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*Papers by the Author on Allied Subjects*

(a) *In Hebrew*

1. "Israel—Land of Survivors," *Niv ha-Rofeh* (published by the Histadrut Medical Association), May 1955.
2. "The Pathology of the Disaster Period and the After-Effects on the Survivors in Israel," *ibid.*, March 1955.
3. "Remnants of the Holocaust in Israel," *Gesher* (quarterly of the World Jewish Congress), No. 1 (1956).
4. "Demographic and Biological Problems of Survivors of the Holocaust in Israel (1946-1956)," *Niv ha-Rofeh*, December 1957.
5. "Investigation of the Bio-Sociological Problems of Immigrants from Europe (1945-1959)," *ibid.*, December 1960.
6. "The European Immigration: 1946-1961; Adjustment of Holocaust Survivors to a Life of Work in Israel," *ibid.*, 1962.
7. "Adjustment to the Concentration-World and to Freedom," *ibid.*, March 1963.

(b) *In French*

1. "Problèmes médicaux des rescapés immigrés en Israël," *AMIF* (Paris), December 1958.
2. "Problèmes bio-sociologiques des rescapés de la vie concentrationnaire immigrés en Israël," *La semaine des hôpitaux de Paris*, No. 36 (1962), pp. 131-138.
3. "Problèmes bio-pathologiques des rescapés des camps de concentration immigrés en Israël," *ibid.*, pp. 139-142.

*Magical Thinking Among the Jews  
During the Nazi Occupation*

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I HAVE NO intention of entering here into any study of the psychological and ethnological basis of magical thinking in general. It is a fact that magical thinking is not solely characteristic of ancient or primitive mankind. Its influences are noticeable in human thought generally in our own day and it seems that it will no less continue to be so in future generations. Such thinking is a result of the dissonance between our will and our capacity, and is deeply rooted in the consciousness and conduct of every human being, even in most enlightened and progressive of contemporary societies.

Scholars in various fields (and not only psychologists) have stressed that in their studies they come up against phenomena which are the result of magical thinking. This is something of which even ordinary mortals are aware, insofar as they are capable of observation and self-criticism. Members of professions in which greater sensitivity is developed towards lingual expression and nuances of style, such as writers and teachers, are particularly alert to such phenomena. Magical thinking, more than any other type of thinking, is recognizable primarily in the outward conduct of men and women and especially in the manner in which they express themselves (use of one category of words and avoidance of some other category).

But, as stated, it is not the development of magical thinking in general, nor the degree in which it has taken hold in ordinary thinking under normal circumstances, that is the subject of our discussion. Those who wish to delve deeper in this field would be well-advised to refer to the basic study of Lévy-Bruhl<sup>1</sup> and others.

<sup>1</sup> L. Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, Paris: Alcan, 1910.

We have set ourselves here the task of replying to the following questions: (a) Was magical thinking widespread among the Jews during the period of the Nazi Occupation? (b) If it was, in what manner did it manifest itself? To reply to these questions we must first of all seek out suitable source material, which must be classified in keeping with the abnormal conditions obtaining at the time. Explanation of this phenomenon will depend upon the general definition of the term "magical thinking."

We shall adopt our own method in regard to the definition and especially in regard to classification of the diverse manifestations of magical thinking and we refrain from taking up any attitude towards the explanations given in the literature dealing with the subject.

*What is the meaning of magical thinking?*

Magical thinking is thinking that is suffused by the belief or conviction that through its instrumentality we are capable of influencing the external course of events. Needless to say, this tendency manifests itself particularly when external physical factors operate in a manner unfavourable to us, and we are not capable through the ordinary forces and means at our disposal, of changing them. Such belief or conviction can be fully conscious or emanate from the sphere of the unconscious. In other words—in the first case I think consciously of a certain objective in order to secure that objective; in the second case I do so without accounting to myself for any action on my part. I believe that the following examples will clarify what I wish to say.

One other remark: Use of the collective "we" implies that what has been stated applies equally to an individual and a collective body, each member of which or all together think and conduct themselves magically.

Magical thinking manifests itself in two ways: (1) Positively—I think of something because I wish that thing to happen to me, to be close to me, to help me; (2) Negatively—I try not to think of certain things, or to think of them in such a fashion that they will not happen and will not harm me.

