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Professor Ruth R. Wisse Kelly Scott Johnson

Sholem Schwarzbard: Biography of a Jewish Assassin

## Abstract

The thesis represents the first complete academic biography of a Jewish clockmaker, warrior poet and Anarchist named Sholem Schwarzbard. Schwarzbard's experience was both typical and unique for a Jewish man of his era. It included four immigrations, two revolutions, numerous pogroms, a world war and, far less commonly, an assassination. The latter gained him fleeting international fame in 1926, when he killed the Ukrainian nationalist leader Symon Petliura in Paris in retribution for pogroms perpetrated during the Russian Civil War (1917-20). After a contentious trial, a French jury was sufficiently convinced both of Schwarzbard's sincerity as an avenger, and of Petliura's responsibility for the actions of his armies, to acquit him on all counts. Mostly forgotten by the rest of the world, the assassin has remained a divisive figure in Jewish-Ukrainian relations, leading to distorted and reductive descriptions his life. In contrast to these partial views, the thesis follows Schwarzbard's fate chronologically, from cradle to grave, emphasizing development and contradiction in his story. Special attention is paid the dynamic nature of Schwarzbard's Jewish, Anarchist, and French commitments. After a long struggle, it was the first of these that came to dominate Schwarzbard's life, as he called the Jews back into history and himself back to his people with a single, irrevocable deed.

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A Note on the Transliteration of Proper Names

The spelling of proper names is a problem for anyone presenting research on eastern Europe, and I have found a remarkable number of variations for the name "Schwarzbard." Besides this latter form preferred by Schwarzbard himself, other variations include: Schwartzbard (even more common than the way he spelled his name), Shvartsbard (the standard Yiddish transliteration), Schwartzbar or Schwarzbar (reflecting French pronunciation), Schwarzbart, Schwartzbart, Schwartzbourd, Schwarzbord, Schwartzbord, etc.... Ukrainian names present similar difficulties in transliteration. For the purposes of the thesis I have used the following forms for three of the more important figures:

Sholem Schwarzbard
Symon Petliura
Vladimir Vynnychenko

Unless necessary for clarity, I have omitted the "(sic)" for variations on my standard forms, all of which come from quoted material.

Acknowledgements

The debt owed to the many people that have aided, abetted and inspired the thesis is obviously too large to repay in a few words. Still, to all of you with whom I have passed the hours discussing the unique and largely forgotten figure of Sholem Schwarzbard, thank you. Particularly important to the project was my discussion with Rena Fuks-Mansfeld at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam who emboldened me to emphasize the subjective aspects of the assassination. I also must thank Dr. Katerina Romanenko and Constantine Galynov, not only for their assistance in working with Russian and Ukrainian documents, but also for engaging conversations over tea at a critical time for the project.

Of course, I must also thank the members of my committee, professors Ruth Wisse, Eugene Orenstein and Jay Harris. To work with two historians, and a literary scholar of such high caliber has been ideal for a first time biographer learning to "dance at two weddings" as the genre requires. Thank you for your belief in the project, and I apologize for the work's many shortcomings that can only be attributed to my own.

Thank you to Nikhil and Seema Mahajan for opening their home in Arizona, allowing me to work in desert calm for over a month. Thank you to my good friend Nouman Khan for doing the same in New York City, where the archives more than compensated for the lack of calm. Thank you to Shahid Parvez Khan, my teacher in music and life that never wavered in his belief I would see the project through. Finally, thank you to my dear and faithful family who suffered through the project "in the trenches," as it were, giving me strength when I felt at wit's end. Without the love and patience of my beautiful wife Yasmin, my son Rumi, and my mother-in-law and "*baji*" Nasim Omer the project could have never been completed. Thank you.

Do not read works of history, only biographies, for that is life without theory.

-Benjamin Disraeli

A story that was subject of every variety of misrepresentation, not only by those who then lived but likewise in succeeding times: so true is it that all transactions of pre-eminent importance are wrapt in doubt and obscurity; while some hold for certain facts the most precarious hearsays, others turn facts into falsehood; and both are exaggerated by posterity.

- Tacitus (quoted in Peter Graves's *I, Claudius*)

He that writes the life of another is either his friend or his enemy, and wishes either to exalt his praise or aggravate his infamy.

- Dr. Johnson (The Idler)

Moral indignation did and still does affect me in a direct physical manner. Like most people who suffer from chronic indignation—I can feel, during an attack, the infusion of adrenaline into the bloodstream, the carving of the muscles for violent action.

- Arthur Koestler

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times,
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!

- Shakespeare (Julius Caesar)

*Une nation se sauve, elle ne se venge pas*.

-Danton

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Setting the Scene: the Assassination

On May 25th, 1926 Sholem Schwarzbard, a mostly unknown Jewish emigrant, clockmaker, warrior poet and Anarchist, shot dead the Ukrainian Hetman Symon Petliura on a Parisian lane in broad daylight. Schwarzbard had lived in Paris since 1910, except for a two-and-a-half year period working and fighting for the Revolution in Ukraine. He had brought back to Paris pogrom memories from the *annus horribilis* 1919, and six years later he still could not escape them.[1] Convinced like many others of Petliura's role in the violence, Schwarzbard claimed his was a legitimate act of retribution, and did not flee the scene, but instead waited to greet an oncoming policeman with the words: "I came to kill a murderer."[2] At his trial eighteen months later a twelve-man jury of the *Cour d'assise de la Seine* agreed, acquitting him of all charges on Wednesday evening October 26, 1927.[3] Shouts of *"Vive la France!"* rang out in the courtroom, and Jews around the world celebrated the verdict.

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[1] The violence of those years was unprecedented even in the frequently dark annals of Jewish history in Ukraine.

[2] *Notes sténographiques*, V. Bluet, Ministere Public, "Madame Veuve Petlura et M. Le Colonel Petlura (Parties Civiles) c. Schwartzbard," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39506.

[3] This was the same Assize court in Paris's *Palais de justice* that convicted Émile Zola for criminal libel during the Dreyfus Affair in February 1898.

In contrast, Ukrainian nationalists saw the affair as another blow to their people's reputation, and set back for dreams of independence from Soviet Russia.[4] As an exiled President of the Ukrainian Directory, and the "Hetman-and-Chief" of the Ukrainian National Army, Symon Petliura had striven for these things, but units fighting in his name also killed an estimated 15,000 Jews, not to mention many more maimed, raped, exposed to disease and economically ruined.[5] This was the Ukrainian National Army's share in a total of between 60,000 and 100,000 Jewish pogrom victims during the Russian Civil War (1917-1920).[6] Whether Petliura himself was responsible for the violence of his commanders and soldiers raises a number of difficult historical and legal questions, and scholars continue to disagree on how to answer them. Schwarzbard's deed was not based on reliable figures, or

[4] It should be remembered that Ukrainian support for Symon Petliura was hardly universal, and his assassination did much to make him a martyr and unifying figure. For more on divisions in Ukrainian politics between the wars "What Kind of Ukrainian are you? Cleavages within the pre-World War II diaspora." Found in Vic Satzkevich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora* (London and New York: Routledge), 49-85.

[5] See John Klier, *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press), s.v. "Pogroms." Klier says of Petliura's armies: "Two groups were particularly prone to pogroms, the anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army commanded by General Anton Ivanovich Denikin, and forces loyal to the Ukrainian national government, the so-called Directory, headed by Simon Petliura. The irregular forces fighting in the name of the Directory, the Otamans, were particularly notorious for anti-Jewish murder, torture, and rape. Antipogrom declarations issued by the Directory were decried by Jewish groups as mere window-dressing. In fact, the Directory had little effective control over the forces fighting in its name. While ideology played some role in prompting pogroms, much of the violence was occasioned by the collapse of governmental authority, the brutalization caused by years of inhumane warfare, and a criminal desire to loot and plunder." Ibid. Of the literally thousands of pogroms perpetrated against Jews (many were also committed against other ethnic minorities, especially German-speaking Menonnites) approximately 900 have been attributed to units associated with Petliura's command. Other perpetrators included agrarian "Greens" under Hetman Zelyonyi (most the pogrom violence actually witnessed by Schwarzbard was perpetrated by Zelyonyi's peasant armies), and notorious "Hetmen" like Grigoriev, Struk, Angel and others, including many "robber-hetmen." Although anti-Jewish excesses were severely punished in the Red Army, some revolutionary units did have a hand in the violence, especially in 1918, before the re-organization of the Red Army under Trotsky. In the summer of 1920, invading Polish armies (Petliura's allies) also perpetrated much anti-Jewish violence. Although details of the Polish invasion are not covered in it, the most detailed source on the pogrom era remains Elias Tcherikower's *Di Ukrainer pogromen in yor 1919* [The Ukrainian Pogroms in the Year 1919] (New York: YIVO, 1965).

[6] The "Directory" was the political body that led the fight for Ukrainian independence. It was made up of a handful of influential figures in Ukrainian politics and culture.

on the abstract assignment of responsibility within a chain of command, however, but on an explosive combination of factors including his character, experience, ideology and perception of the man he targeted. As a study of the life and times of Sholem Schwarzbard, the thesis will focus on these latter factors, not the legacy of Symon Petliura as has been done in the past with inconclusive historical and pernicious biographical results.

## 1.2 Petliura's Reputation as Pogromist

Sholem Schwarzbard, like most people in his day, assumed the number of pogrom victims was much higher than recent estimates, a figure of 300,000 Jewish dead common at the time. Rightly or wrongly, no single name was more closely associated with the horror than that of Symon Petliura:

> In the primitive Jewish folk consciousness a very definite idea of the just recently assassinated Petliura has formed. Under this name the people imagine a terrible, wild rider on a white horse, with blood-filled eyes, a thick Cossack moustache, and an inhuman cruel face, who rides into a Jewish village at the head of bloodied pogromchiks and slaughters every Jew that comes in his way with animal delight.[7]

This image took root deep in the Jewish folk imagination, producing stories about the Hetman, including one used by Jewish mothers to threaten children reluctant to sleep, saying that "Batko Petliura" would come and take them away if they did not settle down.[8] The image occasionally appeared in Yiddish high literature as well.

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[7] Avrom Revutsky, "*Petlura un di Ukrayiner pogromen"* [Petliura and the Ukrainian Pogroms] *Morgn zhurnal,* May 31, 1926. The term "pogromchik" denotes perpetrators of pogrom violence. For the purposes of the thesis I have chosen to use this spelling or the common "pogromist." In Yiddish and Russian the word is *"pogromshtshik."*

[8] "*Batko Petliura"* can be translated "Little Father Petliura." It was a term of affection commonly used by Ukrainian soldiers for popular leaders.

For example, the great balladeer Itsik Manger, perhaps with the folk story in mind, pictured Petliura standing menacingly outside the window of a Jewish home:

> *Un Petlyura shteyt ba dem fenster.*
> *"Vos vil er, der finsterer haydamak*
> *mit der krumer shverd. Mit der sharfer hak?*
> *Vos vil er fun unz hobn?...."*
> *"Shvartse feygl fun der nakht,*
> *tsevos hot ir Petlyuran aher gebrakht*
> *mit di blutike hent. Mit finstere oygn?"*
>
> [And Petliura stands at the window
> "What does he want, the dark Haidemak
> With his crooked sword, with his sharp axe?
> What does he want from us?..."
> "Black birds of the night,
> Why did you bring Petliura here
> With the bloody hands, with the dark eyes?][9]

The Yiddish satirist, Der Tunkeler, grants Petliura an equally baleful pogrom pedigree in a mostly forgotten little book on the civil war era called, *The Adventures of Benjamin the Fourth (from the Ukrainian Chaos).*[10] Written in the midst of the crisis in 1920, Der Tunkeler addresses the dire situation in Kiev with humor, but it is obvious that the underlying reality is deadly serious: "I have to begin with Kiev. I've

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[9] Itsik Manger, "*Di Balade fun Petlyura*," from *Shtern afn dakh* (Bucharest: Sholem Aleichem, 1929), 155. The pogroms haunt Yiddish literature from the interbellum period like a ubiquitous black cloud, but blatant treatment of them remained rare until the release of Peretz Markish *Di Kupe* [the Heap] in 1922. One critic gives the following very moving reason for this: "The pogrom theme is used relatively little in our high literature. Perhaps because we're too close to this scourge on our existence; perhaps because every Jew has been personally too bloodily hit by the pogroms to be able to handle this misfortune of ours with appropriate artistry. And perhaps it is even because the pogrom in its horror is such a grandiose phenomena that it scares away most writers who want to approach it through art. To describe such a phenomena means living through it again. Describing such things means cutting your own wounds with a knife." See L. Krishtol, "*Lamed Shapiro's pogrom-dertseylungen*" [Lamed Shapiro's Pogrom Stories], in *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* June 5, 1920. For more on the role of the pogrom in eastern European Yiddish and Hebrew literature see David Roskies, Against *the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), esp. chapters 4-7.

