive. Though most of the AJC leadership had seen *Crossfire* on May 8 at a special New York screening arranged by Schary, they prevailed upon him to run the film again on June 19 for a panel of "experts" chaired by New York psychiatrist David M. Levy.<sup>54</sup> The expert audience was hand-picked by the AJC, and included leading academics—sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and even anthropologist Margaret Mead—as well as key figures in the field of mass-media studies, most notably Paul Lazarsfeld, Leo Lowenthal, Robert K. Merton, and Sigfried Kracauer, author of *From Caligari to* 48

*Hitler*. John Slawson and Richard Rothschild also attended, as well as Dr. Samuel Flowerman and Dr. Marie Jahoda of the Scientific Research Department, and Elliott E. Cohen, executive editor of the AJC-funded journal *Commentary*. The only ADL representative in attendance was Frank Trager. Despite the preponderance of AJC staff members, Slawson assured Schary when he forwarded Dr. Levy's report that they had not participated in the post-screening discussion, so as not to sway the opinions of the experts.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, the discussion was organized around a number of rather leading questions: "Is [such a film] worth trying?" "Can the conflict between propaganda and entertainment in *Crossfire* be resolved?" "Will it intensify antisemitic feelings, even inflame smouldering feelings into active hostility among those already antisemitic? In other words, is *Crossfire* a dangerous movie?" "Can a group like ours . . . predict the response of the general public?" Or, "Are [such] considerations merely arm-chair strategy—nothing but hunches and abstract theories that make interesting conversations, but [are] completely irrelevant?"<sup>56</sup> Following the screening, the experts filled out a questionnaire rating their own psychological identification with key characters in the film and speculating on the psychological identification of a "typical" movie audience. The experts' responses strikingly reveal their abiding faith in the efficacy of applying social-science techniques to the problem of prejudice, as well as an equally deep-seated *lack* of faith in both the intuitive responses and the intellectual capacities of ordinary Americans. Though they were not necessarily averse to the liberal propaganda in *Crossfire*, they were extremely concerned that average moviegoers might be easily "duped" by "dangerous" propaganda. In the specific instance of *Crossfire*, however, the experts were more concerned with psychological mechanisms than with overt propaganda; like Horkheimer, they believed that unconscious psychological identification would most likely invalidate the film's liberal message.

Given this commitment to a psychosocial model of prejudice (as well as the fact that they were "prompted" by the questionnaire), it is not surprising that much of the discussion focused on the potential for audience identification and the implications of such unconscious identification for the problem of prejudice. Significantly, the experts assumed that the average moviegoer, and particularly the average anti-Semite, was male. Thus, for some, Monty was the most troubling character in *Crossfire*. Though a few (particularly those with "experience with GIs") believed that Monty's bullying tendency would make him "feared more than admired," many felt that he was "too attractive, too virile" and thus, would be too appealing to the average moviegoer. In this context, some were worried that the film characterized Monty "as a pretty 'normal guy,'" which might reinforce identification among those filmgoers who were either mildly or vigorously anti-Semitic. Thus, most agreed that the filmmakers missed "a great

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opportunity" in failing to show "why and how Monty developed into an anti-Semite, and that there were other people like him." Disturbed that "Monty's conflicts are never made clear and are never resolved," some suggested that the film should have included a scene in which Monty "tells his life story" after being wounded, or in which the GIs discuss his psychosocial development after he has been killed.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the debate over the characterization of Monty, the representation of Samuels provoked consensus: the filmmakers missed the mark. On the one hand, the experts agreed that audiences did not have enough information about the character, arguing that Samuels "is a figurehead who disappears before one can develop any sympathy for him." On the other hand, however, they felt Samuels embodied several widespread anti-Semitic stereotypes. In their view, he is "too rational," a kind of "wise guy" who sticks his nose where it doesn't belong. He might be perceived as a slacker, since it is not clear that he was *badly* wounded at Okinawa. He "doesn't fight back hard enough when attacked," reinforcing his victimization. He is "so mysterious" that he might be perceived as a "crook or confidence man."<sup>58</sup>

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Significantly, refugee intellectual and University of Chicago professor Bruno Bettelheim, commenting on *Crossfire* at a later date, argued that the casting of Sam Levene reinforced the stereotypical representation of Jewishness in the film and undercut audience identification. Reiterating the postwar emphasis on the "sameness" of American Jews, he noted, "There was no valid reason for selecting an actor who utilizes all the stereotyped qualities assigned to Jews particularly when many second generation Jews are barely distinguishable from the rest of the American population." Thus, Bettelheim concluded, "[T]he picture does a disservice to the cause of tolerance by showing that Jews are different."<sup>59</sup> One wonders how Bettelheim and the other experts might have responded to a young, handsome and very virile John Garfield in the role of Samuels.

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Most interesting, however, is the experts' very subtle but unmistakable homophobia, evident in their concern with the representation of Samuels. Arguing that the generally negative portrait of the Jew "was in no way enhanced by his girl friend," the experts warned that his relationship to her is never "made very clear." Even more suggestive, however, is their concern that in the bar scene Samuels is shown not only as an overly intellectual "buttinsky," but as "obtain[ing] power over Mitchell," whose character they described as "just a little too weak and confused." The potential homosexuality that they perceived in Samuels and Mitchell stands in sharp contrast to the "virility" they perceived in Monty. In this context, the debate over Keeley's character is particularly fascinating. Several were concerned that, as one of the "hero characters," Keeley

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was not as virile as Monty. Others, however, applauded Keeley's "manliness," arguing that he was "virile but controlled his virility in a desirable manner." Though none of these experts agreed openly with Horkheimer's assertion that Monty's excessive masculinity indicated repressed homosexuality, their obsession with "virility" is very suggestive. Significantly, the experts also believed that the many artistic and psychological "faults" in the film "were due to the transplanted from the original story dealing with homosexuality in *The Brick Foxhole* to the movie, *Crossfire*."<sup>60</sup> Clearly, they believed that for the average (male) moviegoer the excessive virility of the fascist would be more attractive than the subtle effeminacy and possible homosexuality of the Jew.

Though the general consensus was that *Crossfire* would not be "harmful," the experts agreed that the film would not be "very effective in a positive manner" since "prejudice is a deep-seated phenomenon not easily subject to change," and a single film could not "be reasonably assumed to change such deep seated attitudes." Not surprisingly, the experts agreed that thorough and objective scientific testing would be necessary to validate their "hunches" about the audience response, and they chided the filmmakers for failing to consult them during the planning process.<sup>61</sup>

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Frank Trager and Louis Rath both attended the AJC's expert discussion, and they took up the challenge to subject *Crossfire* to rigorous—though not necessarily objective—scientific evaluation. In order to dispute what they believed to be the AJC's most devastating charge against *Crossfire*—that film audiences would unconsciously identify with the anti-Semite rather than the spokesmen for liberalism and tolerance—Trager and Rath designed two questionnaires to test audience attitudes before and after seeing *Crossfire*. One, given to adult audiences in Boston and Denver, used standard lobby response cards, while the other used a special before-and-after questionnaire developed by Trager and Rath; this one was given to a group of high-school students in Hamilton, Ohio, chosen as a "typical Middletown city." Trager was especially jubilant over the results of the student testing, cabling Schary to report that the students greeted the final credits with cheers, applause, and "every energetic and sincere expression of enthusiasm." On July 15, the ADL released a confidential memo to the regional offices of the ADL and CRC, summarizing the audience response. Interestingly in light of later developments, the ADL memo, though mentioning the testing of high-school students, actually reported only on the results of the lobby cards given to the adults in Boston and Denver: "There was an overwhelming endorsement of this kind of film, in the first place. There was an overwhelming majority who identified themselves with the heroes and against the villain. There was an overwhelming majority who held that the villain got his just deserts. There was an overwhelming expectancy that the picture would be a very