Generally speaking these are the main forms of magical thinking. We are familiar with them in our daily lives, particularly in times of trouble, when normal thinking and normal conduct, normal knowledge and science cannot help us (such as in times of cataclysms of nature, serious illness and the like). Needless to say, this manner of thinking is more frequent in times of uncertainty and insecurity, when we have to cope with events we are not accustomed to and with which we are not familiar, when knowledge, tradition and experience cannot show us how to adjust ourselves. When any one finds himself unable to prevent a certain event or to influence it in a manner favourable to himself, he transports himself to the psychic area where he is independent and master of his thoughts.

Magical thinking is an integral part of all human thinking, from the most primitive to the loftiest and most scientific. The difference lies only in the relative part it plays with the ignorant man and with the scientist respectively. For the primitive man magical thinking is decisive in its importance and is very frequent. The reverse is true of the scientist. But just as primitive people do not think only magically (he would not be able to exist if he did) there is no similar extreme case in the opposite direction of completely sober human thinking, which is never subservient to magical thinking.

We believe that by the above we have already begun to reply to the question whether there was magical thinking in the grim years of the Hitler regime. We can reply in the affirmative, even before adducing concrete examples from those troubled years to verify our assumption, simply because we know the nature of magical thinking and when it occurs. And as we said above: magical thinking is not just a way of thinking and nothing more; it is directed towards practical ends and endeavours to influence the outside world. That indeed is its most characteristic quality, the *conditio sine qua non*. For that reason, obviously, it manifests itself more than any other way of thinking under various physical circumstances. It manifests itself in a set of words, in a pattern of conduct, in characteristic gestures and in actions which sometimes have no

definite significance, but sometimes allude to events in whose appearance we are interested.

This brief introduction will enable us to distinguish the various forms of magical thinking and conduct, insofar as they are known to us from studies we conducted in this corner of the Nazi period.

*"Don't open your mouth to Satan..."*

From antiquity we are familiar with this phrase. I recall that in the region in which I lived no woman would ever use the word "graveyard," certainly not after dark. Instead she would say "the good place," "the holy place" or "not-to-be-thought-of-at-night" and the like. It was strange to hear a sentence like the following: "I have been to the not-to-be-thought-of-at-night!" Her audience, of course, understood her. When the graveyard was referred to as "the good place" no further explanations were necessary. A similar habit not to mention what is regarded as evil by name, is common among other peoples and in other times, too, from times immemorial—is there any beginning in this matter?—to our own day.

The phrase "Don't open your mouth to Satan!" seems to be almost mandatory for every man, woman and child at all times, wherever he or she may be. We need only add: In primitive thinking only the concept "Satan" changes, for it is the thing that is feared, the name of which is not to be mentioned. In antiquity the devil himself was referred to, and barbaric peoples were loth to mention even wild animals by this name. Satan must not be named for he could easily appear if called. Even in cultured and intelligent circles in our midst "unpleasant words" are avoided. Thus "Don't open your mouth to Satan!" has acquired a modern connotation. Below are a number of examples:

Rabbi Pinhas Hirschsprung tells of 1939, the eve of the outbreak of war. The Jews of the town of Dukla (in the Carpathians in Poland) are consoling themselves: War will not break out. Only one of their number cries: "Jews, why should we delude ourselves. War is at our threshold, it is already in the air!" — "Don't open your mouth to Satan," he is interrupted. And someone else shouts: "Bite off your tongue!" (The last phrase is some

sort of talisman against something unpleasant coming to pass.)<sup>2</sup>

Another example of the same kind from before the First World War (1914) in the town of Bilgoraj. Just before the outbreak of the global conflagration someone in conversation made use of the word "war." "Don't talk nonsense!"; "Don't even mention the word!" his hearers admonished him and spat for good measure, as if they had been discussing some epidemic, mention of the name of which alone could cause harm...<sup>3</sup> Thus no change had come about in the course of the twenty-five years intervened between the outbreak of the two world wars. Spitting and biting off one's tongue, were tried and tested methods of guarding oneself against any "terrible" word that had been used.