[10] Der Tunkeler, *Masoes Benyomin ha-revii (funem Ukrainishn kaos)* [The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Fourth: from the Ukrainian Chaos] (New York, Warsaw: Farlag Mizrekh un Mayrev, 1920). The title is a spoof on the Yiddish classicist Mendele Mokher Sforim's enlightenment satire of traditional Jewish life in tsarist Russia," *Masoes Benyomin ha-shelishi"* [The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third].

passed the last two years in Kiev. A fine city, I must admit, a beautiful city, a real paradise, so what's the problem? The whole time I've been there I've had the feeling that at any moment someone's going to stick a knife in my side. That's all..."[11] The writer provides a list of "contenders" for power, all of whom share the blame for the mortal danger he must negotiate in daily life: "Petlura, Hetman, Trotsky, Denikin, Makhno, Grigoriev, Zelyoni, Sturk, Angel, Sokolovsky, Rakovsky and all the rest…"[12] Significantly, Petliura heads the list, and his armies are paid a special tribute: "Petlura's bands tear into the city, they want to take over Kiev and, while they have the chance, slaughter thirty thousand Jews. But this is no big deal for Kiev—a drop in the ocean for Kiev compared to towns like Proskurov, Uman, Novgorod-Volinsk…"[13]

Petliura's sinister reputation was prevalent among non-Jews as well. A favorite bogey of the Bolsheviks, Soviet writers adopted the Hetman as a ready-made villain, who resisted the Revolution and baited Jews. Characters in a novel from the 1930s by Nikolai Ostrovsky determined who was in power on any given day by the presence or absence of pogrom violence: "Let's wait a bit and see; if they start pillaging the Jews, we shall know it's Petliura's men."[14] In a second example from Soviet literature, Mikhail Bulgakov, in his novel "White Guard" written in the years leading up to the assassination, evokes Petliura's mystique and the hold he has on the popular imagination of his followers:

"Petlyura…. Petlyura."

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[11] Der Tunkeler, "Benjamin the Fourth," 5.
[12] Ibid. 6.
[13] Ibid. 8.
[14] Salo Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 219.

"What Petlyura? Are you crazy?
"Why is Petlyura climbing the fountain?"
"Petlyura's in Kharkov."
"Petlyura just entered the palace for a banquet."
"*Quit your yapping, there aren't going to be any banquets.*"
"Hail to the people!"…
"Quiet!"…
"See Petlyura?"
"Sure, just now."
"Lucky man. What's he like?"
"A black mustache, like Wilhelm, and a helmet. Hey, there he is, there he is!
"Look, look, Maria Fyodorovna! Look, look! There he goes."
*"Don't create a provocation! That's the Fire Department chief."*
"My dear lady, Petlyura is in Belgium…"[15]

These are the hopeful voices of witnesses to Petliura's first triumphal entry into Kiev in the winter of 1918-19. The Hetman's elusiveness makes him both comic and mysterious, the same crowd interested in the role religion might play under Petliura's government:

"*Did you see? Did you? So impressive… Went down Rylsky Lane in a coach. Six horses."*
"Sorry, you mean they believe in the clergy?'
"*I'm not saying* they do or don't, I'm *saying* he rode by, that's all. Make of what you like of it."
"the fact is the priests are serving mass right now."
"It's stronger with priests."
"Petlyura. Petlyura. Petlyura. Petlyura. Petlyura…"[16]

For Bulgakov, Petliura does not enter Kiev as a savior on this chilling Palm Sunday, however, but as an atavistic anti-Christ, his person as threateningly amorphous as the spirit of the mass movement he leads. As Petliura's antithesis, Bulgakov's Christ lay instead in the corpse of an old Jew ruthlessly killed by the Hetman's troops. The

[15] Mikhail Bulgakov, *White Guard,* trans. Michael Glenny (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1987), 266.
[16] Ibid. 262.

leaden weight of this heap frozen in the snow grounding the hoped for redemption (resurrection):

> And the corpse was the only evidence that Petlyura was not a myth but had really existed. But why had he existed? Nobody can say. Will anybody redeem the blood that he shed? No. No one. The snow would just melt, the green Ukrainian grass would grow again and weave its carpet over the earth. The gorgeous sunrises would come again. The air would shimmer with heat above the fields and no more traces of blood would remain. Blood is cheap on those red fields and no one would redeem it. No one.[17]

Though the Hetman remains unseen, his legacy is tainted by Jewish blood. Petliura had indeed become a "living symbol of the bloody events that played out on the wide expanses of Ukraine."[18] At least for some of Schwarzbard's Anarchist comrades at the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* this sufficed to legitimate the assassination: "Comrade Schwarzbard's deed satisfied that desire for revenge in the hearts of millions of people, for Christians as well as Jews, as is shown by the extraordinary offer of assistance from all sides. This alone is the best justification for the deed."[19]

### 1.3 Sholem Schwarzbard's View of Symon Petliura

Sholem Schwarzbard's investigation and trial showed that Petliura's legacy was more complex than his sinister reputation indicated, but this made no difference to the assassin for whom the Hetman remained the same *bête noire* both

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[17] Bulgakov, *White Guard,* 290.

[18] Avrom Revutsky, *In di shvere teg af ukrayne: zikhroynes fun a yidishn minister* [During the Difficult Days in Ukraine: Memoirs of a Jewish Minister] (Berlin, *Yidishe literarishe farlag,* 1924), 281. For an English translation of this important book see Abraham Revutsky, *Wrenching Times in Ukraine: memoir of a Jewish minister,* trans. Sam Revutsky and Moishe Kantorowitz (St. Johns, Nfld: Yksuver, c. 1998). It should also be mentioned that Ukrainian leftists also contributed to Petliura's bad reputation with claims that he was a rabid antisemite, mediocrity, adventurer and traitor. See Satzkevich, *Ukrainian Diaspora*, 76.

[19] "*Shvartsbard's tat un Yanovksi's meynung*" [Schwarzbard's Deed and Yankovsky's Opinion], *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, July 2, 1926.

before and after his deed.[20] Schwarzbard had his own impenetrable "White Rider" image of Petliura based on an understanding of Ukrainian history that indiscriminately conflated the twentieth century with centuries past. Resorting to a characteristic mix of historical analysis and spiritual speculation, Schwarzbard saw the pogroms both politically, as a tool in the arsenal of the Ukrainian independence movement, and metempsychotically, as an inheritance from earlier generations:

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[20] In all seriousness, the main prosecuting attorney at Schwarzbard's trial, César Campinchi, called Petliura a "*philosemite.*" Campinchi pointed out that such a claim, if made earlier in the trial, would have been greeted with laughter, as opposed to the sober looks it now received. Like the lawyers at the trial, historians disagree on Petliura's legacy, and in forming my opinion I have, following a biographer's instincts, sought viewpoints that allow for a more complex view of the man. I've been drawn in particular to the opinions of Vladimir Vynnychenko and Vladimir Jabotinsky, two men who had reason both to criticize Petliura and protect his reputation. Vynnychenko was the Directory President before Petliura, and as a Socialist to the left of his successor (who was also a Socialist). He disliked Petliura's militarization and nationalization of the Ukrainian independence movement. Still, Vynnychenko—a novelist of world repute—cared deeply for Ukraine and did not want the affair to perpetuate the murderous stereotypes so often applied to his people. He said of Petliura: "Many enemies, and some immoderate allies, represent Petliura as a dictator having an unlimited power, with a will of iron and authority over all questions concerning national existence. In all earnestness, I must contend that presenting Petliura in this fashion is the fruit of a voluntary or involuntary misunderstanding. This was a man not at all made for the role of dictator. He was a man of too soft a character, of average intelligence, of weak will, but with an energetic ambition that guided all his actions. Hardly having any of the real gifts for being the leader, neither the moral authority nor the technique, he tried to win popularity and maintain it by exterior means: this was his system. It applied also in the case of the pogroms." See Vladimir Vynnychenko**,** letter to Assize Court (French translation of Ukrainian original), Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 37263. The father of Revisionist Zionism, Vladimir Jabotinsky, insisted Petliura was not an antisemite and that he never encouraged pogroms. He believed tragic historical circumstances caused them instead. The circumstances behind Jabotinsky's benign view of Petliura are interesting as well. In 1921, Jabotinsky touched off the biggest scandal of his career when he signed a pact with Petliura's representative in Prague, agreeing to create Jewish brigades to be attached to Petliura's armies for pogrom prevention in case of a future invasion of the Soviet Ukraine from Poland where Petliura and an army of 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers were in exile. For most Jews this became known as Jabotinsky's "pact with the devil," and when Schwarzbard's deed again made Symon Petliura a focus of attention around the world, Jabotinsky had compelling personal and political reasons to emphasize history, not Petliura's faulty leadership, as the cause of the violence. Vladimir Jabotinsky, *"Di 'Krim' kolonizatsye"* [The "Crimean" Colonization], *Morgn zhurnal,* June 4, 1926. Though he never renounced his opinion on Petliura's benign attitude towards Jews, Jabotinsky later amended his position, holding Petliura responsible for "every drop of Jewish blood spilt" by his armies based on an inadequate response to the pogroms. Vladimir Jabotinsky, official court translation of Russian original, *"Petliura et les pogroms," Les Dernières Nouvelles* [*Posledniya novosti*], October 11, 1927. In my opinion, Petliura was ultimately culpable for the pogroms perpetrated by his armies. Knowing the strong anti-Jewish feeling in the ranks, he should have done much more, much sooner to try and prevent them.

> Especially dangerous were the "*samostinikes*" with their supposed republicanism that suddenly smelled of antisemitism...[21] Their solution was "Great Ukraine"... Their strategic plans how to take over those wide expanses of land were very simple: Because lots of Jews lived on all the desired territories, they would first kill all the Jews like their great grandfathers Bogdan Chmielnitsky, and later Gonta and Zhelyeznyak did, and all the rest—Poles, Rumanians, Germans and Russians.... would abandon these place out of fear, and finished."[22]

In such a scheme Petliura is culpable both for a cynical policy of ethnic cleansing and, more profoundly, for a link to Ukrainian forebearers that implicates him in the death of tens of thousands of Jews in past pogroms.[23] Indeed, in Schwarzbard's mystico-historical view Petliura is not just another nationalist leader, but the twentieth century revenant of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Cossack hetmen. As such, the names Bogdan Chmielnitsky, Ivan Gonta and Maxim Zhlyeznyak are mentioned time and again next to Petliura's own in his memoirs and journals. Prone to sweeping generalizations, Schwarzbard did not allow finer distinctions to alter his opinion of Petliura. For example, when the presiding judge Flory at his trial in 1927 asked him if he believed Petliura was the "*inspirateur*" or the "*instigateur*" of the pogroms, he answered "*C'est la même chose.*"[24] When the judge insisted on the distinction, Schwarzbard responded with an opinion based on a New Testament parallel:

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[21] "*Samostinikes*" can be literally translated "sovereigntists," and refers to adherents of the Ukrainian independence movement under Petliura and the Directory who refused to accept any form of "autonomy" under Russian rule.

[22] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 73-4.

[23] At his trial Schwarzbard made the same historical connection, again calling Petliura "*le petit-fils*" of Hetman Bogdan Chmielnitsky. *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39514. Schwarzbard's tendency to see Ukrainian history as a continuous present was possibly encouraged by the use of names feared in Jewish history for military units of the Ukrainian National Army under Petliura. There was, for example, both a "Chmielnitsky Regiment" and a "Gonta Regiment." For many Ukrainians these men were national heroes, while for Jews they were perfect villains. Simon Dubnov, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, vol. X (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1929), 518.