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good success." The ADL urged its membership to support the film, saying, "We think that *Crossfire* will be an exciting film. We think it may be helpful, although no one picture can do the whole job for us. . . . We urge you to watch for it when it comes to your community."<sup>62</sup>

Though the audience response in both cases *was* overwhelmingly positive, the tests themselves had serious methodological flaws—as the members of the AJC's Scientific Research Department were quick to point out. After receiving a copy of the report from Trager, department head Dr. Samuel Flowerman and his staff dissected the study in a flurry of in-house memos. Each memo pointed with increasing outrage to the problems in Trager's report: the lack of control groups, the vagueness of the questions, the use of confused psychological concepts and biased terminology, and untenable claims to statistical significance. Though their glee in reporting the study's flaws is a bit disturbing, Flowerman and the staff were essentially correct in their critique. Operating on the assumption that audience members would discuss the film after seeing it, Trager and Rath's questionnaire asked the students, both before and after they saw the film, to make judgments on the opinions of their friends on a variety of issues, including religious tolerance, compulsory military training, labor unions, racial tolerance, and so on. Trager and Rath assumed that by this method they would "secur[e] evidence concerning the influence of the movie in bringing about a change in attitude." Thus, for example, the students were asked, prior to seeing the film, how many people they knew who "think their own religion is the very best, and . . . think people with other religions are not as good as they are." *Crossfire* was shown the next day to the student group, and then on the following day, the students were again given the same questionnaire. In the pretest, the students answered that 24 percent of the people they knew believed their religion was the very best; in the posttest, the result was only 15 percent. From this evidence, Trager and Rath concluded that *Crossfire* might help to "release" the intolerance of audience members.<sup>63</sup> An alternative conclusion, however, is that Monty's example of virulent, murderous anti-Semitism radically skewed the very definition of anti-Semitism for the high-school audiences, so that what had previously seemed to be anti-Semitic attitudes among their friends now appeared comparatively more acceptable.<sup>64</sup>

The really interesting thing here is not so much whether or not the Trager-Rath study was scientifically valid, but that the AJC took the study as a call to arms, as both a challenge to its own scientific authority and a threat to "standards" in the field of social scientific testing as a whole. Ultimately, the AJC's Scientific Research Department decided that it could not let either Trager's chutzpah in undertaking an independent study or the shoddiness of the Trager-Rath study itself go unchallenged. As they reported to Dr. Slawson, "In view of our

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experience it appears highly unlikely that such a quick and methodologically unsophisticated study could produce scientifically meaningful results or serve as a guide for action. The Department is seriously concerned about the potential bad effect on the entire field of testing if investigations of inferior quality are allowed to stand uncriticized." In early October, Dr. Marie Jahoda and Dr. Seider Chein convened a meeting with Dr. Raths to confront him with the methodological flaws in his study. Bringing the full weight of the AJC's scientific reputation to bear, Jahoda and Chein used a thinly veiled threat of public exposure to pressure Raths into admitting his errors: "It was made clear to Dr. Raths that various pressures would be likely be placed on . . . [the] AJC to take some public stand on the study and that, in this case, they would have to criticize its methodology in order to safeguard the more time consuming and expensive studies [of its own]."

By the end of the meeting, insisting "he was in no sense a lackey of Mr. Trager," Raths capitulated to Jahoda and Chein's bullying. "With great sincerity," Raths offered to "cooperate, without charge, in any interesting and worthwhile studies of . . . the AJC," and agreed to revise the study according to the guidelines suggested by the AJC's Scientific Research Department. Additionally, Drs. Jahoda and Chein extracted Raths's promise that he would "mention to no one that [the conversation] had taken place." As he left, the beleaguered Dr. Raths "expressed his great satisfaction at having had this discussion."<sup>65</sup> The version of the Trager-Raths study that was published in 1948 in the *Journal of Educational Sociology* is remarkably guarded in its conclusions.<sup>66</sup>

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### **The Commentary Debate**

The final act in the AJC's campaign against *Crossfire* was an article by Elliot E. Cohen, "A Letter to the Movie-Makers: The Film Drama as a Social Force," that appeared in the August 1947 issue of *Commentary*. Though sponsored and funded by the AJC, *Commentary* was equally influenced by the cultural politics of the anti-Stalinist Left, particularly the New York Jewish intellectuals clustered around *Partisan Review*. Young, brilliant, and remarkably prolific, this group dominated and nearly defined the American intellectual scene in the late 1940s and 1950s, though they preferred to see themselves as outsiders, at odds with the dominant society by virtue of their Jewishness, their politics, and their superior intellect.<sup>67</sup>

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Though Elliot Cohen, *Commentary*'s executive editor, was raised in the South rather than in Brooklyn or Manhattan, and educated at Yale rather than at Columbia or City College of New York, he clearly belonged to this pivotal generation of New York Jewish intellectuals.<sup>68</sup> During the 1920s, Cohen wrote for the *Menorah Journal*, gathering around him an elite clique of bright young Jewish

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writers including Lionel and Diana Trilling, Herbert Solow, Clifton Fadiman, and Tess Slesinger. The group, in pursuing the *Menorah Journal's* goal of defining the place of the Jew in the modern world, embraced a cosmopolitan cultural pluralism. Emphasizing that Jews were shaped by the same forces that conditioned the rest of humanity, Cohen argued that knowledge of Jewish history and culture could shed light on the "pressing problems of adjustment among all self-conscious racial, national, and cultural minorities of the modern state." In the 1930s, the *Menorah Journal* group flirted briefly with the Communist Party, and Cohen was active in some of the celebrated causes of the day, defending the Bonus Marchers, the Scottsboro Boys, and Angelo Herndon, and writing a pamphlet, *The Yellow Dog Contract*, in support of striking coalminers in Harlan County, Kentucky. By 1933 or 1934, however, the group had repudiated the Party, though not necessarily revolutionary Marxism, and allied themselves with the Trotskyists and the anti-Stalinist Left.<sup>69</sup> Soon afterward, in response to personal and family pressures, Cohen had retired from the world of little magazines and mass rallies to spend ten years working with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. The contacts he made with Jewish community leaders helped him to secure funding from the AJC to launch *Commentary* in November 1945.<sup>70</sup>