Another example from the year 1939: A group of intellectuals was in flight from Warsaw, making its way eastwards. The carriages were crowded and *en route* some of them shoved themselves onto a passenger train. Those who remained were filled with foreboding for the fate of the passengers. One of them, a medical student, said: "A nightmare train, as if rushing into the arms of death!" — "Shut up!" he was shouted down, for every superfluous word was harmful and once spoken it could never be taken back. Incidentally, *en route* the train was bombed and the passengers were killed.<sup>4</sup>

Some examples from a later period (October 1942):

In Bialystok two hundred young girls were kidnapped in broad daylight and sent to work. The parents, convinced that the destination of the girls was destruction, tried to run after the transport weeping and crying out "*Shma Yisrael*." Ephraim Barash, Chairman of the Judenrat addressing a public meeting (on October 11, 1942) declared: "Let us hope that this unnecessary *Shma Yisrael* will not bring nearer the day when we shall cry the true *Shma Yisrael*."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From: *Fun Nazischn Yomertal*, Montreal: 1944, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> From: Abraham Kranenberg (ed.), *Hurban Bilgoraj*, Tel Aviv: 5716 (1956), p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Yerahmiel Weingarten, *Die Velt in Flamen*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>5</sup> Nachman Blumental, *The Way of a Judenrat*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.

From Opoczno, Jews were being transported in a sealed truck to destruction. "Mother began to cry in a loud voice, 'We are being taken to our deaths!' In a strangled voice I did my best to calm her: 'Mother, you must not mention the word *death*. You must not say, 'We are being taken to our deaths.' At that moment I believed that in using the word 'death' we were opening our mouths to Satan!" These are the words of A. Carmi, an intelligent youth of twenty, who was to fight in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.<sup>6</sup> It was better not to utter the undesirable word! But silence could also be eloquent. Another example:

Eisiskes, 1941-42, under the Nazi Occupation. The writer, Leib Reiser, has come to the town and met a Jew there. He is eager to learn what is going on. The Jew answers him in vague allusions. "But anyway, tell me, what is happening here?" The Jew turned his head and answered: "Don't open your mouth to Satan!" "And before I could question him further he had disappeared."<sup>7</sup>

The Jew, fearful of not being able to restrain himself, made off in order not to endanger the Jews of the town.

The author then went to others, but they too chose to remain silent. ("I could not obtain a clear answer as to the evil which had overtaken them.")

In daily ordinary conversation the Jews did not mention the name "Hitler," "SS," "Gestapo," "Germans," and the like. I think they were afraid to utter the terrible words. They preferred to say "he" (Hitler), "them" (the Germans). Each of these words had its own special meaning which everybody understood. Naturally, the covert fear that someone might be listening to the conversation also had its influence.

But not only the spoken word but a thought could prove harmful. Reiser, the author of the memoir already referred to, came to Minsk in 1941, from his native town of Grodno. He was

<sup>6</sup> 1962 (Hebrew), p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> A. Carmi, *Min Ha-dleka Ha-hi*. Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz ha-meuhad, 5721 (1961), p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Yad Vashem MS.*, p. 80.

homesick for his relatives and wanted to return to Grodno at all costs. How was he to do so? He discovered a way of travelling. He would conceal himself in a military truck, carrying uniforms from the eastern front to the west. "But I did not want to think about the matter too much for the simple reason that I was afraid of the Evil Eye."<sup>8</sup> But there was not only fear of the word "evil" but even of the word "good," lest it bring evil in its train, by arousing the envy of Satan. The latter might not wait until he was called by name; seeing any one too sure of himself he might make him fall into his trap. In that case even a good action could not be of much help after he had sinned by boasting, instead of modestly being satisfied with what he had. Thus it was wiser not to speak about plans and stratagems.

An example from Auschwitz camp. "After the roll-call, a woman official came in and wrote down our names and ages, and hinted that we might be transported that very day. We were given to understand that those over thirty-two should lower their age and those under seventeen should raise it. We dared not hope that this would be of any help. By tacit agreement we did not speak about the matter. We were afraid that we might spoil everything by talking!"<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note here that nobody suggested silence, but all instinctively preferred not to speak.

It is the same with all other examples, though the writers themselves may not stress the fact.

Generally speaking, in times of trouble it is just as well not to be mentioned. As if you didn't exist! If you are still alive don't

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 68.

Something else about the "Good Eye" during the same period: When an order was published prohibiting Jews to use stamps bearing the likeness of Hitler, the order was interpreted as fear that the Jews might give Hitler an "evil eye" (Notes of Dr. Ringelblum, May 1942). To "give an evil eye," all that was necessary was to look at the face of the person in question. On the other hand, in order to "remove the evil eye" (a grave illness), some article belonging to the person afflicted was necessary, if the latter could not come himself.