[24] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39522.

> This is exactly what Pilate did. He, the governor, the most powerful, he condemned the Christ, and mockingly, and afterwards washed his hands. Petliura secretly gave the order to make antisemitic propaganda because in the twentieth century you cannot do openly what you did in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Officially, before the civilized world he protected them. This was a hypocritical gesture, and Janus faced. On one hand, he said, "We must make pogroms," on the other, officially, he said: "We must not make pogroms." But he made them! During the three years Petliura ruled in Ukraine there were pogroms! The massacres did not stop until he had been driven out![25]

Schwarzbard's penchant for typologizing and drawing historical parallels in this manner knew no limits. In another example from his trial, he even compared Petliura to the Roman Emperor Titus—the ancient destroyer of the Temple in Jerusalem.[26] Thus, whatever other factors may have informed the assassination, on the level of Schwarzbard's philosophy of history, anger engendered by two thousand years of persecution rang out in the five shots fired that day.

### 1.4 Basic Ukrainian and Jewish Images of Schwarzbard

When it comes to Symon Petliura and Sholem Schwarzbard, the traffic in misperceptions has gone in both directions, and the assassin's own susceptibility to stereotyping became clear when Ukrainians immediately claimed he was a Soviet agent. Lacking concrete evidence for this accusation, but generally suspicious of Jewish collusion with the Bolshevik enemies of Ukraine, this became an article of faith for Ukrainians where the assassin's biography was concerned. Still popular with Ukrainian scholars today, the agent theory remains unproven, unlikely, and

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[25] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39526.

[26] See Sholem Schwarzbard, *"Di rede vos ikh hob nit gehaltn"* [The Speech I Never Gave], *In the Tide of Times*, 308-315. After Schwarzbard had made yet another similar historical reference on the first day of the trial, chief prosecutor César Campinchi asked sarcastically: "You do understand, gentlemen of the jury, that we are dealing with a biblical story here, and not Petliura?" *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39523.

ultimately irrelevant because even if true it would not negate the important personal and Jewish motives for the assassination attested to in Schwarzbard's biographical sources—motives Ukrainians prefer to ignore.[27] More troubling was the way Ukrainian nationalists tried to use the common antisemitic equation of Jew and Bolshevik to deflect attention from the pogroms to Soviet politics. Because of this equation, the mere suggestion that Schwarzbard was a Soviet agent cast a long shadow of doubt on Schwarzbard's Jewish motive. It made little difference whether the allegation was actually proven. This doubt diverted attention from Ukrainian responsibility for pogroms, and re-directed blame to the victims by reminding the world of Jewish involvement with the Bolsheviks—involvement that tended, and perhaps in some quarters still tends to be much exaggerated.[28]

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[27] Always sensitive to the Ukrainian point of view, the historian of Ukrainian-Jewish relations in the period of the Directory, Henry Abramson, concedes the possibility Schwarzbard worked with the Communists, but nevertheless seems to defend the assassin's Jewish motive: "Current research in French archives is confirming the extent of his Communist ties, but Schwartzbard seems to have had a sufficient motive to engineer the murder without any provocation." Abramson refuses to say anything specific about Schwarzbard's "sufficient motive," never explicitly using the word "Jewish," but I believe I have read him correctly. Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-20* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 169 and 172. If one wants to indulge in speculation about collaborators, however, I see no reason to emphasize tenuous "Communist ties," as Ukrainians (and Abramson?) have done, over those Schwarzbard openly maintained with the Anarchist world. He may well have had help, especially in light of the fact that the *pneumatique* (express postcard) to his wife Anna that he claimed to have posted before the assassination was post-dated an hour later. This meant that either the post office made a rare mistake in what happened to be a very important instance, or someone else mailed the letter. Why, however, was this necessarily a Communist agent, and not a friend or fellow Anarchist? A story of Morris Ganberg is at least as credible as any Moscow connection: "In Paris my comrade Schwartzbard shot Petliura and was tried and acquitted. In 1937 the French government sent WWI vets to a convention in New York, and Sholem, who had been decorated for bravery, was among them. He stayed with me for 7 months... He told me that he had told only one man about his plan to kill Petliura. That was Makhno, who followed Petliura and recorded all his movements for Sholem to plan his attack."[27] Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 376. Schwarzbard visited American in 1933-4, not 1937 as Ganberg claimed, but otherwise the old radical's memory served him well, and the Anarchist leader Nestor Makhno was indeed in Paris at the time of the affair. This must remain speculation, of course, and I only bring it up to highlight the precarious nature of the Ukrainian position on Schwarzbard.

[28] Baron, *The Russian Jew,* 203.

Ukrainians were not alone in their manipulation of Schwarzbard's image, however. In stark contrast to the cold political tool Ukrainians saw in him, Jewish commentators tended to make their unbidden avenger—to borrow a phrase used by Ludwig Lewisohn—a "mild little poetic man." The assassination threatened not only Ukrainian pogromists, but also the traditional way Jews saw themselves as victims. Sholem Schwarzbard was indeed a kind man, but ignoring aspects of his character that did not fit the mold of victimhood imposed on him the very millennial image he wanted, with a vengeance, to shatter.[29] For example, Jewish commentators politically neutered a devoted Anarchist whose heroes included some of history's most brutal revolutionary assassins.[30] They also turned a blind eye on things Schwarzbard wrote which suggest he had a certain taste for violence. Most importantly Jewish observers sequestered Schwarzbard's radical past because they wanted to protect him from the concerted effort by the Ukrainians to bury his Jewish motive under the stereotype of the "Jewish Bolshevik."

### 1.5 The Petliura Debate and its Effect on the Biographical Understanding of Sholem Schwarzbard since the Trial

Beginning with the affair, a long and contentious debate has perpetuated inaccuracies and further distorted Sholem Schwarzbard's biographical picture. According to the historian, Henry Abramson: "Much of the historiography on

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[29] See Ludwig Lewisohn, "Moral Stupidity," *Criterion*, July 15, 1938, 13. This enduring image of the assassin traced its roots back to the time of the affair. The Communist Henri Barbusse, for example, who used Schwarzbard as the basis for one of his stories against the White terror in April 1927 called Schwarzbard "a young man of gentle and dreamy disposition, silent and poor...." Henri Barbusse, "And We Were Celebrating Peace," trans. Brian Rhys in *I Saw it Myself* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1928), 149.

[30] Sholem Schwarzbard (under pseudonym "Sholem"), "*Yisroel Lev,*" *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* September 15, 1925.

Schwartzbard is simply incorrect, and written with a view either to lionize or to defame him."[31] Up to the present day, both Ukrainian and Jewish contributors to this debate fictionalize, fragment or forget Schwarzbard's life-story at their convenience. A basic understanding of the assassin's place in that debate helps to explain not only received views on Schwarzbard, but also why a proper academic biography has yet to be written on a figure who otherwise attracts so much attention. Again according to Abramson:

> The Schwartzbard affair is of great relevance to the historiography of the revolutionary era, since both Ukrainian and Jewish historical scholarship were mobilized to provide evidence at the trial. Works published before Petliura's assassination tend to grapple with the issues in a forthright and reasonably balanced fashion, but many of those published after 1926 have followed, in the main, the arguments presented by either the prosecution or the defense instead of carefully examining the historical record."[32]

The " great relevance" of Schwarzbard's trial for the historiography of a complex and politically charged era has left scholars unable to detach his biography from their agendas. The best example of this is Taras Hunczak's 1969 "reappraisal" of Symon Petliura's legacy in the journal *Jewish Social Studies*. Hunczak's arguments were met with the spirited "rebuttal" of Zosa Szajkowski, a "long-standing proponent of the Jewish view."[33] The exchange between the two scholars was heated with the occasional insult thrown in, but it focused mainly on Petliura, neither saying much about Schwarzbard. In fact, each in his own way reiterated the "agent" and "angel" myths that by 1969 had been attached to the assassin for over

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[31] Abramson, *A Prayer,* footnote 1, 222.

[32] Ibid. 172.

[33] Ibid. 177. For the debate itself see Taras Hunczak, "A Reappraisal of Symon Petliura and Ukrainian Jewish Relations, 1917-1921," *Jewish Social Studies* (1969), 163-183; and Zosa Szajkowski, "A Reappraisal of Symon Petliura and Ukrainian Jewish Relations, 1917-1921: A Rebuttal," *Jewish Social Studies* 32 (1970), 184-213.

forty years. Hunczak breaches the subject of the assassin in an apparent spirit of reconciliation, paying lip service to the Jewish view:

> Viewed as an avenger by some, and as a Bolshevik agent or at least a tool of a Communist conspiracy by others, Schwartzbard may well remain an eternal enigma. Whatever the truth may have been, the object of this study is not to try to convict the assassin nor even to examine his motive in perpetrating such an irrevocable act. The principal purpose of this study is to establish, as far as historical sources and human failings permit, the culpability, if any, of Symon Petliura for the pogroms[34]

By relegating Sholem Schwarzbard to the status of "eternal enigma" Hunczak accomplishes two things. First, he recuses himself from the necessity to look any closer at the assassin's life (and with it one important witness's account of the Jewish pogrom experience in Ukraine). Secondly, he casts the same shadow of doubt over the assassin's past mentioned earlier.[35] After all, what is more "enigmatic" than a Bolshevik agent? Hunczak ignores the fact that this enigma—contrary to the usual style of Soviet assassinations—waited to be arrested and openly tried before the world.

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[34] Taras Hunczak, *Symon Petliura and the Jews: A Reappraisal* (Toronto: Ukrainian Historical Association, 1985), 8.

[35] To my mind Hunczak asks the same question about Schwarzbard the individual Jew, as he does about the Jews of Ukraine as a whole: Did Schwarzbard kill as a Jew or was he involved with the Bolsheviks? And did the Jews die at the hands of the pogromchiks because they were Jews, or because of their involvement with the Bolsheviks? Hunczak resorts to a biased and inaccurate report from British naval officers made June 6, 1919 to help emphasize Jewish blame for the pogroms: "Bolshevism in the Ukraine is rapidly losing ground... The [peasants and workmen] found that their own local Soviets were formed, for the most part, by the hated Jews... the Bolshevik reign was even more tyrannical than any government they had ever suffered from. Rightly the blame is apportioned to the Jews. And there are signs of a violent anti-Jewish movement spreading all over the South of Russia... This anti-Jewish movement is, in effect, an anti-Bolsehevik (sic) one [as] practically all the regimental commissars are Jews, and Jews largely predominate in nearly all the Soviets." Hunczak, *A Reappraisal,* 38.

Behind Hunczak's new, more "academic tone" Zosa Szajkowski recognized the same old Ukrainian arguments.[36] In defending Schwarzbard, he stays close to the folksy, poetic view, adding a touch of irony from his personal acquaintance with the assassin: "I knew Schwartzbard for many years. The man had only one fault: he wanted to become a poet and he did, but he had little talent."[37] Szajkowski bursts Hunczak's "enigma" bubble with pithy details from Schwarzbard's biography—his ambition and shortcomings as a writer—but goes no further. In his response, Hunczak acted surprised at Sjakowski's sensitivity on the Schwarzbard "issue," complaining that his opponent "read it as an accusation that Schwartzbard was a Bolshevik agent." In the same lines, he reveals it was precisely that:

> It might be interesting to note that while I merely mentioned Schwartzbard in passing, Szajkowski makes an issue of it. The reason for his preoccupation becomes obvious when Szajkowski confesses to have known Schwartzbard for many years. It seems that even a suggestion of the possibility that Schwartzbard acted as a Bolshevik agent in assassinating Petliura opens some old wounds for Mr. Szajkowski. However, the evidence is such a nature that a historian cannot simply dismiss it."[38]

Hunczak obviously did not consider Schwarzbard as enigmatic as he had claimed, and Szajkowski was correct to challenge the flimsy evidence given in

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[36] Henry Abramson criticizes Szajkowski's "inflammatory language," while he praises the Ukrainian scholar's "academic tone." Abramson, *A Prayer,* 177. To my mind, there is something morally anemic in that tone, while Szajkowski's language and concrete examples are more appropriate to the pogrom subject. It should also be remembered that the main Jewish frustration with Petliura and the Directory was the cool indifference, the shrugging of Ukrainian shoulders, they met whenever the pogrom problem was raised with Ukrainian authorities. Y. Drakhler, a Jew who was in close contact with many prominent Ukrainian officials during the civil war, gives numerous examples of Directory indifference to the pogrom crisis. This indifference continued after the Directory's defeat, Drakhler noting how "other than the twenty pages which the well-known Ukrainian writer V. Vynnychenko dedicates to the Jewish pogroms in his three volume history of the Ukrainian Revolution, there is not one Ukrainian chronicler.... (and there exists a good number of them) who feels the need to spend any time on that great Jewish misfortune that took place in the same land and at the same time of which he writes." Y. Drakhler, *"Petliura un di Ukrainer shkhites"* [Petliura and the Ukrainian Massacres], *Tsukunft,* November 1927, 624.