As executive editor, Cohen infused *Commentary* with his own anti-Communist left-liberalism and anti-Zionist cultural pluralism. In many ways, however, his politics complemented the views of the AJC's patrician leaders. Indeed, though Cohen prefaced his review of *Crossfire* with a disclaimer that the views expressed were entirely his own, his comments reflected the AJC's position on *Crossfire*. More interestingly, perhaps, Cohen's critique also reflected the emerging consensus among left-liberal intellectuals on the deleterious effects of mass culture on American society. This critique, deeply influenced by Freud and the Frankfurt School theorists, argued that the proliferation of mass culture had corrupted high modernist culture and aesthetic standards, and obliterated "individual genius." In elevating common entertainment over serious art and pandering to the middlebrow tastes of the masses, mass culture encouraged escapism and conformity and undermined critical thinking and the individual's will to resist the state. Though they certainly saw film as an art form, the mass-culture critics were particularly contemptuous of Hollywood filmmaking, believing that "collective creation" could only lead to a standardized, inferior cultural product.<sup>71</sup>

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Cohen's contempt for Hollywood films is evident from the subtle sarcasm of his opening paragraph: "We see by the papers that Hollywood is to give us a cycle of movies on anti-Semitism. This is exciting news. At last we are to have the fabulous magic of the film, the influence of its stars on the millions, its infinite

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technical resources, marshalled against this insidious social threat." Citing the industry's plans to follow *Crossfire* with *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Focus*, and other anti-anti-Semitism films, Cohen argued that film producers, like advertising executives, naïvely believe that "repetition, repetition, repetition" is sufficient to mold public opinion, whether concerning the virtues of Lucky Strike cigarettes or the evils of intolerance. For Cohen and the other mass-culture critics, the line between advertising, popular culture, and propaganda—with its connotations of totalitarian mind control—was not at all clear.<sup>72</sup> Thus, he asked, "May we not, by similarly pounding away on the wrongness of hating Jews, wear a new groove in the reflexes of American social behavior?"<sup>73</sup>

Drawing on the "expert" discussion organized by the AJC, which he himself had attended, Cohen noted that though many were impressed by the "movie *as a* movie," most of the experts had significant qualms about the film. While he was careful to describe the range of opinions expressed by the experts, he suggested that those who believed that "bringing prejudice to the surface and openly confronting it is healthier than continuing to leave it suppressed and hidden" may be as naïve as the film's producers. And though he acknowledged that the majority agreed that *Crossfire* would simply reinforce existing attitudes or at best convert the neutral, he gave far greater weight to the expert minority (those who "have learned to know [the anti-Semite] through their studies of his personality type and its motivations") who believed the film might inflame the violent prejudices of committed bigots.<sup>74</sup>

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From this perspective, Cohen argued that *Crossfire's* noir milieu would actually enhance the film's dangerous effect. His language reveals his outrage at mass culture's appeal to the basest instinct of movie audiences:

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[F]rom the start it projects you into the involved and unhealthy atmosphere of the 'hardboiled' detective thriller (Hammett-Chandler: Bogart-Alan Ladd), in which violence and intrigue have acquired a new, sadistic dimension. It is a milieu in which the characters are mostly not merely sinister, but depraved: fists crunch against skulls, and murder is only the final expression of a world of hostility, torture, betrayal, and cruelty. Vice is no longer a mere means of advancing the plot (for the characters: for the audience) but an end in itself. Perversities lie close to the surface.

Because of this depraved "social framework," Cohen argued, *Crossfire* was "bound to set reverberating group and class prejudices and loyalties not evoked by the ordinary crime film or Western."<sup>75</sup>

Like the AJC's expert panel, Cohen was concerned with audience identification with the characters. He argued that conscious anti-Semites, especially "the

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'unadjusted' veterans," would identify unconsciously with the GIs: "just demobilized, ordinary, white native Protestant, 'our kind,'—a band of comrades with battle records, plagued by the unhappinesses and insecurities of that new, troubling No Man's Land between war and postwar." Against this obvious ethnic solidarity, Cohen believed, audiences would perceive Samuels as an outsider. Though he commended the filmmakers for presenting the Jew as more than a "pasteboard, Arrow-collar noble-innocent," Cohen saw in Samuels a "composite of many of the anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew": "[S]oft-handed, flashily dressed, suave, artistic, intellectual, moralizing, comfortably berthed in a cushy bachelor apartment during the war, with a bosomy Gentile mistress, self-assured, pushing in where he is not wanted." Cohen, too, noted the sexual ambiguities in the film's representation of Samuels, despite the presence of "a fast-looking babe": "He makes up to Mitch and invites him to his room—what does he want of him?" Given the nasty elements of the Jew's character and his questionable motives in insinuating himself into the company of the GIs, Cohen argued, audience sympathies would naturally gravitate toward the anti-Semite.<sup>76</sup>

In this context, Cohen's characterization of Monty is also telling, as it reflects Horkheimer and Adorno's psychosocial explanation of the "authoritarian personality" and anticipates the "status anxiety" argument put forth in the 1950s to explain the appeal of McCarthyism to the masses.<sup>77</sup> Noting that anti-Semitism is not a "casual bit of excess baggage" but a fundamental component of personality, Cohen argued, "It is perhaps his most important defense in a harsh world, enabling him to operate in the midst of conflicting pressures and personal frustrations. To greater or lesser degree, it protects him; and, needing it, he will *fight* to protect it." For him, *Crossfire's* Monty is an "every-man" with whom "the millions near enough like him" would identify: "A tough character, and a nasty streak in him, especially with a drink or two under his belt. But you're drawn to him. His personality overshadows the others. A plain, husky fellow, not much education, visibly troubled, up against a world too smart for him, fighting shrewdly, stupidly, blindly against the 'others' who hem him in—before his crime, after his crime." According to Cohen, even the bullying and villainous aspects of Monty's character would not deter audience identification. Instead, he argued (with appropriately modernist references), Monty will be perceived as "a kind of hero-victim—the movie equivalent of the Hemingway-Faulkner-Farrell male, hounded and struck down by a world he never made."<sup>78</sup>

In contrast, according to Cohen's interpretation, bigoted moviegoers would find little with which to identify in the other male characters in *Crossfire*. Cohen dismissed Finlay as a "slick detective," while excoriating Mitch as a "mild, moony kind of a softie, *hardly a man*, much less a murderer." He argued that Keeley's masculine appeal was compromised by his willingness to "put in with the law,"

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while Leroy, a "weak, illiterate hillbilly," broke "every tie of soldier loyalty . . . not merely to give his friend up, like a stool pigeon, but to trap him to his doom like a Judas!" For Cohen, the ending, as Monty is trapped and shot "like a rat," would particularly reinforce the audience identification with him as an underdog-hero-victim, and he read the denouement from the perspective of an unregenerated anti-Semite: "What the hell kind of justice is that, a soldier, who fought for his country, just for roughing up some smart-aleck Jew, and when the soldier was blind drunk and on a tear? What kind of country do you call this when . . . . It only goes to show . . . ." Cohen asked ominously, "Can you be sure that the anti-Semites in the audience won't react this way?"<sup>79</sup>