<sup>10</sup> Grete Salus. "Eine Frau erzählt." Beilage zu *Das parlament*. October 30, 1957.

make yourself too prominent. Thereby you may be saved. Sala and Siegmund Tagger relate "After the *akzia* in the Kolomyya Ghetto, survivors met someone and asked: 'How are things? Has any one survived?' There was no reply, only a gesture with a finger." They were afraid to say that they were still alive.<sup>10</sup>

We know of cases of similar conduct during the First World War. During an epidemic, the Angel of Death was deluded by pasting a notice on the door, "Nobody lives here!"<sup>11</sup> Much colourful material on this subject from the lives of the inhabitants of Poland can be found in the study of Dr. Henryk Bigeleisen, a Polish-Jewish scholar, *Death in Popular Belief* (in Polish), which for some reason is not known in our country.<sup>12</sup>

He cites examples from the Jewish environment, too.

When any one, by slip of tongue, mentioned members of his family who had survived, he stopped himself immediately, and to obviate the danger he would touch wood three times. That was how the "Evil Eye" was averted before the War.<sup>13</sup> There are also cases of appeasing the evil in order to prevent the harm that might ensue. Everything that can rouse its anger is removed, such as certain articles or human beings. Under circumstances, of course, strangers are not desirable. They bring down the evil. Satan knows us already, but when an unknown person appears, it is dangerous. For preventive reasons no new garment should be worn in time of trouble, no guest should be invited home, and generally speaking, undue attention should not be aroused.

September 1939. The Germans are bombarding the open towns of Poland. The civilians seek refuge in underground bunkers. A Jewish woman enters a shelter occupied by Poles. She is immediately expelled on the pretext that her presence will cause the

<sup>10</sup> Testimony of Sala and Siegmund Tagger, YAD VASHEM Archives.

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Abraham Kronenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>12</sup> Jewish ethnographers have also written on this subject, as for example, the martyred Joseph Zelikowicz, and others.

<sup>13</sup> Mina Tomkiewicz, *Ptatzot Ve-achbarim* (Bombs and Rats), translated from the Polish MS. by Peretz Nof, Tel Aviv: N. Tversky, 5716 (1955).

bombardment of the building. She leaves to the insults of the Poles, which are by no means of a magical character: "The anger of God on those who crucified Jesus!"<sup>14</sup> This incident is the outcome of anti-Semitic propaganda, which used religion for its purposes. ("God has foresaken Israel" was a slogan much used by Hitlerite propagandists among the more ignorant sections of the population in Poland and Ukraina.) But the driving out of a stranger in order to enhance security reflects magical behaviour and thinking. In the present case the "unbeliever" could bring down disaster. God may punish the innocent because they have allowed a Jewish woman to enter their shelter. Rabbi Hirschsprung relates that shortly afterwards a bomb fell on the shelter and all the Poles were killed. The Jewish woman who had remained outside was saved. But this was not always the case.

Similar incidents occurred in other towns and under other circumstances. The surviving Jews of Warsaw knew, in the late summer of 1942, that those who had been dispatched to the death camps had been killed in the gas chambers, but no one would use the term "died" or "were destroyed." The victims were mentioned in various euphemisms such as "they have gone," "went out in this or that *akzia*," as if by some tacit agreement among those who had remained alive, those who had gone might yet return. This is stressed by the authors of various memoirs, including Mina Tomkiewicz, Helena Szereszewska and others. It was thought: If we say in so many words that they were liquidated, disaster can befall those who are still alive.

Leib Rochman in his book *Ich Hob Gevolt Leben*<sup>15</sup> tells us of a characteristic use of this roundabout way of speaking of those who were killed (with every effort being made not to use a "bad" word): "...Where are they now—our relatives, our mothers, sisters, brothers, all of them? My dears do not ask, I do not know. Let us hope that we shall survive..." This reminds us of the story in the Tractate *Pesachim* 3.2: Johanan Hakuka went

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Hirschsprung, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>15</sup> Jerusalem: Yesodot, 1961, p. 217.

out into the fields. When he came back he was asked: "Has your wheat turned out fine?" He said to them: "The barley is very fine!" Rashi comments: "From what he said is to be understood that the wheat was not fine, and he did not wish to utter a word of curse from his lips." All understood the allusion, but they did not use the severe word so that Satan should not understand what they were talking about.