[37] Szajkowski, "A Rebuttal," 203.

[38] Hunczak, *A Reappraisal,* 36.

support of a thinly veiled accusation of conspiracy against the assassin. Most of Hunczak's evidence for the allegation comes in a single footnote in which he quotes, for example, Allen Dulles's contention—made in the midst of the Cold War in 1963—that "Soviet security murdered Petliura." American interest at the time to emphasize the reach of the KGB, and to encourage Ukrainian discontent makes Dulles's claim highly suspect. For different reasons, other evidence provided by Hunczak is equally suspect.[39]

In the end, the Hunczak/Szajkowski exchange is merely the most articulate academic rendering of arguments formulated during the affair, and not the initiation of a "new phase" in the debate Abramson sees in it. In my opinion, a more substantial change occurred only after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the realization of Ukraine's long frustrated goal of national independence. The new situation ushered in a spirit of *rapprochement* between Jewish and Ukrainian scholarship on the affair. The single most important work to come out of the new climate remains Henry Abramson's 1999, A *Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-20*, a book to which I have already made extensive reference. Abramson's foreword recounts early attempts by Jewish and Ukrainian political leaders to bring their two peoples out of the "intimate insularity" that had so long defined their relationship, and the author clearly hopes to follow their example in the present day. This spirit of reconciliation has carried on and

[39] Hunczak, *A Reappraisal,* 36. In addition to the Dulles quote, Hunczak presents KGB hearsay about a plan to assassinate Petliura. Finally, he refers to the testimony (letter) of Elie Dubkowski, a dubious witness for the prosecution that accused Schwarzbard of involvement with a Soviet international hit squad. Not even the free-wheeling, witch hunting prosecuting attorney, Alfred Willm, who mobilized every possible scrap of inferential and circumstantial evidence against the assassin, was willing to refer to Dubkowski's testimony in his final argument—needless to say, neither were the more respectable prosecutors Campinchi and Raynaud.

recently historian David Engel traced the pedigree of the current *rapprochement* back to the time of the affair when the "two of the most visible and vocal European minorities" tried to find common ground to help them circumvent positions hardened by the assassination of Symon Petliura.[40]

On closer inspection, however, this *rapprochement* phase can be seen to perpetuate many of the earlier arguments on the affair, albeit with some new twists. This is especially true in regard to the life of Sholem Schwarzbard, scholars after *rapprochement* failing to yield a deeper understanding of his biography; at least in part because they see him as a figure that "complicates," "strains," and aggravates Jewish-Ukrainian relations at a time they are on the mend. Because Schwarzbard is seen as an inconvenient figure, omission has replaced misrepresentation where his biography is concerned.[41] Some of the most important Jewish scholars either avoid Schwarzbard's biography, or bow to the Ukrainian view. John Klier provides a good example of the latter approach: "Petliura's alleged culpability for pogroms was the pretext for his assassination, in Paris, by Shmuel Schwartzbard on 25 May 1926. During the sensational murder trial that followed, Schwartzbard's defense team obtained an acquittal by depicting the crime as a political act of justified retribution. The trial did much to complicate Jewish-Ukrainian relations."[42] Klier not only

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[40] David Engel, "Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in the Aftermath of the Schwarzbard Trial," synopsis of a talk at the Center for Jewish History in New York on December 14, 2010. Found on-line at http://www.cjh.org/event/1755. Professor Engels has spent many years working on what I understand is to be an annotated documentation of the Schwarzbard affair. Unfortunately, it was still unpublished during my research for the thesis.

[41] According to Henry Abramson, Schwarzbard's displacement from the center of the debate corresponds with a trend to place less importance on Petliura in the historiography of the era. Henry Abramson, *A Prayer*, 178.

[42] *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), s.v. "pogrom".

reveals his concern for Jewish-Ukrainian relations, but his use of the words "alleged," "pretext," and "depict" strongly suggest he agrees with Ukrainian theories of conspiracy without introducing any new evidence for them.

From what I have seen of recent comments on Schwarzbard's life, it seems that the change brought about by this emphasis on *rapprochement* has also been somewhat one-sided. Though Ukrainian scholars have also softened their stance on both Petliura and his assassin, they have not shown themselves willing to meet compromise like Klier's half way. Patricia Kennedy Grimsted provides a good example of where things stand on that side of the debate:

> Petliura's hitherto unknown assassin, Samuel (or Sholem) Schwarzbard (Shvartsbard) (1886-1938) was a Jewish émigré from the Russian Empire with anarchist leanings, who had first came to France in 1910. Returning to Odesa (sic) after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, he was active in the Red Brigades during the civil war. Schwarzbard was back in Paris by 1920, continuing to frequent Bolshevik circles, and had reportedly been preoccupied with Petliura's arrival in the French capital.[43]

Though Grimsted shows a new readiness to look at Schwarzbard's life in more detail, she continues to emphasize how he supposedly "frequented" Bolshevik circles, making his "anarchist leanings" only an aside. In fact, Schwarzbard was arguably more Anarchist than Jew at the time of the assassination, and not at all Bolshevik. It looks as if Grimsted is trying to leave a "Bolshevik impression" on the assassin with this, and with a vague reference to Schwarzbard's supposed service in a "Red Brigade" —a term that resonates with Red Army units like General Budyonny's Second Red Cavalry Brigade made famous by Isaac Babel. In fact, Schwarzbard was never part of the "Red Army," but did join the workers' Red Guard

[43] Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "The Odyssey of the Petliura Library and the Records of the Ukrainian National Republic during World War II," http://www.archives.gov.ua/Eng/Odyssey.php.

and two independent, mostly Anarchist brigades that resisted, sometimes violently, the centralizing tendencies of Trotsky's military conception.[44] Grimsted continues:

> Schwarzbard was vindicated in a highly publicized trial. The defense represented Schwarzbard as a Jewish hero, seeking revenge for 14 family members killed in anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukraine, for which he held Petliura responsible—an argument strongly supported by Jewish interests, which bitterly linked Petliura to the pogroms that took many Jewish lives.[45]

There is no doubt that "Jewish interests" linked Petliura to pogrom violence, but they just as surely refused to make a "Jewish hero" of the assassin. In fact, Schwarzbard's lawyer did everything possible to present to the court a French, not a Jewish, hero.[46] Grimsted goes on to discuss Schwarzbard's purported "co-conspirators," mostly re-hashing the final argument of the prosecuting attorney Alfred Willm during the trial. She does seem to make the curious concession that Petliura's Ukrainian enemies may have been behind the assassination.[47] However that may be, these two quotes to my mind suffice to show how Schwarzbard's biography continues to be used, as opposed to understood by Ukrainian scholarship.

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[44] Tanja Penter, *Odessa 1917: Revolution an der Peripherie* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 161-174. Schwarzbard described his unit as part of the "immigrant-anarchist section." He also described the Red Guard in this period (late 1917-early 1918) as a mix of Bolsheviks, Maximalists, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and Anarchists. Sholem Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 76.

[45] Grimsted, "Petliura Library," 184.

[46] *"L'assassinat de l'ataman Petlioura,"* in *"Revue des Grands Procès Contemporains,* no. 5-6, May/June 1929 (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, XX, Soufflot), 333.

[47] Grimsted's argument runs as follows: "Was Schwarzbard a lone player? The prosecution accused the assassin of acting on behalf of the Soviet foreign intelligence service, which considered Petliura's leadership of the Ukrainian nationalist cause abroad a threat to the Soviet regime. Schwarzbard was linked to a recognized Bolshevik secret service (OGPU) agent, Mikhail Volodin; but Volodin had expeditiously returned to Moscow before he could be called to testify at the trial. Although no documentation from Soviet sources has yet been released proving Schwarzbard's link to the Soviet OGPU, Soviet authorities became more apprehensive following Pilsudski's May 1926 coup d'êtat that a new Ukrainian-Polish campaign against the USSR might be imminent. They were also anxious to prevent Petliura's wooing of French support… The still unresolved interpretations of Petliura's assassination and the acquittal of his assassin are reflected in the historiographical interpretations of the period and appraisals of his political career and the briefly independent regime he led. Grimsted, "Petliura Library," 184.

## 1.6 The Thesis: A Cradle to Grave Biography of a Jewish Assassin

The goal of the thesis is to provide the first reasonably complete and objective biography of Sholem Schwarzbard. I come to the project with no national interest in defending or objecting to the verdict of the Parisian jury, but with a biographer's curiosity about an intriguing human being who lived a life radically different than my own. Though some degree of bias is a given, I believe the thesis avoids the extreme sort that has hitherto resulted in sloganized versions of Schwarzbard's life story. In order to skirt such partiality, two things are imperative: first, to keep the interpretation of Schwarzbard's life as distinct as possible from historical judgments on Symon Petliura and, second, to emphasize Schwarzbard's unique personality and experience beyond the assassination. In pursuit of the first, I have presented an overview of opinions on Symon Petliura, including my own, here in the introduction, hoping to limit the need to interrupt the biographical flow of the thesis with issues related to Schwarzbard's victim. This, in turn, falls in line with my intent to place a special emphasis on the subjective, as opposed to the much disputed objective historical factors that potentially helped lead Sholem Schwarzbard over the threshold of assassination.

As concerns methodology, I have tried to strike a balance between what Virginia Woolf famously calls the "granite" and "rainbows" of modern biography, maintaining factual rigor in piecing together a detailed chronology on which to structure the narrative, while allowing the "fact of fiction" to penetrate the deeper, more elusive aspects of Schwarzbard's soul. Contributing to the latter, the thesis references memoir, autobiographical poetry, literature, journalism, and court

records. Though such documents are "historically" suspect, I make no apologies for the thesis's reliance upon them for a couple of reasons. First, these are the main documents available, Schwarzbard's life remaining largely hidden from public view until he threw it in such dramatic fashion onto the open stage of history. Secondly, sources like these work well together to reveal not only the biographical subject, but also the individuals and groups that had a stake in his life. I believe Schwarzbard emerges from the pages of the thesis as a man who lived, and sometimes killed, as a Jew, an "Anarchist-individualist," a poet, a malcontent, and many other things. It is these many sides of Sholem Schwarzbard, in their harmonies and dissonances, the thesis hopes to introduce for the first time in an academic context.

## 2: Growing Up in and Around Balta (1886-1906)

### 2.1 Balta

On his father's side, Sholem Schwarzbard's family resided for several generations in and around Balta, a small city in the southern part of the Russian province Podolia. Like many cities in the western part of Ukraine, Balta had a diverse population. In an unpublished description of his hometown, Schwarzbard called it a "cosmopolitan city in miniature."[48] Balta's inhabitants included Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, Wallachians (Rumanians), Russians and Germans—each group largely maintaining its own language and culture despite the efforts of Russifiers.[49] The largest single ethnic group, Jews made up nearly half the population of 27,000 at the end of the nineteenth century.[50] Historically, Balta had been a border town split between the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Although fully part of the Russian Empire by the time of Schwarzbard's birth, the people of Balta continued to refer to the opposing banks of the little Kadyma River as the "Turkish" and "Polish" sides of town.[51] Jews and Christians lived on both banks.