Cohen was equally critical that *Crossfire* applied a simplistic "cowboy-and-Indian" solution to a complex social problem. "The easy going journalistic assumption that a mere expose suffices to cure a social ill is naïve or worse," he complained. Reiterating the AJC's "quarantine" defense, he argued that *Crossfire* could have a boomerang effect: "Don't you risk something when you voice before millions the old European cry (to our knowledge still unheard on these shores) 'Kill the Jew!'—and then show the scapegoat actually slaughtered?" Echoing the concern expressed by Max Horkheimer (identified only as "a West Coast psychologist"), Cohen asked whether a series of anti-anti-Semitism films "might not link up hidden emotions with open action . . . and stimulate violence—especially if the Jew continues to be presented as a helpless, non-resistant, made-to-order victim." Most significantly, however, he also invoked the recent example of the Holocaust, drawing on the medical metaphors so prevalent in midcentury analyses of anti-Semitism:

At the moment, we know that the germs of this disease lie latent everywhere in this country, stimulating large masses to relatively discreet discriminations and exclusions, stimulating others to more or less open hatred and scarce-hidden violences and aggressions. (Pre-war Germany seemed less infected.) But suddenly—and this is the great fear—the disease can flare epidemically—and tens of thousands cry, 'Kill the Jew'—while the other millions stand passively by. Six million Jews—not to speak of most of Europe itself—died of such an epidemic not so long ago.<sup>80</sup>

Cohen concluded his "Letter to the Movie-Makers" with two recommendations for Hollywood. First, betraying again his deep antipathy to mass culture, he suggested that filmmakers must produce "art," rather than simplistic, escapist, "nickelodeon" fare. Arguing that film is indeed an art form, he condemned Hollywood for corrupting the artistic potential of film by its refusal to be responsible to "anything except the box-office." Interestingly, given his own elitism, Cohen criticized filmmakers for failing to "respect" the film audience, apparently by looking upon moviegoers as "the masses" or the "common man."

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However, his greatest criticism was reserved for those simplistic filmmakers (including, presumably, Schary, Scott, Paxton, and Dmytryk) who believed the problem of prejudice could be "lightly polished off in a few story conferences." For Cohen, art takes work: "There is no substitute, and there is no short-cut. . . . You cannot free your brother's spirit by half-baked 'progressive' catchwords or pious indoctrinations—no matter how well-intentioned—slipped into routine catch-penny thrillers and romances, written down to 'the morons.'" Thus, he patronizingly suggested that, to produce serious and effective dramatic exposes of anti-Semitism, Hollywood should "turn to the practitioners of thought and art themselves—I mean to *serious* writers, among them, hopefully, some with genuine social insight and more than superficial political understanding."<sup>81</sup>

Cohen's second—and clearly related—recommendation was that Hollywood should turn to experts, the "historians, sociologists, psychiatrists, psychologists . . . [with] a fund of information about how the anti-Semitic personality works." Noting that "you wouldn't film a naval battle without a host of experts and technical advisors," he snidely commented that Hollywood could hire three experts on anti-Semitism "for the price of one starlet." Apparently unaware of the film industry's obsessive reliance on audience previews and Gallup polls, Cohen also suggested that filmmakers "use these experts and their skills to test the impact of previous films, to pre-test audience response to parts of your films or to the actors in the key roles, and to test the completed film with different groups, areas, types of audiences." This, he suggested rather pompously, "would be a contribution to American life of the first importance." Cohen's parting shot, though, is a real zinger: "Gentlemen, how about *working* at it?"<sup>82</sup>

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Cohen's "Letter to the Movie-Makers" appeared in the August 1947 edition of *Commentary*. To reach beyond the magazine's regular readers, however, Cohen distributed reprints of his article to the Anglo-Jewish press and other trade publications, as well as to individual producers and executives in the film industry. Whether as a courtesy or a challenge, Cohen also sent a copy of the article to Dore Schary, along with a telegram reiterating his position as an "independent writer" and assuring Schary that his article "was neither stimulated [by] nor is necessarily in accord with [the] American Jewish Committee's views."<sup>83</sup>

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Outraged by the smug condescension of "Letter to the Movie-Makers," Schary immediately took Cohen up on his offer to comment on the article, providing that Cohen agreed to publish his reply without deletions and to give it the same targeted distribution as Cohen's article. Before sending his response to Cohen, however, Schary sent a draft of his article for review to Mendel Silberberg and Dr. David Levy, who had chaired the AJC's panel of experts. Though Levy had not yet seen the August issue of *Commentary*, he responded to Schary via telegram:

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"Read your excellent reply. As far as I know it covers all points and hits hard as it should."<sup>84</sup> Schary also sent a copy of his reply to Frank Trager, and they exchanged a flurry of letters and telegrams, strategizing ways to counteract the effects of Cohen's article. Trager assured Schary that he had already started a "counter-current" throughout the "entire B'nai B'rith membership of several hundred thousand persons as well as with some of the Jewish Community Councils." Trager also suggested that they take the offensive by publishing some of the documents from the testing procedures that he and his ADL colleagues had done with *Crossfire*. At that point, too, Schary was negotiating with Random House publisher Bennett Cerf to publish the script of *Crossfire* in book form, and Trager was eager to have his testing documents included in that as well. Schary felt that Trager should wait until his reply to Cohen's article was in print before circulating the results of the audience research on *Crossfire*. Then, however, he agreed that Trager's research should be circulated "very thoroughly so that every avenue is saturated with the answer."<sup>85</sup>

Schary's response, "A Letter to Elliot Cohen from a Movie-Maker," reveals political and aesthetic sensibilities fundamentally at odds with Cohen's. Indeed, one reader of the *Commentary* debate complained, "There must be some common ground on which the pro and con can stand before a debate becomes meaningful."<sup>86</sup> If Cohen's elitist negativity toward mass culture suggests the growing influence of Freud and the Frankfurt School on American thought during the years after World War Two, Schary's heated defense of himself, the film industry, and ordinary American moviegoers against the mass-culture critics reflects the deep-seated, lasting influence of pragmatist philosopher William James on American culture. Cultural historian Ann Douglas, arguing that James "laid the philosophic basis for the American preference for popular culture over elite and self-consciously difficult art," points to James's "instinctive reliance on the conscious life to express and to modify the unconscious one" and his "trust that what shows up in the light is more important than what may remain hidden in the dark."<sup>87</sup> This is clearly evident in Schary's reply, particularly his populist faith in the intuition and intellect of ordinary Americans, as well as his willingness to trust his own experience—as both a Jew and a filmmaker—in judging the political and social efficacy of *Crossfire*.

Schary's response also indicates, however, the importance of class in his personal rivalry with Cohen. Though Schary had become a highly paid and well-respected film executive, his New Jersey childhood had been a roller-coaster ride from penury to prosperity and back, and his formal education had ended with high school—a sharp contrast to Cohen's petit-bourgeois background and elite Yale education. Schary obviously interpreted Cohen's patronizing tone and recommendations not only as a personal attack, but as an affront to the ordinary

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Americans, the "little guys," with whom he still closely identified. Schary was a scrapper, and he vented his personal resentment toward Cohen, as well as his frustration with the machinations and self-righteousness of the AJC, in his reply.