*Positive magical thinking: actions*

We shall now discuss the second category of magical behaviour, when a person seeks by thought on his part, or through certain actions, to exercise a positive influence on external phenomena. We find a classic example of this sort of thinking or action in the book *Min Ha-dleka Ha-hi* (page 119).

The scene is Warsaw Ghetto at the time of the uprising (1943). Some of the fighters are concentrated in Töbens' workshop. For the time being they are "unemployed," but in the distance, from other section of the Ghetto, comes the sound of firing. "We strained ourselves in silence trying to distinguish which shots were 'ours' and which those of the Germans. We knew only too well what sort of arms we had and the sort they had. When we heard a single shot or the explosions of a few grenades we would mutter to ourselves, 'Those are ours!' Thereby we sought to help in the battle they were fighting."<sup>16</sup>

In *The Book of Bilgoraj* (page 262) an incident which is connected with magical actions is related. An eye-witness recalls the following: During one of the *akzias*, Jews were being seized and loaded onto trucks and transported to the Belzec Death Camp. As was customary in such cases, the door of the truck was locked and sealed. The only fanlight was covered with a grating. The people crowded in the truck broke the grating and prepared to jump from the truck. It was very risky. A German escort in special trucks was escorting the transport and some of the soldiers had

<sup>16</sup> This example strengthens the assumption that magical thinking has its physiological element.

taken up position on the roofs of the trucks. Those trying to escape could easily fall under the wheels. "Joseph Shmirer," the witness tells us, "recited the *Minhab* prayer 'publicly.' He said that since there were people who were prepared to jump from the fast-travelling train, we should first recite the *Kedushah*-prayer. After *Kedushah* we went into conference to decide who should jump first." Why should just *Kedushah* be recited before trying to make a getaway? Were there no other prayers to be recited in time of danger? Normally, ordinary Jews, who are not learned (and it was Jews of this category who made up most of those crammed into these trucks), would know that in time of trouble a chapter of Psalms could be of avail. Why then the recitation of *Kedushah*?<sup>17</sup> The only explanation that seems feasible to me is that during the recitation of the words of the *Kedushah*, "*Kadosh Kadosh, Kadosh!*" (Holy, Holy, Holy), it is customary to raise oneself on the toes of one's feet. In Yidish this is called *springen* (to jump) *Kedushah*. This symbolical "springing" (jumping), sanctified through generations of practice, might help when the time came to jump from the train and help them to escape the clutches of the murderers. There was a magical connection between the symbolical and real springing.

We are not referring to the religious aspect. It does not interest us in the present context. We are not discussing prayer, but the question why this prayer was specifically chosen.

Another eloquent example: In the transport from Bochnia in August 1942 there were, among others, three children, brothers. The bereaved father, in the Ghetto, severed from his loved ones,

<sup>17</sup> Yizhak Nussenblat (former resident of Stryj) relates the following about the value of reciting Psalms in this period, in his *Memoirs* (MS.): "My mother prayed all the time and recited Psalms; she inspired us with new hope and courage not to despair."

And in the *Book of Stolple* (MS.) V. Geffen recalls that before jumping from the railway carriage, he read the following verses from Psalm 69: "Save me O God for the waters have come unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me."

took in three orphans, believing that because of the merit gained thereby someone would take pity upon his own children.<sup>18</sup> The Jews of the Ghetto still believed that the transport had been sent to labour in the Ukraine. They did not yet know that its destination was the Belzec Death Camp. During the Catastrophe there were many cases of parents caring for strange children in the hope that their good deeds would help their relatives who had been forcibly taken away from them.

We shall discuss in brief other forms of magical behaviour. The economic situation of the Jews in the ghetto was, of course, terrible. Many families did not have any means of subsistence. In order to keep themselves somehow alive, they sold clothing, household utensils, jewellery and the like (hence the phrase which became common at that time "to eat clothing"). In *Pinkas Zetel*<sup>18a</sup> (page 320) we read of a mother whose husband had been arrested, and who had to feed her children somehow. She had sold everything in the house in order to buy food. "She did not touch Father's clothing," her son relates, "as if she wanted to make sure that Father was still alive and would yet return." The woman was fearful for the welfare of her husband. He might yet return. (He had been killed by the Nazis, in fact.) If she resolved to sell his clothes it might be interpreted that she had reconciled herself to his death, and thereby, magically, bringing his death closer. Personal effects must not be touched: thereby one strengthens the owner; if the clothes "wait" for him, he might return. Even personal effects could have a good or an evil influence (and this could be reinforced by prayer or ceremony). Magical thinking does not distinguish between the living and the inanimate, between human beings or animals.