Located near the rail line connecting Kiev and Odessa, and at a crossroad leading north to Lemberg (Lviv), west to Kishinev, east to Elizabetgrad

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[48] Sholem Schwarzbard, "Balta, City of my Birth" [*Balte, mayn geburts-shtot*], Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71478. This and two other short essays related to his family and upbringing, "*Moyshe Gralnik, mayn zeyde*" [Moyshe Gralnik, my Grandfather], and "*Itse Moyshe Gralniks, mayn tate"* [Itse Moyshe Gralnik's, my Father] were intended for translation and publication in Schwarzbard's Hebrew autobiography *Book of my Life: Memories* [*Sefer khayai: zikhronot*], published in Tel Aviv in 1930. Parts of the three essays were used by the editor A. Ashman, but most the material was not used and is only available in manuscripts found in the Schwarzbard Archive at YIVO.

[49] Ibid. 71476.

[50] *Encyclopedia Judaica,* 1st ed., s.v. "Balta."

[51] Schwarzbard, "Balta," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71474.

(Kirovograh), Kremenchug, Poltava and Kharkiv, Balta served as a hub for trade in Ukrainian grain. Other, mostly agriculture related industries like tobacco, soap, tanning, flour milling and distilling complemented the grain trade.[52] Balta also hosted an important annual market, and was the region's political and military center. A place that offered some economic opportunity, internal immigration helped replace the many Jews that left Russia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The exodus to America presented an attractive option for Jews throughout the Russian Empire, but it was particularly enticing in Balta after the pogrom of March 1882.[53] It was the most severe pogrom in a yearlong scourge of violence that swept over Ukraine following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, and won for the city what the historian Simon Dubnov called "mournful celebrity." Balta's fame lingered on over the next twenty years until Kishinev Bessarabia took its place as the shtetl most symbolic of pogrom violence in April 1903. In describing the Balta pogrom, a Balta Rabbi wrote to the St. Petersburg paper *Voskhod* on April 9, 1882: "Balta is turned into a desert. All the merchandise and household goods of the [Jewish] inhabitants are plundered. The numbers of wounded reaches two hundred, of whom three have already died…. More than 5,000 families are utterly ruined. Mothers and daughters were violated." Dubnov correctly claimed the account was understated and that "the calamity was far greater."[54]

[52] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, "Balta."
[53] *The Jewish Encyclopedia,* 1906, s.v. "Balta."
[54] Ibid.

## 2.2 Schwarzbard's Family Background

In the decades preceding the great pogrom of 1882, Balta and its environs had not been unkind to the Shvartsburds, as the family name was pronounced in the broad Yiddish dialect of Ukraine. Sholem's pious grandfather Moyshe had worked his way up to become arendar (lesee of feudal privileges) for the local nobility in the village of Sorazhinke [Sarazynka] north of Balta.[55] He was responsible, among other things, for the village distillery. This was reflected in his name, Reb Moyshe Gralnik — "*gralnik*" being Yiddish for "distiller".[56] Schwarzbard compared Reb Moyshe's good fortune to that of "Our beloved father Jacob," saying that for his grandfather, *"mit yedn kindele iz tsugekumen a rindele"* [For each new child, there came new money].[57]

Part of this rich harvest, Schwarzbard's father Yitskhok, known to fellow Jews as Itse and to Ukrainians as Itsko, was the third child born to Moyshe and his first wife. He was a quiet, sensitive child, in contrast to his older brother (Sholem's eldest uncle) Shmuelik, who was such a boisterous, book-shunning Esau (*leb-yingl*) that grandfather Moyshe despaired of him with the words: "What do I care, let him

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[55] Sholem Schwarzbard's grandfather was a nineteenth century example of what Jacob Katz calls the "remote Jew," living in relative isolation from the wider Jewish community, and in close contact with non-Jewish nobility and peasants—the isolated Jew's "accommodation group": "The manner in which such an isolated individual solved his problem depended on circumstances and on the extent of his religious attachment. There emerged diverse types of adjustment. At one end was complete submergence within the "accommodation group," the most extreme expression of which was acceptance of the dominant faith. At the other, was the strictest allegiance to the group of origin and the scrupulous observance of all the religious and social restrictions, all of which involved denying himself many benefits and liberties offered by social intercourse." Schwarzbard's grandfather seems to have walked the line between maintaining Jewish tradition and accommodating non-Jewish contacts. See Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: Schocken, 1961), 29-31. For a literary representation of a remote Jew, that resembled Schwarzbard's grandfather in many respects, see the opening chapters of Sholem Asch's novel, *Kiddesh Ha-Shem* [Martyrdom] (Philadelphia: JPS, 1926).

[56] I am indebted to Professor Eugene Orenstein for the etymology of the name.

[57] Sholem Schwarzbard, "My Grandfather," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71501-71511.

grow up a goy…"[58] Considering the fighting life that lay ahead of him, Sholem was fortunate that the hyper-sensitivity he inherited from his father was complemented by a healthy dose of his uncle's gusto.

After the birth of two more children, Moyshe's first wife died. A wealthy man with five children on his hands, Moyshe soon caught the attention of matchmakers. He married a young beauty named Ite who gave him six more children. Of these eleven children, all were dark-eyed and brunette except for Sholem's father, who had a thick head of wavy blond hair and blue eyes—features he passed on to Sholem. The Shvartsburds were the only Jewish family in the village, and wanting a Jewish community where his sons could learn in a traditional *kheyder* and his daughters find proper matches, he forsook rural plenty to try his luck in Balta. Success followed Moyshe Gralnik into the market town, and he quickly set himself up as tavern owner and trader (mainly in wheat) in the relatively happy days of the reforming Tsar Alexander II.

If grandfather Moyshe was compared to the patriarch Jacob, Schwarzbard's father, forced to try and establish his family during an era of bitter reaction and antisemitism under Tsar Alexander III, found his biblical parallel in Job:

> In a word, there was no lack of trouble for Itse Moyshe Gralnik's. If there's a war, he's in it. If they're forcing people out fifty miles from the border, Itse Moyshe Gralnik's is one of the first victims. — And he didn't miss the pogroms of 1881-2 either. In short, he bore the trials of Job on his shoulders, and they came one after the other: "This one was still speaking when another came and said...."[59]

[58] Schwarzbard, "Grandfather," 71506.

[59] The last line is a quote from Job 1:16. Sholem Schwarzbard, "My Father," Schwarzbard Papers YIVO, 71499-71500.

While Sholem's great grandmother managed to spare Moyshe twenty-five years of military service required of Jewish "recruits" under the cantonist system of Tsar Nicholas I—she was forced to maim two fingers on his left hand to do so—the sensitive Itse did not escape service in the Russian army during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878.[60] Stationed in Izmail as a reservist, Itse married a local girl, Sholem's mother Khaye (née Vaysberger). Despite the secularization imposed on him by his soldiering, Itse continued the family's Hasidic piety after discharge and accepted this marriage arranged in the traditional manner.

## 2.3 Sholem's Birth in Izmael and the Family's Return to Balta

Itse and Khaye initially tried to set themselves up in Balta, but after the 1882 pogrom they left the city, moving first to a nearby village. They were soon uprooted from their rural refuge by a tsarist "*ukaaz*" [decree] expelling Jews from the area.[61] The young couple returned to Izmail. It was here that Khaye gave birth to her fourth child, Sholem, on Sabbath Nakhamu (the Sabbath of Comfort), August 18, 1886.[62] During this time of persecution and wandering Khaye and Itse lost all three of Sholem's older siblings. In 1933, while trying to provide an heroic example to a Jewish world faced with the rise of National Socialism, Schwarzbard made much of

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[60] Schwarzbard, "My Father," 71493.

[61] Sholem Schwarzbard, *"Ma Autobiographie,"* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71823.

[62] Depending on the context, Schwarzbard gave a number of different places of birth, including Izmail, Balta, Smolensk, Kolomea and Odessa. Of these, Smolensk became his "official" birthplace, Schwarzbard using it for bureaucratic purposes, including his arrest papers. Other than "Balta, City of my Birth," all other autobiographical essays mention Izmail as his place of birth. See Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 11; Schwarzbard, "*Ma Autobiographie*," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71822-3; and Zalman Rayzn, *Leksikon fun der Yidisher literatur, prese un filologye* (Vilna: Kletskin, 1927-9), s.v. "Sholem Shvartsbard."

his birth on this particular Jewish holiday: [63] "I came the world on Sabbath Nakhamu, as a very welcome guest. First, I was a comfort for the three children who had died before me; second, the comfort and hope of all Israel, "*nakhamu, nakhamu ami....*"[64]

The promise of comfort Schwarzbard sees in his autohagiographic nativity was still a long way off, however, and in 1888 the Schwarzbards were hounded by yet another tsarist decree, this time banning Jews from living within fifty kilometers of the border. They returned to Balta with Sholem yet to be weaned. This time they stayed on permanently, allowing Sholem to grow up on his *terre paternelle*. Barely two years old, Schwarzbard claimed to remember the city as scarred and dysfunctional when the family arrived, the threat of further violence hanging in the air and on the lips of Ukrainian neighbors: "Wait, wait, you Jews. We'll show you yet. You haven't seen anything yet! You'll know pain for the first time!... We'll show you, wait Jews, wait..."[65]

Sholem Schwarzbard paints a fairly grim picture of Balta in those parts of his autobiographies dealing with his early life—all of which were composed after the assassination in May 1926. In his most detailed description of his home, he begins with local geography: "Guarded from all sides by flat hills, naked, without grass and without trees, barren like before the Seven Days of Creation. A fearful chill runs

[63] Sabbath Nakhmu is named for the scripture (*Haftarah*) traditionally read on that day in the Jewish calendar, Isaiah 40:1-26. The verses convey comfort to the Jewish people for their suffering. It takes place on the first Sabbath following the Ninth of Av; a holiday of mourning that commemorates the destruction of the two ancient Temples.

[64] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 11.

[65] Ibid. 12.

through you when you look at them."[66] The hills embody the ever-present threat to the Jews of Balta. As for the city itself, Schwarzbard sees it as bland, without "a clear, distinct physiognomy."[67] In assessing Schwarzbard's memory of the city, it should be kept in mind that as a writer he showed little interest in physical detail, instead preferring abstractions like the mythical imposition of the Creation Story on Balta's landscape in the quote above.

In a short biography of Schwarzbard written following the assassination of Petlyura, the Yiddish journalist Dr. Alexander Mukdoyni misunderstood Schwarzbard's relation to his hometown, making the assassin a typical *shtetl* Jew awash in an alienating urban environment: "From the small, idyllic *shtetele* he [the contemporary Jew] is thrown into the hellish big city, from quiet, soft experiences he's thrown mercilessly on stormy, on world-rattling experiences."[68] Devoid of such nostalgia, Schwarzbard sees Balta partaking in the "stormy" nature of the big city. He complains that Balta Jews were mainly interested in money and only superficially connected to their home. He further claims they lacked a sense of history, keeping no town record, as did most other Jewish cities and towns. Schwarzbard also laments Balta's failure to produce Hasidic dynasties or rabbinic scholars of note.[69]

To help make his point, Schwarzbard compares Balta's population, both Jewish and non-Jewish, unfavorably with that of the smaller *shtetl* Ananiev thirty-seven kilometers south of Balta in Kherson province: "Jews there are much more

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[66] Schwarzbard, "Balta," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71474.
[67] Ibid. 71478.
[68] Dr. A. Mukdoyni (Alexander Kapel), "*Sholem Shvartsburd," Lodzher Morgnblat*, June 30, 1926.
[69] Schwarzbard, "Balta," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71484.

decent, more polite, live with each other in peace, and don't snatch the food from their neighbor's mouth."[70] He praised Ananiev's non-Jews on whose lips the nasty Ukrainian slur "*zhid*" was never heard.[71] According to Schwarzbard, Jews in Ananiev disliked their co-religionists in Balta, saying that the Almighty had sent them the "*goyim*" they deserved. More pious, the Balta Jews answered back that Jews in Ananiev had become so much like their non-Jewish neighbors that it was no wonder they lived in peace with them.[72]

Despite the serious shortcomings described by Schwarzbard, Balta provided the family some permanence in which to raise the spirited and mischievous Sholem and his younger brother and lifelong companion Shmuel, born in April 1888.[73] It

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[70] Schwarzbard, "Balta," 71482.