Citing Cohen's own admission that the majority of experts on the AJC panel believed that *Crossfire* would probably reaffirm the opinions of liberals and perhaps "move slightly anti-Semitic people into the liberal camp," Schary noted triumphantly, "This is what we aimed at." To challenge Cohen's charge that experts should have been consulted, that the film should have been subjected to scientific testing, he cited the responses of his own experts—the American people—and noted that "*Crossfire* is doing remarkably good business to very appreciative audiences all through America." Drawing on the audience research conducted by Trager and Raths, as well as RKO's own screenings for preview audiences, Schary provided a statistical breakdown of the results to show that objective science could also be marshalled in the film's defense: "The mail we've received, and the preview cards totalling some 2,200 individual opinions, are about 93% enthusiastic and approving. Of the remaining 7%, some 5% are cautious and apprehensive, and the last 2% are anti-Semitic in character, varying from casual social anti-Semitism to the violent species." Schary also defended ordinary Americans against the mass-culture critique, arguing that filmmakers would never describe moviegoers as "morons," as Cohen did. Instead, he added pointedly, "Probably we give our audiences a greater vote of confidence than you do with some of your fears and irresolutions."<sup>88</sup>

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Taking direct aim at Cohen's fear that the film would inflame dangerous anti-Semitic tendencies, Schary argued, "*Crossfire* was never intended to convert the violent anti-Semite. It was intended to insulate people against violent and virulent anti-Semitism."<sup>89</sup> Thus, Schary emphasized the responses of ordinary moviegoers to the issues of most concern to Cohen: the "Judas" theme and the film's ending, and the representations of Monty and Samuels. On the "Judas" theme, he bragged: "[A]lmost 92% approved completely the ending, the trap, and understood the motive of LeRoy. The remaining 8% fell into two groups which argued about whether Montgomery (the killer) should have wound up in jail or whether he should have reformed. Nowhere in any of the answers was there an expression of your 'Judas' fear. They all hated Montgomery and enjoyed his getting two bullets in his hide." Schary also pointed out that few audience members agreed with Cohen's reading of Monty: "To the American audiences polled, he is cowardly (he runs), a double-crosser (he kills his best friend), he hates 'civilian' soldiers (who comprised perhaps 95% of our armed forces), and he is sweaty and sloppy (no bobby-soxer virtue for heroes)." On the representation of Samuels, Schary argued, "No matter what the Jew had been in *Crossfire*, the anti-Semite would have read something evil into his character."<sup>90</sup>

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Significantly, Schary's analysis completely sidestepped the issue of unconscious audience identification in his rebuttal. Though he clearly recognized that anti-Semitism was a complex problem, Schary had little patience with the hidden motives, repressed aggressions, and other psychological mechanisms that disturbed Cohen and the AJC's experts. Thus, he was particularly critical of Cohen's invocation of Horkheimer, identified only as the "West Coast psychologist":

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"[H]e forgets that in the years since 1931 some six million people have been killed because they were Jews. A world horrified by the slaughter fought against Nazism. They didn't side with Hitler. If your thesis about *Crossfire* stimulating violence was true, the spectacle of all those sad dead six million would have raised enough violence to have had us all butchered." For the plain-speaking and pragmatic Schary, the psychologizing indulged in by the experts simply muddied the waters. As he commented, "The only confusion about *Crossfire*, I must say, seems to be articulated by you, not by the audiences who have seen it and who have expressed themselves with complete clarity on the subject; they like the picture and understand it."<sup>91</sup>

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Schary clearly understood that a struggle for moral authority and political expertise was at the heart of the criticisms by Cohen and the AJC. Thus, he defended himself by invoking personal experience—rather than abstract theorizing—to challenge the AJC's claims to monopoly in the field of Jewish defense. Citing his own "years of study and practical experience in the field of anti-Semitism" and particularly his history of defense work "on platforms, in Army Camps, in schools and in debate," Schary plugged the pragmatic, activist stance he shared with the ADL, emphasizing the power of organized public action. For example, he pointed to the example of antilynching campaigns to show that lynchings "have always decreased as people have protested vehemently against them." Similarly, he argued that while "you don't yell fire in a crowded movie house," if there is a fire, "you do something about it before somebody gets burned."<sup>92</sup>

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Schary concluded his reply with a rousing defense of the "expertise" of his colleagues in the film industry. "The motion picture art contains people of wide and varied experience and education," he insisted, and, unable to resist a personal jab at Cohen, added snippily, "Some of them even went to Yale." Responding to Cohen's smug assertion that *Crossfire* was "polished off in a couple of story conferences," Schary set the record straight: "We consulted more than one expert in the making of *Crossfire*. We talked to many." However, he also pointed out that experts in Jewish defense were not necessarily experts in filmmaking: "If we had accepted all the reservations of the experts, we would

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have compromised and inhibited and vitiated a picture that right now seems to be doing the job it was aimed at doing." Schary's conclusion reveals how very personally he took Cohen's critique: "We have the things you imply we lack—knowledge, imagination and art. . . . To us, and to our audiences, *Crossfire* was part of our job. I am very proud we made it."<sup>93</sup>

The *Commentary* debate created difficulties for the AJC leaders, since they had not made a public statement on *Crossfire*.<sup>94</sup> On the one hand, they were concerned about the general perception that the AJC had been "unaware of the existence of this picture, and that only the ADL had interested itself" in the film. On the other hand, anxious to maintain the impression, however erroneous, of *Commentary's* independence from the AJC, they were concerned that many in the Jewish community believed Cohen's article represented the AJC's formal position.<sup>95</sup> More importantly, however, their decision to distribute Cohen's article to the press angered key people in Hollywood—particularly the powerful Mendel Silberberg—and exacerbated the already troubled relations between the AJC and the film industry. Indeed, Gus Goldstein of the AJCongress suggested at a meeting of the Los Angeles CRC that the AJC be formally censured for its "activity in relation to *Crossfire*." Though Goldstein's motion was defeated, AJC representative Lawrence Bloomgarden urged the leadership in no uncertain terms to placate Silberberg:

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I know that it is a very difficult problem but Silberberg in my opinion is prepared to continue this as a community issue and to use all possible methods to discredit our actions. For my part I don't see how we can work effectively with the motion picture industry when Mendel Silberberg, Dore Schary, . . . and others would close all doors that Leon Lewis might seek to utilize. . . . [F]or the health and wealth and welfare of the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Jewish Committee . . . the National Organization [must] negotiate a peace treaty to end the war with Mendel Silberberg.<sup>96</sup>

On October 1, following a particularly unproductive meeting to discuss ways to salvage the situation, AJC staff member Dorothy Nathan wrote to John Slawson, bravely asserting that the *Crossfire* affair had been mishandled from the beginning. Noting that the AJC had never clearly articulated a policy for dealing with such films or with Hollywood in general, Nathan argued, "Our procedure would have been regarded by anyone, not only Dore Schary, as going over his head, yet it was recounted yesterday as if he had no right to so regard it. It antagonized him and put us at a great disadvantage vis-à-vis the ADL. It made many more enemies for us in Hollywood, I'm sure, than just Mr. Schary."<sup>97</sup>

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Nathan also pointed out the AJC's hypocrisy on the *Commentary* debate, noting that they had roundly criticized Trager for publicizing information from a