On the other hand the residents of the ghetto were fearful of purchasing and wearing the clothing of those who had already been transported. In her memoirs, Helena Szereszewska relates: "After the transports from Warsaw Ghetto (summer 1942) the

<sup>18</sup> From the testimony of M. Selinger, YAD VASHEM MS., Vol. 2, p. 102.

<sup>18a</sup> A book in memory of the Jewish community of Zetel (Dyatlovo).

survivors believed that all those who wore the clothing of the dead Jews would suffer a similar fate. The dead drew to themselves those who wore their clothes."<sup>19</sup>

Even professional thieves refrained from putting on the night garments of those who had been transported. "There was a superstition among the thieves that a night garment was an inseparable part of the owner and might avenge itself."<sup>20</sup>

But there were "good" articles, too, which when touched exuded goodness and a redeeming influence. A former prisoner of the Sachsenhausen camp tells the following about the early, relatively "good," years: When one of the prisoners received a letter from home it was read out to everybody. But this was not sufficient. Every prisoner wished to take hold of the letter, notwithstanding the fact that the sender was a complete stranger to him. "Although the letters were of interest only to the recipients, they passed from hand to hand. Everyone tried to read them over again to hold them in his hand as long as he could. It was as if the pages had some magic power."<sup>21</sup> In this case it seemed that it was not the words nor the content that exerted an influence but the fact that the letter came from the Free World. It became a symbol of liberty. All those who touched it gave rein thereby to their yearnings for freedom.

An example of the influence of a certain action against one person and in favour of another is related by Naomi Weinkrantz-Shatz in her memoirs *Avek Mitn Faier* (Gone with the Fire, p. 60). When she was slipping out of the ghetto illegally the Lithuanian policeman demanded that she give him her watch.

<sup>19</sup> Helena Szereszewska, *Memoirs* (MS.), pp. 75, 102.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

Incidentally, even Christian thieves were fearful of using Jewish clothing. This was also true of members of the SS. See Dr. Otto Miller, *The Vienna Documents: (c) The Jewish Curse* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem: 1942. This is a matter for separate discussion. In the present article we confine ourselves to the Jewish aspect.

<sup>21</sup> Leon Szalet, *Experiment "E"; A Report from an Extermination Laboratory*, New York: 1945, p. 123.

"I do not believe (*sic*) in the power of curses or superstitions. In spite of that, I put the watch close to my mouth and said: 'Watch! Harm your new owner! Bring down on him a peculiar death!'" The watch, her private property, magically belonged to her person. When she was robbed of it by a stranger, it could harm whoever held it, for the article and its owner were one (to use the term of Lévy-Bruhl). This attachment could bring about the desired result. It could bring down death upon anyone interfering in their mutual relations.

Frequently a glance comes to the aid of thinking in the right direction. One must concentrate upon the event which one desires and at the same time look at the persons from whom that thing must come. Katzetnik, in *Call me Piepel*, tells how Piepel once met the commander of the bloc, Robert, alone and wanted him to take him as "Piepel." "With all his might he attached himself to Robert's look, so that he should not move from him. He devoted himself entirely to Robert's eyes: Take me, Robert, take me. You'll see that you will be satisfied with me. I know all sorts of things" (p. 94). He took up a stand so that the Commander should see him well. "Look at him straight, strongly, strongly, so that he could see the eyes properly; you have to connect his look with your eyes, so that he should not be able to escape" (p. 105).

There are many similar instances in both Jewish and non-Jewish sources (also pages 53-54 of the above book of Katzetnik). It is undoubtedly connected with hypnosis.