[71] Schwarzbard's comparison is forced, both in its negative evaluation of Balta, and in the positive portrayal of Ananiev. He was right about Ananiev's size, the Jewish and non-Jewish populations approximately a third of those in Balta, but wrong to claim that "Ananiev really knew nothing of pogroms in tsarist Times," In fact, Ananiev experienced pogroms in both 1881 and 1905. Neither was as severe as the 1882 Balta pogrom, but they were also by no means negligible with 145 Jewish homes and 14 shops destroyed on April 27, 1881. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Ananyev." Although Schwarzbard does not say so, he may have seen Ananiev in rose-colored glasses because it was a Jewish working town (garment industry) in opposition to Balta's middle-class character. Of the latter he says: "Balta is a calm, proprietors' city, quiet, nice, honorable. True, they bicker, they curse and talk behind each other's backs.... sometimes it comes to heated blows... but they wipe off their lips, and hush, quiet. Heck if the outside world will find out what happens between Jews. Schwarzbard, "Balta," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71490.

[72] Ibid. 71483. It is interesting to note that while Schwarzbard used Ananiev as a foil to what he saw as Balta's shortcomings, the Yiddish classicist Sholem Aleichem used the idyllic shtetl Hashchavata fifty miles north of Balta on the opposite bank of the Bug River in the same way for his short story "Home for Passover." Sholem Aleichem conceived of the story in the week following the Kishenev pogrom in early April 1903, and may well have chosen to make Balta the negative pole in the story because of its long-standing pogrom infamy. Such an approach would fall in line with Sholem Aleichem's general reluctance to address pogroms directly in his work. Balta, like a bad memory, only hinted at this ubiquitous threat pogroms posed to Jewish existence in Russia. In a letter written the week immediately following the Kishinev pogrom in April 1903, the author tells his fellow writer and sometime publisher Mordkhe Spektor in a letter: "For Shavuot I have ready (in my mind) a thing, a sort of "Bug," something exquisite. Publish a "Shavuot issue"—the "Bug" has truly turned the world upside down." The "Bug" mentioned by the author refers to the Bug River that plays an important role in "Home for Passover," treacherously dividing the workaday world of Balta from Hashchavata, the idyllic place of belonging for the story's tragi-comic hero Fishl Melamed. See Sholem Aleichem, Letter #471. *Briv fun Sholem Aleykhem: 1879-1916* (Tel Aviv: Y.L. Perets: Bet Sholem-Alekhem, 1995), 643.

[73] Official records kept by the city of Balta, Schwarzbard Papers YIVO, 72494-5.

also kept them close to the extended family, although no one seems to have been in a position to provide them much help. They did at first stay with Uncle Shmuel in the "*goyish*" part of town. Shmuel and Itse, however, so different in demeanor, began to fight, and their wives (both named Khaye) to squabble. Itse and his Khaye moved out to warehouses near the city's military barracks.[74] Grandfather Moyshe's legendary wealth did Sholem's parents little good beyond providing a shop space that they rented from him. Indeed, Moyshe Gralnik's fortunes had suffered a precipitous decline after the pogrom of 1882, reducing his wealth nothing more than the legend that surrounded it:

> They closed Moyshe Gralnik's tavern, the burden of children and economic hardship, and the ruin of the entire Jewish people began to weigh down on the heart of this fine master of his household, Moyshe Gralnik, who was the envy of God and men, and little by little started to grow old and weaken, until one fine day someone said, "Come Reb Moyshe Gralnik, come into *kheyder*...." and Moyshe Gralnik passed away without a how-do-you-do. He left no will and didn't warn the children that of all his wealth and "handiwork" nothing remained but dust and ashes. The children from the first wife and the stepmother loaded and stuffed themselves to last silk shirt, and tongues in the whole city were able to wag, and tell tales of what had become of Reb Moyshe Gralnik and his whole inheritance...[75]

## 2.4 The Death of Schwarzbard's Mother

With no prospect of help from this once prosperous *pater familias*, the young couple depended on Khaye's small seltzer business and Itse's petty trading. Schwarzbard always remembered his natural parents kindly, but his attitude toward their pious perseverance in the face of adversity altered between respect and ridicule. After losing everything to a fire from which Sholem and Shmuel were

[74] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 15.
[75] Schwarzbard, "My Grandfather," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71511.

barely saved (the two had started the conflagration playing with matches), Schwarzbard recalled his father promising his mother, "after a fire you get rich, you'll see my wife, we'll get help from above."[76] Instead Sholem's infant brother Meyer, born in August 1891, died a short time later.

An additional "blessing" followed when the Schwarzbards' home was robbed while the family attended Friday evening prayers. Despite all this Khaye and Itse continued to see the glass half full: "'Thank God...' my parents said, 'It might have been our fate to become sick, or perhaps one of our children.....'" Schwarzbard recalled that "with God's help, mother fell ill a short time after the theft, and died a few days later, precisely on the eve of Yom Kippur.... "[77] Still subject to Job's tragic fate, Itse, a man prone to tears, broke down. Reb Moyshe and his brothers admonished him: "Itse, Itse! Don't forget! You're a Jew, a father of children! You must be strong! It's a misfortune.... we must see it all for the good, clearly God wanted it this way, what can we do about it, we are in the hands of He who lives forever!.... Itse.... Itse!.... " Sholem was just seven years old at the time of her death, and remembered little of his biological mother beyond her faith and perseverance in suffering. He mentions experiencing a "strange feeling" whenever he thought of her, or touched the Turkish shawl she had worn. He also had a vague memory of how the men of the communal burial society carried her off on a stretcher "somewhere far away.... far away...."[78]

[76] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 15-16.
[77] Ibid. 16.
[78] Ibid. 18-19.

In the immediate aftermath of his mother's death, Itse began arranging for Sholem to intensify his traditional studies, and Schwarzbard recalled with pride "surpassing all the youngsters in Talmud Torah".[79] These plans collapsed when Itse remarried. Like his father before him, Sholem experienced the bitter "taste of a stepmother".[80] Disregarding Sholem's promise as a religious scholar, his stepmother pressured Itse to take the youngster out of traditional schooling in order to help with the family business selling lemonade and seltzer water.[81] Itse relented and Sholem, now ten years old, never returned to full-time studies. In his memoirs, Schwarzbard still resented his stepmother, implicitly blaming her for his lack of formal education, and never mentioning her by name. Despite Itse's failure to support him and to stand up to his new wife, Schwarzbard refused to blame his dear father. In fact, the new circumstances initially drew the two even closer together, making Sholem fully reliant on Itse for Torah study at night and on Sabbath, while Itse turned to his son with complaints about his shrewish second wife. Sholem expressed his gratitude to his father years later:

> For my spiritual nourishment I have my blessed father to thank. He was more to me than a father and mother (because I lost my mother at age 7). He was a friend and loyal comrade to me….[82]

The interruption of his studies helped preempt rebellion against traditional religious education so typical of his eastern European Jewish intellectual

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[79] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 19.

[80] Ibid. 26. Schwarzbard claimed that his step-grandmother had in fact tinkered with the books in order to implicate Itse in foul play. She managed to have him "thrown out" of Moyshe's house.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Sholem Schwarzbard, "*Sh. Shvartsbard's oytobiografye"* [Sholem Schwarzbard's Autobiography], in *Haynt* (Warsaw), June 4, 1927. The quote is from the *Haynt'st* release of Schwarzbard's original autobiographical submission to Zalman Rayzn's *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur un prese"*. It varies considerably from the version published by Rayzn.

contemporaries. In later years education became a lost Eden for Schwarzbard that he worked hard to regain, while trying to help less fortunate children do the same.[83] Schwarzbard was often flippant and dismissive of traditional Jewish attitudes like those of his parents, but never towards religious texts or learning, which he always referred to with reverence. Schwarzbard fondly recalled nights in the House of Study: "I often placed myself in front of the lectern and became the reader and the older Jews would repeat after me. That was for me my greatest pleasure and pride: me a reader by the lectern for old and pious Jews . . ."[84] Such experiences helped offset the shame he felt when his old friends from *kheyder* "turned up their noses and no longer wanted to be my friend, a mere apprentice."[85] Such experiences helped determine the way Schwarzbard defined his youth in terms of a glaring discrepancy between his innate abilities and a lack of opportunity caused by unfavorable circumstances.

## 2.5 Into the Workplace and Revolution

Fond memories like those from the House of Study were rare in the unhappy years that followed Sholem's entrance into the working world. His father first tried to prevent his son from a fall into the low status of a *bal-malokhe* [craftsman] by

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[83] A more typical response of Jewish intellectuals to traditional learning is that of Schwarzbard's famous contemporary Isaac Babel. Lionel Trilling related how Babel "spoke with bitterness of the terrible discipline of his Jewish education. He thought of the Talmud Torah as a prison shutting him off from all desirable life, from reality itself." Lionel Trilling, "Isaac Babel," in *The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 321. Babel himself wrote in his diary: "In my childhood, nailed to the Gemara, I led the life of a sage, and it was only later, when I was older, that I began to climb trees." Quoted from Steven Zipperstein, "On the Secrets of Isaac Babel," *Dissent,* Summer 2003, 23.

[84] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 23-4.

[85] Ibid. 28.

hiring him out as an errand boy for a local business. A hard worker from the beginning, Sholem's efforts for Varshavsky's notions' shop resulted in nothing more than a pair of worn out shoes.[86] Itse then negotiated terms for an apprenticeship with a young Balta clockmaker named Yisroel Dik. Contracted away for five full years, and only able to see his father on Sabbath, Sholem felt distant from his home for the first time.

A sense of betrayal and bitterness intensified, although he still refused to blame his father, instead making the abstract complaint that "they sold me off for the food."[87] He worked for three full years, mostly helping the clockmaker's wife with chores around the house, yet another woman hindering his advancement. His father had successfully bargained for room and board, but failed to secure a wage for his son, adding to Sholem's resentment for what seemed to him a pointless separation from this man he loved and the traditional education he desired. Despite this slow start, Schwarzbard reluctantly learned the trade that would support him over the next twenty-five years—right up to the time of the assassination.

Schwarzbard's memoirs have little to say about his working life beyond the occasional complaint. Unlike the pride he took in being a young Talmudist, he showed none for his working life outside of organizing strikes. This despite the fact that clock making was considered an elite craft among eastern European Jews. Alexander Mukdoyni understood the usual place of the clockmaker very well, but missed the apprentice's attitude to his trade:

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[86] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 22.
[87] Ibid. 23.

> Sholem Schwarzbard is a Jewish craftsman, a Jewish man from the idyllic Ukrainian shtetl: a Jewish clockmaker. The clockmaker has long been a beloved and beautiful figure in Jewish folk life.... the finest white beard in shtetl, the highest forehead among the craftsmen, the best educated of all the workers, he was the aristocrat of ordinary men. The watch, that clever, clean and toy-like little machine would have given him its fine logic, its regularity, its punctuality, and its simplicity. Sholem Schwarzbard would have read a paper every day and quietly, comfortably discussed politics. Perhaps he would have derived pleasure from the daily routine. The world turns like a clock.... only occasionally you have to clean it, once in a while put in a new spring, a new face, a new hand, and sometimes a new cog....[88]

Schwarzbard was not torn from the orderly life of a contented craftsman, rather grand historical hopes to lift himself and the entire world out of quotidian drudgery found fertile ground in his restless and ambitious heart. Indeed, his nature was poorly suited to the trade chosen for him. The young apprentice soon found he preferred dangerous engagement with the turbulence of the times to the patient skills associated with his craft. Dissatisfied with his fate and the course of the world, the spirit of revolution on the rise in Russia offered him an escape from the workshop into historically meaningful adventure.