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confidential meeting (quite possibly the "expert discussion," though this is not entirely clear), but then were outraged when others criticized Cohen for doing the same. She also noted that it was disingenuous of them to expect that they might avoid being criticized for widely distributing reprints of Cohen's article simply by saying it was "automatic" when they knew full well that it was not, that the magazine only distributed select articles. She asked, "Is it more important to promote *Commentary* or to accomplish something in the field of combatting anti-Semitism?"<sup>98</sup>

Finally, Nathan argued that the AJC needed to make a public statement of their position on *Crossfire*, both to clear up the confusion among their membership and to counteract the impression that only the ADL had been "active in evaluating the picture and promoting it." Thus, she suggested that they distribute a formal memo, along with Dr. Levy's summary of the expert discussion, rather than the *Commentary* articles by Cohen and Schary, which she felt would only fan the flames. In addition, she chided Slawson for failing to send Dr. Levy a note of thanks "for the trouble he went to . . . at our request," lamenting, "I just don't understand why we go ahead antagonizing people who can be, and have been willing to be helpful in our work."<sup>99</sup>

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The imminent release of *Gentleman's Agreement* gave added urgency to Nathan's desire for the AJC to mend its fences. She had spoken recently to someone at Twentieth Century–Fox, who told her that the ADL would "be in on any showing" of *Gentleman's Agreement* since they had been so active in promoting *Crossfire* within the Jewish community. She was also warned, however, that "Jewish agencies would probably do well to keep their hands off this picture as the producers did not want it regarded as a propaganda piece."<sup>100</sup>

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At the end of October, Slawson and the other AJC leaders issued a formal memo to members of the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) written by S. Andhil Fineberg, the AJC's leading advocate of the "quarantine" defense. Though his "Memorandum on *Crossfire*" notes, in a brief stab at objectivity, that "there is no unanimity within the staff regarding its propaganda effect," the AJC's general disapproval of the film and its continuing commitment to the "quarantine" defense are abundantly clear.<sup>101</sup> For example, though Fineberg acknowledges that many Jews had responded enthusiastically to the film's "unquestionable sincerity of purpose" and "remarkably fine technical execution," he insists that "a professional attitude requires that personal responses to the film's message be discounted." The AJC's concern with overemphasizing Jewish victimization and publicizing the prevalence of anti-Semitism in America is evident in Fineberg's plea for films that represent Jews in a positive light. Noting the public relations value for Catholics of films like

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*Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*, he warns of the danger in representing Jews "to millions of people as rejected and unpopular" in the string of anti-anti-Semitism films planned by Hollywood: "We who know something about scapegoating should foresee the consequences of this process." And, reiterating the desirability of expert consultation and scientific testing, he argues, "There is too much at stake for the Jews of America to rely upon good intentions and rule-of-thumb judgements in dealing with intolerance. Intolerance is much too devious, subtle and misleading a phenomenon, and dangerous seeds may be planted in the very act of tearing off branches."<sup>102</sup>

To ensure that the AJC critique would reach a mass audience, Fineberg also wrote an article for circulation to newspapers and magazines. A popularized version of the NCRAC memo, "Examining the Movie Gift-Horse" reveals even more clearly Fineberg's preoccupation with negative public perceptions of Jews. Noting that "the Jewish problem"—the "most damaging phrase" to Jews everywhere—was common parlance in Europe before the "debacle" (the Holocaust), he reiterates the postwar consensus that Jews should not be represented as "different" from other Americans: "If there is anything the Jews of America need, it is that they be regarded not as a problem but as people, who, as individuals, range from saints to sinners. When regarded as a group, they must appear as deserving people, who elicit respect, not animosity." For Fineberg, publicizing anti-Semitic attitudes would have a "boomerang" effect, creating the "impression of group support for the individual's hostility." As he argues, "No sane individual would advertise himself as unpopular in the hope of winning friends and allies thereby." Fineberg was particularly concerned with the anti-anti-Semitism films planned by Hollywood:

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If these are box-office successes, we may soon find the Jew presented on the screen as someone whose windows are smashed; as someone to whom jobs are refused; as someone unwelcome at the colleges; as someone mistreated in many other ways. In all of these pictures anti-Jewish scurrilities must be spoken. Some of the film characters will denounce anti-Semitism but the American Jews will be fixed in the public mind as persons most likely to be disliked.

Rather than relying on films featuring "fictitious characters which strengthen the impression that many people hate Jews," Fineberg maintained that anti-Semitism should be combated by "specific measures, wherein we take real action directed toward eliminating concrete acts of intolerance and discrimination in specific localities by specific steps and specific laws."<sup>103</sup>

Not surprisingly, Fineberg's public statements endorsing the "quarantine" defense did little to placate Mendel Silberberg, and the "private war" between AJC and the Hollywood Jews continued well into 1948. However, by late October, the HUAC

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hearings on Communist influence in Hollywood (which ultimately resulted in contempt citations for Scott and Dmytryk) dramatically altered the political terrain. Fearful that they might be tarred by the "Jewish-Communist conspiracy" brush wielded against Hollywood by HUAC, the Jewish defense organizations scurried to present a united front, taking a hard line against Communism and reiterating their loyal Americanism. Apparently agreeing with HUAC that outspoken criticism of anti-Semitism seemed suspiciously un-American, in December 1947 the ADL joined other leading Jewish defense organizations in the NCRAC, in officially endorsing the "quarantine" defense. Though the ADL never formally repudiated its support for *Crossfire*, its zeal for "social problem" films cooled considerably in the dangerous new political climate.<sup>104</sup>

## Notes

**Note 1:** Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 12–13, 143, 153; David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 67; and Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 22.

**Note 2:** Wyman, *Abandonment of the Jews*, 67–68.

**Note 3:** *Ibid.*, 68; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 12–13; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 182.

**Note 4:** *Overcoming Prejudice*, Solomon Fineberg's 1943 manual for organizing against anti-Semitism, is a far cry from the activist "bible" of the 1960s, Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*. According to Fineberg, "The undeviating objective of a program for establishing security against anti-Semitism must be to make Jewish life in America as admirable as possible and to see to it that Jewish reputation is as good as Jewish character" (19). Nevertheless, the AJC's suspicion of "the people" is evident in Fineberg's disturbing portrait of immature, overemotional Jews who overreact to every little anti-Semitic "incident." Such making of mountains out of molehills, he suggests, only confirmed Gentiles' suspicions that Jews are overly sensitive troublemakers. Discouraging his readers from trying to handle anti-Semitic incidents on their own, Fineberg counsels them to bring their problems to a mature, rational, and properly trained expert in Jewish defense. This is not to say that Fineberg recommends passivity in the face of anti-Semitism; quite the opposite, in fact. However, he is very clear that aggressive, outspoken action should be overseen by professionals, rather than individuals. See Solomon Andhil Fineberg, *Overcoming Prejudice* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943).

**Note 5:** See, for example, Wyman, *Abandonment of the Jews*; Rafeal Medoff, *The Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust* (New York: Shapolsky, 1987); and Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938–1944* (New York: Hartmore House, 1985).

**Note 6:** See, for example, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (New York: Henry Holt, 1982); and Henry Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938–1945* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980).

**Note 7:** Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 276–288; Novick, *Holocaust in*

*American Life*.