Here is another example of enlisting the aid of articles and actions, to ensure that something favourable come to pass. (We are not speaking here of benedictions and maledictions, prayers and vows): In the Lodz Ghetto women used to light special candles known as "Hitler candles" and wish that when the candle flickers, Hitler should go out like a candle. In this case they were not interested in any secrecy, on the contrary, they mentioned Hitler by name. The Angel of Death must know whom they were referring to in order to get him more easily.<sup>22</sup> For him death and

<sup>22</sup> Meshullam Ad, *Ke-agmonim Ba-ssa'ar*, p. 161.

destruction, for us life. For this purpose, too, there was a tried and tested traditional method. Whenever a fine was imposed on the Jews, even the poorest contributed eighteen roubles (eighteen, in Hebrew characters, is read *hai*—life).<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Szalet,<sup>24</sup> tells about the significance of magical thinking for those who made use of it:

Our faces must have reflected our deep despair, for Karl, who had remained in the room, suddenly adopted a casual tone, as if he wished to rally us from our grim thoughts. "If we could complain to the English," he said, "about the ungentlemanly way the Nazis are treating their allies, perhaps that would help. The trouble is, we have no short-wave transmitter. But how would it be if we transmitted our complaints by telepathy? One thing is sure we'll get light and fire in abundance [they were forbidden to heat their block or to have light — *Ed.*]. Come on, let's try telepathy." A lighted stove could not have given us more warmth and comfort in that bitter moment than Karl's half-ironic, half serious words. Instantly a more cheerful mood took possession of the barrack. Some comrades eagerly took up Karl's proposal and began to "telepath" their wishes and complaints, not only to the English, but to various other addressees. To everyone's delight, one wit improvised a telepathic dialogue with Hitler, in which he spoke his mind to the Führer with all the resources of his vocabulary, and Hitler, bursting into a frenzy, tried to answer him. This drama was acted in a whisper, of course. But it was a masterpiece of mimicry and so amusing that for a time our troubles were forgotten.

It is a different question whether this was good for the prisoners, but it encouraged and consoled them, strengthened their will to survive.

<sup>23</sup> Gershon Taffet, *Zydzi w Zólkowi* (Jews in Zholkva), p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.* (See n. 21), p. 101.



In addition to the types of magical thinking which we have mentioned we shall conclude with another concept which Professor Stanislaw Pigón, a former prisoner of Sachsenhausen, calls "magical will," which has its own special characteristics. In his introduction to *The Isolated Camp* by Włodzimierz Wnuk,<sup>25</sup> the Professor notes:

Any one who did not have sufficient strength to persist, not to submit morally—his fate was sealed. His days were numbered from the start. The contrary was also true. He who found refuge within himself, who had some or other sublime support within himself, could hold out. For there is something in a human being which can be called magical. This was revealed in the camp as a truth, that could be felt with one's hand!

This fact is stressed by other survivors too, of other German camps and of ghettos. This tone is met with in war-time principally in Soviet literature. Strength of will enabled one not only to overcome the greater strength of the enemy but even inhuman conditions of living, physical weaknesses and inhibitions, disease, wounds, etc. "Strength of will" has often upset the diagnosis of doctors.

During the Eichmann Trial, Dr. Leon Weiliczker, one of the witnesses, replying to a question as to how he had managed to survive, said: "It was a matter of strength of will and a sense of responsibility."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Włodzimierz Wnuk, *Obóz kwarantanny*.

<sup>26</sup> Session 43, May 2, 1961, p. 21.

## *The Concept 'Crime Against the Jewish People' in the Light of International Law*

MARION MUSHKAT

NATIONAL LEGISLATION for the prosecution and punishment of Nazi criminals, generally adopted—sometimes with certain changes—the definitions of crimes formulated in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal. This Tribunal was set up on the basis of an agreement signed in London on August 8, 1945, by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France, for the trial and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis countries. In actual fact, only 24 accused, political, military and economic leaders of Nazi Germany, were tried by it. Their sentences, pronounced in Nuremberg on September 30 and October 1, 1946, determined their responsibility as to: (a) crimes against peace; (b) the participation in a common plan, or conspiracy, for the accomplishment of the above crimes; (c) war crimes; (d) crimes against humanity. Most of the accused were convicted of committing one or several of these acts; some were acquitted.

Under Article 5 of the London Agreement, 19 member states of the United Nations which had fought the states of the Axis acceded to it. The application of the Agreement was further extended by the approval of the principles of the Charter and of the Nuremberg Judgment by the U.N. General Assembly, on February 13 and December 11, 1946.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the Assembly established a Committee on the Progressive Development of International Law and its Codification. The Assembly recommended that this Committee urgently consider the formulation of the Nu-

<sup>1</sup> *General Assembly Journal*, No. 75, Supplement A-64, Addendum 1, p. 945.