Schwarzbard joined the many desperate, yet historically optimistic Jewish youth that tsarist repression had made ripe for the revolutionary ideas of the time. Walking Balta's streets one evening in 1903, the young apprentice found himself furtively invited to a socialist meeting in the hills outside the city.[89] Only sixteen years old and still pious, Sholem, had no idea where he was being led. The meeting changed his life forever. In the economic and political teachings of Marx, Plekhanov, Engels, Lassalle and Liebknecht he soon found an exciting and affordable surrogate for the traditional education denied him. The Hebrew and Aramaic for which he

[88] Mukdoyni, "*Shvartsbard*."
[89] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 29.

showed such promise were augmented by a new vocabulary of foreign words that "set your teeth on edge" like "proletariat, bourgeoisie, republic, constitution and a thousand others...."[90] Schwarzbard became an active member of the burgeoning Socialist movement with a group called *Iskra* (Spark). He was particularly keen to give speeches, admitting his intense envy for comrades who excelled as orators.

The mention of "*Iskra*" is the only hint that Schwarzbard gave in his memoirs as to his political "brand" during his three years as a Socialist, this being the name of the Social Democratic paper published by Martov and Lenin. Although Schwarzbard says nothing about the details of his Socialism, it is safe to assume that he, like most Jewish Socialists, sympathized with Martov and the Mensheviks after the latter split with Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1903. Menshevik populism, as opposed to Bolshevik centralization, would have had a greater appeal to Schwarzbard's independence of mind that eventually led him to Anarchism in 1906.

Quickly losing the trappings of traditional piety after his "conversion" to Socialism, Schwarzbard nonetheless maintained a questioning relationship with fellow revolutionaries based on this independence spirit and residual loyalty to aspects of his religious upbringing. The love for his father, who continued to support Sholem even after he became a Socialist, led him to make a clumsy attempt at reconciling tradition and revolution, and he remembers defending what he considered the biblical roots of his own radicalism:

> One time I met with a cell of revolutionary agitators and discussed whether there is a God in the world or not. I tried to prove that socialism has nothing to do with religion. A rude young man named Idel the Carpenter stood up and demanded of me:

[90] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 30.

> " What, you believe in God?"
> "Yes, I believe."
> "Go to hell." He spat in my face. "A socialist that believes in God?! I have nothing more to say to you . . ." I found myself a little let down by the conviction that there is no God... but secretly I was sure the opposite was true: "God is with us socialists" and that the "Prophets were socialists before Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle and that they spoke with God."[91]

Schwarzbard's attempt to synthesize Jewish tradition with his revolutionary activity persisted throughout his life, but was most evident in Russia before his emigration, and in the years immediately preceding and following the assassination of Petliura.[92]

Schwarzbard's was an impatient soul, historically and personally. This impatience combined with ambition and courage to define his early participation in the revolutionary movement. He claimed "wherever someone planned to carry out a dangerous plot, I was always the first, everywhere I volunteered and pushed ahead."[93] Hurried and excited, Schwarzbard's language attests to the keen historical ambition that contributed to the frustration he felt with his low rank in Balta's revolutionary pecking order.

Schwarzbard was therefore glad to find work in Kruti, a smaller town than Balta some thirty kilometers west, where he was able to assume a leadership role.[94] He continued to "fix Cossack watches," but also became a leading revolutionary

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[91] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 30.

[92] Schwarzbard, in his own peculiar way, partook in what Dov Sadan later identified as the messianic, spiritual soul in Jewishness that he believed overcame the division between secular and traditional Jews, and formed the foundation for a messianic Zionism. According to Dan Miron, Sadan saw "our entire modern culture as a transient episode," finding residual "religiosity" of so many Yiddish and Hebrew writers of what he called the "transitional period." Schwarzbard would not have agreed with the latter point, but he was fully aware of his secularized messianic fervor. See Dan Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl and other studies of modern Jewish Literary Imagination* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 370.

[93] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 31.

[94] Ibid. 33-4.

agitator. He fondly remembered that here, unlike Balta, he was the "head of the foxes." Although somewhat unsure of himself and hesitant to speak at gatherings throughout his life, Schwarzbard was equally uncomfortable keeping silent, and was happy that in Kruti he could call meetings every Sabbath for which he "spoke and spoke...."[95]

When the first Russian Revolution was picking up steam in early 1905, "a short time after the Gapon incident..."[96] Schwarzbard made a trip to Odessa. He brought back propaganda leaflets for distribution in Kruti.[97] True to his courageous, and somewhat reckless nature, he nailed one of these leaflets to the manor house door of the local princely estate belonging to the famous noble family Triboutzky. The police subsequently hunted down his entire revolutionary cell.[98] Expecting the same willingness for sacrifice from his comrades as he did from himself, he showed no regret, only voicing his disappointment that "martyrdom" was denied to him as he continued to evade arrest.

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[95] Schwarzbard here used a Talmudic reference to *Aboth* 4:15 which advises one to "be a tail to lions and not a head to jackals or foxes." As a young revolutionary in Russia he was often frustrated by the feeling that he was being a" tail to jackals" because of the failings of his comrades, and especially of those in power. Schwarzbard's use of the Talmudic allusion reverses the humility prized by the traditional quote, his thinking closer to that of a modern proverb that claims it is better to "be a foxes head than a lion's tail." Ibid.

[96] "The Gapon Incident" is more commonly called "Bloody Sunday." On January 22 (Old Style January 9), 1905 the radical orthodox priest, Georgy Gapon, marched with workers in St. Petersburg to present their petition to the Tsar. The march was violently broken up, becoming a rallying point for the Revolution later that year. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgy_Gapon. Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Schwarzbard only mentions the name Triboutzsky in his entry for Zalman Rayzn's *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur, prese un filologye.* This was the same Triboutzsky family whose most famous member, Sergei Petrovich Triboutzsky, had played a leading role in the Decembrist revolt against the tsarist autocracy in 1825. The Prince spent most of his remaining life in Siberian exile, but later had his excellent memoir published in London by Alexander Herzen (1863). See online, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Petrovich_Troubetzkoy. Herzen himself was a great memoirist known for his "grace, energy and ease," qualities that, besides the energy, Schwarzbard unfortunately lacked in his memoiristic work. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Herzen.

## 2.6 The Early Fight against Pogroms

A short time after this exploit, Schwarzbard heard shouts in Ukrainian, "*Bey zhidov!*" [Beat the Jews!] in the streets of Kruti, accompanied by "screaming and shrieking."[99] He rushed out to find drunken Russian reservists, recently returned from the Russo-Japanese war, terrorizing Kruti's Jews. Schwarzbard immediately grabbed his "socialist stick" and attacked the ruffians. Although he put up a good fight, Schwarzbard was clubbed over the head from behind. The thugs retreated, and the Jews emerged from their hiding places amazed at the young clockmaker's courage.[100]

After recovering from this blow, Schwarzbard had time for one last revolutionary act in Kruti. Entering the House of Study to preach socialist doctrine with radical interpretations of "a few verses from Isaiah and Amos," he was denounced to the authorities by some elderly congregants. Schwarzbard himself believed they betrayed him more for his fight against the reservist thugs than his blasphemy, such resistance potentially endangering the Jewish community as a whole.[101] Schwarzbard recalled whispering to himself the words of Moses after killing the Egyptian, "the matter is known," and immediately fled Kruti for Balta in early October 1905. This was just a short time before the Tsar issued his Manifesto of liberal concessions on October 17, 1905.[102]

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[99] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 32.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid. 33.

[102] For the chronology of the first Russian Revolution, I am indebted to Professor Eugene Orenstein.

Ironically, Schwarzbard returned home armed with a revolver bought off a Cossack sent to Kruti to arrest him and his comrades for distributing the leaflets from Odessa. Schwarzbard does not stipulate whether he bought the weapon for revolutionary purposes or to defend the Jewish community, but in Balta it proved useful for the latter. After two short days living "in a beautiful dream" of genuine hope for the new constitution, the tsarist reaction came, and rumors reached Balta of a terrible pogrom in Odessa. Schwarzbard noted how "those of us in Balta began to feel the pogrom mood in the air..."[103]

Having been away from Balta for several months, Schwarzbard recognized none of the thirty or forty young "enthusiasts" he helped organize for Jewish self-defense.[104] Most of the older comrades were already either in America, Siberia, prison or dead. A procession of the "dark powers" heralded the coming pogrom on Friday afternoon October 20, 1905.[105] Schwarzbard described the delegation of community leaders "dancing at two weddings," when they carried a Torah scroll to greet the "pagan procession."[106] Their gesture of peace was greeted with violence, and soon the Torah scroll was defiled and its escorts' "heads split open."

Later that evening, when the pogrom gained momentum, Sholem's father Itse join the young fighters on their makeshift barricades. He was the only observant Jew to fight with them, his action adding to Sholem's love for the man. The rest of the pious looked for divine help. In this instance, Schwarzbard did not ridicule them, however, instead showing respect for their limitless "*bitokhen*" [faith]. In the

[103] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 34-5.
[104] Ibid. 37.
[105] Ibid. 36.
[106] Ibid.

tense hours before the outbreak of the pogrom, while he and his comrades nervously manned their barricades, Schwarzbard observed the pious continue their Sabbath observances despite the imminent threat of violence against them:

> We young ones, who no longer found warmth in the faith of our parents, observed in amazement how the Houses of Study were packed full with Jews, how in homes tables were set for Sabbath, the light and the chandeliers casting a mild light on the faces.... "God will help! He who is in Heaven will not forsake his people Israel...." and with that faith in God and certainty they calmed themselves, while we stood at the barricades and quaked, fearing any moment the sudden attack that would put an end to us.[107]

Once the attack began, the defenses held until late in the night when a fresh contingent of Cossacks arrived to give the advantage to the pogromchiks. Out of bullets and outmatched by these experienced soldiers, the exhausted Balta self-defense abandoned the barricades seeking shelter wherever it could be found. Despite eventual defeat and the death of some of their fighters, Schwarzbard remained convinced this small defense effort helped mitigate the pogrom which was not nearly as severe as that in 1882.

Now on the run from authorities for both his revolutionary and Jewish fights, Schwarzbard fled to Volotchisk on the border with Austria-Hungary. He left Balta with a new "respect and love for my father and for the old world and its faith."[108] In Volotchisk, Schwarzbard intensified his radical work under the pseudonym "*Nabat*" [alarm], running illegal propaganda, guns and fellow radicals between Volotchisk in Russian Volhynia and Podvolotchisk in Austria-Hungary. He again managed to find work with a local clockmaker named Yosl Vinakur who tried to discourage Schwarzbard's penchant for revolutionary activism by transferring him from his

[107] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 37.
[108] Ibid. 40.

shop at the station to one in town. His new employer's efforts proved futile, however, and Schwarzbard soon organized a local garment workers' strike.

He was again reported to the authorities by fellow Jews, the police finally managing to arrest him. He was imprisoned for several months in Volotchisk, Proskurov (a small city that played a central role in his trial) and Balta. Fully expecting to be sent to Siberia, he was suddenly paroled, and fled across the Austro-Hungarian border he now knew well. Schwarzbard would live the next eleven eventful years in exile, not returning to Russia until the second Russian Revolution was in full swing in the summer of 1917.