**Note 8:** Novick, *Holocaust in American Life*. See also Hertzberg, *Jews in America*, 286–291.

**Note 9:** In fact, according to Novick, well into the 1960s, American Jewish defense groups worked to downplay the victimization of Jews, emphasizing instead acts of Jewish resistance such as the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto and the battlefield heroism of American Jewish servicemen. Novick, *Holocaust in American Life*, 121.

**Note 10:** Hertzberg, *Jews in America*, 291.

**Note 11:** Karen Brodtkin, *How the Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 35–51. On changing racial definitions, see also Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), and Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

**Note 12:** Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 15, 31–36.

**Note 13:** Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 182.

**Note 14:** Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 18–21.

**Note 15:** Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 181–182; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 31–32.

**Note 16:** The Frankfurt School, the popular term for the Institut für Sozialforschung, was founded in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt. Many of the Frankfurt School intellectuals, fleeing Nazism, emigrated to New York in the 1930s, where they affiliated with Columbia University, recreating their workgroup as the Institute for Social Research. Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 33–35; Phil Slater, "Max Horkheimer," in Justin Wintle, ed., *Makers of Modern Culture* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1981), 236–237.

**Note 17:** Oliver Zunz, *Why the American Century?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 65–69, quote on 66. On the AJC's public opinion surveys of the 1930s, see Charles Herbert Stember et al., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966).

**Note 18:** See Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin: African-Americans and Other Minorities* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943; rev. ed. 1964) and *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948; New Brunswick, N. J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999). For more information on McWilliams and his work, see Carey McWilliams, *The Education of Carey McWilliams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), and Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), particularly chapter 12.

**Note 19:** Both Horkheimer, ed., *Studies of Authority and the Family* (1936) and Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), for example, are concerned with modern techniques for controlling public opinion and human behavior. However, in the earlier work, the antiauthoritarian type is the revolutionary, while in the later work, it is the "democratic personality" or the "genuine liberal." The mass-culture critique, which had great currency among left-liberal intellectuals in the 1950s, is discussed in more detail below. Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 33–35, 37; Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 217; William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 54, 145, 110; Slater, "Max Horkheimer," 236–237.

**Note 20:** The Studies in Prejudice series also included two sociological works that the AJC found less useful as a theoretical framework for its defense work. Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 33–35; Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 122.

**Note 21:** For a stellar example of the application of medical metaphors to anti-Semitism, see Fineberg, *Overcoming Prejudice*. On Hollywood's popularization of this discourse, see

Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

**Note 22:** Pells, *The Liberal Mind*, 130. In *Why the American Century?* Olivier Zunz brilliantly traces the continuities between prewar and postwar social engineering, particularly the uses of social science in the "knowledge matrix" (65–69).

**Note 23:** Myrdal quoted in Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 31–32.

**Note 24:** Though members of the AJCongress participated in various coalition groups with the AJC and ADL, the AJCongress as an organization did not participate in any substantive way in the debate over *Crossfire*. Nonetheless, in the conflict between the ADL and the AJC, the leftist AJCongress could generally be counted on to support the more populist views of the ADL, rather than the elitist AJC. This support, however informal or unspoken, no doubt bolstered the ADL's confidence in their position on *Crossfire*.

**Note 25:** The Jewish Community Committee's Community Relations Council (CRC) was an interagency group representing a broad spectrum of national organizations, including the more left-wing AJCongress and the JLC, as well as the ADL and AJC. In general, the war crisis forced greater collaboration among Jewish defense agencies. In addition to their independent activities, the defense agencies worked together through a complex array of committees and subcommittees, as well as with local Jewish Community Councils, synagogues, labor unions, and other organizations. To coordinate these wide-ranging and often overlapping defense and public-relations activities, the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) was created in March 1944. Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*, 181; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, especially 15; Memorandum on Community Relations Program with the Motion Picture Industry, March 1947, in American Jewish Committee Papers [hereafter AJC Papers], General File 10, Box 229, File 2, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research [hereafter YIVO], New York.

**Note 26:** Memorandum on Community Relations Program with the Motion Picture Industry, March 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B229-F2, and Frank Altschul to Members of the Domestic Public Relations Committee, AJC Memorandum, July 10, 1944, in AJC Papers, G12-B145-F5, YIVO; Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 293–297.

**Note 27:** Rothschild to Silberberg, August 4, 1944, in AJC Papers, G12-B145-F4, and Altschul to the Domestic Public Relations Committee, July 10, 1944, in AJC Papers, G12-B145-F5, YIVO.

**Note 28:** Mendel Silberberg to John Slawson, January 29, 1946; Slawson to Silberberg, February 5, 1946; Silberberg to Slawson, February 13, 1946; Slawson to Silberberg, March 22, 1946; all in AJC Papers, G12-B145, YIVO.

**Note 29:** Slawson to Walter Hillborn, May 5, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 30:** Silberberg to Rothschild, March 19, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 31:** Slawson to Hillborn, May 5, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 32:** Lewis to Rothschild, April 4, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 33:** Proskauer to Irvine, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 34:** Rathvon to Schary, April 8, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 35:** Slawson to Hillborn, May 5, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 36:** Coleman to Gutstadt, April 14, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 37:** Ibid.

**Note 38:** Herzberg to Schary, April 18, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 39:** Lewis to Rothschild, April 17, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 40:** Ibid.; Gabler, *Empire of Their Own*, 267.

**Note 41:** Lewis to Rothschild, April 17, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 42:** Hillborn to Schary, April 17, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 43:** Lewis to Rothschild, April 17, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 44:** Horkeimer to Schary, April 18, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F1, WHS.

**Note 45:** Ibid.

**Note 46:** Ibid.

**Note 47:** Ibid.

**Note 48:** Ibid.

**Note 49:** Schary to Horkheimer, April 28, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F1, WHS.

**Note 50:** Robinson to Schary, April 22, 1947, and Prinzmetal to Herzberg, April 22, 1947, both in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 51:** Rathvon to Irvine, April 22, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 52:** Herzberg to Silberberg, April 11, 1947, and Robinson to Schary, April 22, 1947, both in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 53:** Slawson to Trager, May 13, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 54:** It is unclear whether the AJC chose Levy to chair the panel with the expectation that he would be a neutral facilitator or an advocate for their position. However, after the fact, the AJC was unhappy with his performance in this role, perhaps because he failed to direct the discussion more stringently along the lines of the AJC's critique. Though Levy himself reported "objectively" on the proceedings, there is some evidence that his sympathies lay with the ADL's position. For example, his wife wrote to Schary after the screening, praising the film as a "fearless and forthright presentation of a problem that is threatening our democratic way of life," and Levy himself later supported Schary during the *Commentary* debate (see below). Mrs. David Levy to Schary, May 24, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS.

**Note 55:** Slawson to Schary, July 8, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F1, WHS.

**Note 56:** David M. Levy, "Crossfire: The Case of Propaganda in a Mystery Thriller," July 8, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F1, WHS.

**Note 57:** [Samuel Flowerman], "Crossfire: A Discussion among Experts," n.d. [June 1947], in Schary Papers, B127-F1, WHS.

**Note 58:** Ibid.

**Note 59:** Though Bettelheim did not attend this screening and expert discussion, his reply to Elliot Cohen's review of *Crossfire* in *Commentary* [see below] reiterated the AJC's conclusions about the film's dangerous effect. Bettelheim to Cohen, October 29, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F3, YIVO.

**Note 60:** "Crossfire: A Discussion among Experts," n.d. [June 1947], in Schary Papers, B127-F1, WHS.

**Note 61:** Ibid.

**Note 62:** Trager to Schary, June 5, 1947, in Schary Papers, B126-F16, WHS; J. Harold Saks to CRC and ADL Regional Offices, ADL Memorandum, July 15, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 63:** Louis E. Raths and Frank N. Trager, "Public Opinion and *Crossfire*," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 21 (1948): 351–355.

**Note 64:** Indeed, a similar conclusion was reached by the AJC's Dr. Marie Jahoda in June 1945, after *Tomorrow the World*, a film about Nazism, was shown to thousands of

high-school students across the country. The "percentage of students who thought Jews were treated unfairly fell by more than a third after seeing the film: it set a standard of 'unequal treatment' that made discriminatory practices in America not worth noticing." Dr. Jahoda concluded that "these figures ought to be considered very seriously by everyone making use of Nazi atrocities for propaganda here." Novick, *Holocaust in American Life*, 122–123.

**Note 65:** Department of Scientific Research to John Slawson, AJC Memorandum, October 9, 1947; Dr. Marie Jahoda and Dr. Seider Chein to Dr. Samuel Flowerman and Dr. Stuart Cook, AJC Memorandum, October 10, 1947, both in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 66:** Louis E. Rath and Frank N. Trager, "Public Opinion and *Crossfire*," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 21 (1948): 345–368.

**Note 67:** Indeed, *Commentary* strove to be a *Partisan Review* for its middle-class Jewish readers, and many of the writers associated with *Partisan Review*—Philip Rahv, Calvin Trilling, Sidney Hook, Leslie Fiedler, Daniel Bell and others—often wrote for *Commentary* as well. In addition, several key *Commentary* staff members frequently published their work in *Partisan Review*, including Clement Greenberg (associate editor), Robert Warshaw (managing editor), and David Reisman and Irving Kristol (both assistant editors). Pells, *Liberal Mind*, 71–77. For a thorough analysis of this pivotal generation, see Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

**Note 68:** Elliott Cohen was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1899 and raised in Mobile, Alabama, the son of a Russian-born rabbi who became a peddler and then owner of a clothing store in America. Cohen was a "prodigy from birth" who could read newspaper headlines from the age of 2 or 3. Enrolling at Yale at 15, he graduated at 18 with a brilliant record in English literature and philosophy, and then spent several years at Yale graduate school. Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 31–32.

**Note 69:** Elliot Cohen, quoted in Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 32; Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 31–32, 56–61. The political sojourn of the *Menorah Journal* group is brilliantly satirized in Tess Slesinger's novel *The Unpossessed* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), available with an introduction by Alice Kessler-Harris and Paul Lauter, and an afterword by Janet Sharistianian (Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1984).

**Note 70:** Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, 110–111.

**Note 71:** Pells, *Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 216–228; Graebner, *Age of Doubt*, 137–140.

**Note 72:** Cohen's example of Lucky Strikes is particularly interesting here. The mastermind behind the Lucky Strike ad that first "sold" cigarettes to women, Edward Bernays, was the nephew of Sigmund Freud. Bernays's seminal handbook on advertising, deeply informed by Freudianism, was provocatively entitled *Propaganda*. Bernays also served on Creel's "propaganda" committee during the First World War. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 47; Zunz, *Why the American Century?*, 62.

**Note 73:** Elliot E. Cohen, "A Letter to the Movie-Makers: The Film Drama as a Social Force," *Commentary* 4:2 (August 1947): 110–111.

**Note 74:** *Ibid.*, 111–112.

**Note 75:** *Ibid.*, 112.

**Note 76:** *Ibid.*, 112–113.

**Note 77:** See, for example, Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960); Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Knopf, 1948); and Reisman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of*



*Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950; rpt. 2001).

**Note 78:** Cohen, "Letter to the Movie-Makers," 112, 115.

**Note 79:** *Ibid.*, 112–113.

**Note 80:** *Ibid.*, 113–114. Note that even as he raises the specter of the Holocaust, Cohen downplays the special victimization of the Jews, as well as the class, race, and gender complexities of fascism.

**Note 81:** *Ibid.*, 116–117.

**Note 82:** *Ibid.*, 118.

**Note 83:** Cohen to Schary, August 26, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F2, WHS.

**Note 84:** Levy to Schary, n.d. [September 1947], in Schary Papers, B127-F2, WHS.

**Note 85:** Trager to Schary, September 18, 1947; Schary to Trager, September 29, 1947, in Schary Papers, B127-F2, WHS.

**Note 86:** Irving Lipkowitz to Elliot Cohen, October 31, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10, B7, F3, YIVO.

**Note 87:** Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 116, 119.

**Note 88:** Dore Schary, "A Letter to Elliot Cohen from a Movie-Maker," *Commentary* 4:3 (September 1947): 1–2, 8, in Schary Papers, B127-F2, WHS. The audience response to *Crossfire* is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

**Note 89:** Schary, "Letter to Elliot Cohen," 1–3.

**Note 90:** *Ibid.*, 2–4.

**Note 91:** *Ibid.*, 6.

**Note 92:** *Ibid.*

**Note 93:** *Ibid.*, 3, 8.

**Note 94:** In August, the NCRAC had issued a report to its membership, summarizing the testing of *Crossfire* and noting only that "there was a division of opinion" among the AJC's experts "as to whether the picture would be helpful or harmful to the cause of intergroup relations." Samuel Speigler to NCRAC Membership, NCRAC Memorandum, August 1, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 95:** Dorothy Nathan to George Hexter, Dick Rothschild and Sol Fineberg, AJC Memorandum, September 18, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1-15, YIVO.

**Note 96:** Lawrence Bloomgarden to Nathan Weisman, AJC Memorandum, October 6, 1947, in AJC Papers, G12-B145, and Dorothy M. Nathan to John Slawson, AJC Memorandum, October 1, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-F1, YIVO.

**Note 97:** Nathan to Slawson, October 1, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-F1, YIVO.

**Note 98:** *Ibid.*

**Note 99:** *Ibid.*

**Note 100:** *Ibid.*

**Note 101:** There is another "Memorandum on *Crossfire*" in the AJC papers, dated October 10, 1947. Though unsigned, it is clearly a rough draft of Fineberg's memo published memo of October 27. Though the two documents are almost identical, the differences between the two are important. The first draft, for example, acknowledges that there are "strong arguments to be made on either side" and notes "considerable wavering on the part of most of us" regarding the political and social efficacy of anti-anti-Semitism films. These comments do not appear in the final, public version.

**Note 102:** S. Andhil Fineberg, "Memorandum on *Crossfire*," October 27, 1947, in AJC

Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 103:** S. Andhil Fineberg, "Examining the Movie Gift-Horse," October 23, 1947, in AJC Papers, G10-B7-F1, YIVO.

**Note 104:** Only the AJCongress formally protested this move, reiterating its position that mass action and public demonstrations against anti-Semitism, particularly by "rabble rousers," were critically important to Jewish defense and the continuous agitation for the civil liberties of all Americans. Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 272, n 39.