## 3. Schwarzbard as Emigrant (1906-1914)

### 3.1 First Love, First Arrest and First Emigration

In the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution a young woman named Comrade Sofia took a special interest in Schwarzbard, offering to pay for his passage to America.[109] For Schwarzbard flight meant, "abandoning the field of battle," and he refused Sofia's money, preferring the martyrdom of imprisonment and likely exile to Siberia. When tsarist police finally apprehended him in the winter of 1905-6, Comrade Sofia tried to secure his release from prison. He realized that the young woman's devotion to him was something more than political only after he fled Russia for Austria-Hungary: "As it turned out, this was my first love, which I didn't understand and pushed it away with both hands."[110] Of the three love interests in his life, Sofia came closest to his ideals of feminine strength and revolutionary sacrifice found in the biblical examples of Deborah, Esther and Judith. He nevertheless dismissed his first love, seeing her as a dependent woman: "The girl suffered a while and then found comfort in a different young man."[111] Typically, Schwarzbard offers no physical description of Sofia, nor much insight into her personality beyond the dedication shown to him.[112]

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[109] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 43.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Throughout his life, Schwarzbard's personality evoked similar devotion in women, who, if they appreciated his warmth, courage and charisma, also had to accept his disdain for anything he saw as too "bourgeois" in them. His faithful wife Anna was not spared such criticism, which was often quite biting, and likely became worse in the early 1920s when Schwarzbard's feminine ideal crystallized around Anarchist heroines like Emma Goldman and the assassin Germaine Berton. Vaguely attracted to romantic adventure and to its equally vague poetic expression, Schwarzbard

## 3.2 New Names

Whether because of Sofia's persistence, tsarist forbearance, or some other reason, Schwarzbard was released from prison in early 1906. Taking advantage of this unexpected reprieve, he left Russia before the inevitable next arrest. Perhaps helped by knowledge and contacts gained earlier in the border town Volotchisk, he crossed successfully into Austria-Hungary in the spring of 1906, and made straight for Czernovitz, the heart of Jewish Bukovina, where he passed the first of four unsettled years in the Dual Monarchy.[113] Schwarzbard sought out the local "Socialist club," and always proud to find acceptance with those better educated than himself, he boasted about his friendship with two local students.[114]

Despite their help and his experience as a clockmaker he failed miserably at his first interview. Looking back in 1928 he recalled the following exchange in German with his potential employer:

> "Who are you?"
> "A Russian."
> "Why did you leave?"
> "I'm a khaliticol [sic] emigrant!"[115]
> "What, what? A political.... nihilist? No, no. I don't need you."[116]

Though better than Russia, he discovered his new country was not as liberal as he had hoped. His friends scolded him for his heedlessness, and warned that he could be sent back if he did not take care. They also became more active in trying to

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remained suspicious of both, always feeling guilty for them as distractions from his political work and writing. This had a negative effect on his attitude towards women, and many of his "love" poems reveal a Delilah-complex and fear of emasculation.

[113] Sholem Schwarzbard, *Mayn viner legende* [My Vienna Legend], *Haynt* (Warsaw), January 2, 1928.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

control Schwarzbard's unwieldy temperament, and he was soon hired. One more obstacle to employment remained, however. Schwarzbard required an *Arbeitsbuch* [work permit] from the local police. This should have been a relatively simple matter now that he had found a job, but issues arose when the police clerk asked his name:

> "What's your name?"
> "Sholem"
> "What kind of name is that?" Before I could respond, the student spoke for me: "Samuel!"
> "So is better. And your family name?"
> "*Shvartsburd*!"
> "What? What? Schwarzburd? That's not a real name, Schwarzburd. You mean to say Schwarzbard?"
> "Let it be Schwarzbard." I thought to myself.[117]

Although Schwarzbard presents the incident in a matter-of-fact, even comical manner, his name change was the symbolic beginning of an important personal transformation during his stay in Austria-Hungary and beyond. As it did for so many others, immigration opened possibilities to redefine himself, further intensifying a process that began with the abandonment of traditional piety and the creation of a revolutionary identity in Russia. One very insightful commentator at the time of his trial showed a keen awareness of the relation between this process and the role of name changes in an emigrant's life: "Schwarzbart—what is his first name after all? He called himself Shalom for years, but he's really named Samuel. Isn't that typically Jewish? You yourself don't even know what you're called.

[117] Schwarzbard, "Legend."

Mostly it's the family name that's controversial because an antagonistic, foreign world makes incomprehensible, malevolent demands for papers and documents"[118]

This statement is correct regarding the change in Schwarzbard's family name, but his first name was not "really" Samuel, any more than it was any of the many other names he would choose for himself in the years ahead.[119] These included, other than Sholem and Samuel, Solomon, Nabat, Izmael, Bal-khaloymes, and, ironically, Simon—Hetman Petliura's first name.[120] In fact, Schwarzbard's flexibility with names is more likely attributable to his revolutionary activism and worldview than anything Jewish. In the context of Schwarzbard's continued subversive work while in Austria-Hungary—leading strikes, propagandizing,

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[118] Moses Waldmann, *"Die Pogrome vor Gericht: Schwarzbart, einer aus dem Volke," Die jüdische Rundschau*, October 25, 1927. Waldmann, a disenchanted former philo-Ukrainian, was one of the more insightful commentators on the affair. As an ardent Zionist, he gives Schwarzbard yet another name by using the Sephardi version "Shalom," instead of the Ashkenazi and Yiddish "Sholem." As far as I know, Schwarzbard only ever used the latter.

[119] Samuel (Shmuel) was the name of Schwarzbard's younger brother, who also immigrated to Austria-Hungary, and then onto Paris—his immigration experience paralleled that of Sholem's but without the extreme radicalism. As seen above, Schwarzbard claimed the same name was incidentally chosen for him by one of the Austrian students he had befriended, but it was also very useful to him when he later got in trouble with Austrian police, and it is possible that he in fact adopted the name as a smokescreen to keep the Vienna police in the dark about his political activities in Russia. Investigating charges of theft against "Samuel Schwarzbard" in August 1908 (details of this affair are discussed later in the chapter), Austrian police contacted their Russian counterparts in Balta. The latter dug up the younger brother's (Shmuel's) clean record and not Sholem's history of arrest. The Russian police also contacted Schwarzbard's father Itse, who clearly thought that his younger son (who had also emigrated) had been arrested in Austria, claiming "Samuel" was a lathe worker and not a clockmaker like Sholem. See the Vienna police protocol containing information received from Russian government official in Kiev, December 12, 1908, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 41940.

[120] Schwarzbard recorded the following exchange with his favorite defense attorney, Serge Weill-Goudchaux (Schwarzbard liked him because he was a "Jew who feels") on the issue of his many names: "Now we find out that you have a number first names: here you're called Samuel and there Solomon. For your military honors you're called Izmael and normally you're called Sholem. What is this all about?" Schwarzbard answered in a light vein, "What, my dear fellow, you've forgotten one further name, "Simon," how I'm registered in my working papers. And don't you know that Jethro had more names than I and no one was much troubled by it." Weill-Goudchaux didn't answer whether he knew that in Rabbinic tradition Jethro was normally attributed seven names, he did however have genuine reason for concern because his client's misrepresentation of himself could have had serious consequences under French law. Fortunately for Schwarzbard, nothing came of the matter legally. Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 319.

"expropriating" and perhaps smuggling—it served both the practical end of avoiding the police and a more abstract desire to sacrifice one's self for a utopian ideal. Paralleling these reasons, it also reflected Schwarzbard's more general distaste for answering to the state, and a whimsical streak in his personality. Both tendencies became stronger after Schwarzbard's embrace of Anarchist political individualism.

### 3.3 Conversion to Anarchism

After the year in Czernovitz Sholem (Samuel) Schwarzbard moved to Lvov in Galicia, another Jewish center, where, after failing to find work in his trade, he led strikes and "shoveled snow." He soon left for the Hungarian part of the empire, spending some time in Kaschau, a city famous among Jews for its Hasidic court, before landing in the Austria-Hungary's second city, Budapest, in the summer of 1907.[121] In Budapest he came under the influence of a man named Dovid Haskin, and shifted his political allegiance from Social Democracy to Anarcho-communism.[122] It was the most important change in his life since departing Hasidic piety, one commentator saying that for Schwarzbard "Peter Kropotkin became the *Rebbe*, the Baal Shem-Tov."[123] Schwarzbard later described his motivation in the following manner:

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[121] Called Kasho in Yiddish, the Hungarian city's Hasids are now located in Williamsburg, Monsey and Bedford Hills, New York. I am again indebted to Professor Eugene Orenstein for this information.

[122] Although Schwarzbard mentions Dovid Haskin by name in his memoir, he says nothing else about the man, and what is to be known must be inferred from a poem written in the trenches on November 18, 1915 and dedicated to Haskin. Called "Come Not Now to Me....", the poem uses no-man's land as a metaphor for the moral abyss which separates the soldier from the man who introduced him to the ideals of Anarchist antimilitarism. See Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 13-4.

[123] Dr. A. Mukdoyni, "*Sholem Shvartsburd," Lodzher Morgnblat,* June 30, 1926. When he was in prison awaiting trial for the Petliura assassination, Schwarzbard called Kropotkin, "that noble Russian heart," and "the Buddha of our time...." Sholem Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 291.

> Here in the free land of Austria, where I came face to face with the program minimum that I had so fervently defended in Russia, I understood that this was not the way! And instead of the economic teaching of Karl Marx I started to learn Max Stirner, Bakunin, Mackay, Tucker and Kropotkin.[124]

Schwarzbard joined up with the anarchist group forming around Pierre Ramus, a political exile from America recently arrived in Vienna.[125] A 1913 article from Ramus helps clarify Anarchist attitudes to Social Democracy in "German-speaking lands," and what motivated Schwarzbard to leave the latter. Ramus begins with the situation in Germany claiming the proletariat would first have "to overcome the bane of discipline and cast-iron centralism that is dominating the German working class under the form of "Socialism," viz., Social Democracy" before it could begin the attack on "the scourges of authority and exploitation."[126] Dating the beginning of Austrian Anarchism to "the middle and end of 1907," the situation there was similar: "Until universal suffrage was conquered in 1907, Anarchism had no foothold whatsoever among the German-speaking workers of Austria, the same being enwrapped by the most blissful expectations of the possibility of parliamentarianism as promised and pictured to them by their Social Democratic

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[124] Schwarzbard, "Legend." Max Stirner (1806-1856) was an anti-state, individualist thinker best known for his book *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* [The Ego and its Own]; Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1806-1876), the most famous of all anarchist thinkers, was a spirited rival of Marx and theorist of collectivist anarchism; John Henry Mackay (1864-1933) was a prominent individualist anarchist born in Scotland but raised in Germany; Benjamin Tucker (1854-1939) was an American individualist anarchist and proponent of a political philosophy called "Egoism"; Prince Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842-1921) was a man of science and the world's foremost exponent of anarcho-communism, best known for his book *Wohlstand für alle* [Prosperity for Everyone]. The latter had the greatest influence on Schwarzbard.

[125] Pierre Ramus was the alias of Rudolf Grossman (1882-1942), who adopted his name from the sixteenth century French humanist Petrus Ramus. He was an antimilitarist Anarchist, orator, and editor. After speaking on June 18, 1902 in Paterson, New Jersey, Grossmann was arrested along with Luigi Galleani and William MacQueen for "inciting to riot" during a strike in which police opened fire on workers. Skipping bail, Grossmann fled first to England and then to Vienna. There he edited the journal *Wohlstand für Alle* (1907-14).

[126] Pierre Ramus, "Anarchism in the German-speaking Countries," *Mother Earth*, December 1913, 307-14.

leaders... The workers themselves have been converted into conservatives by the Social Democracy."[127] Used to the more rigorous revolutionism in Russia, Schwarzbard was drawn to Anarchism and Anarchist critics of mainstream Socialism like Ramus when it became a viable alternative in Austria-Hungary.

In an atmosphere of new beginnings, Schwarzbard came to know Pierre Ramus personally. Like Schwarzbard, Grossman generated a number of names, although his were more theatrical like "Ramus" itself, but also Klaus Morleit (a playful use of Goethe's dying words "More light") and Franz Stürmer (Stormer). Ramus's Anarcho-communism preached contraception rights, vegetarianism, and anti-militarism. It also advocated the creation of free "communities" as the movement's foundation in opposition to Anarcho-syndicalist's preference for unions. For Ramus and Schwarzbard, Peter Kropotkin and Leo Tolstoy were major intellectual influences. Ramus admired the latter as "an adversary of all violence," but nevertheless inflamed class conflict with as much fervor as any Marxist.[128] For example, Ramus's "Anarchist Manifesto" from 1907 begins:

> As Anarchists and Communists we come to you, proletarian Brothers, to you working Sisters, to show you the way to your liberation, so that you can be saved from slave labor [*Arbeitsfrohn*], from the shame of spiritual, material and social enslavement![129]

Today, this canny piece of revolutionary pamphleteering stands out for its pontification, offering an enlightened hand to help lift the oppressed worker out of servitude. A part of that mission, Schwarzbard worked as a member of the "press

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[127] Ramus, "German-speaking Countries," 311.

[128] Rudolf Grossman (P. Ramus), Letter to Henry Torrès from October 8, 1927, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38696.

[129] Pierre Ramus, *Das anarchistische Manifest*, (Berlin: Verlag Lehman, 1907), 3.

committee" for Ramus's weekly *Wohlstand für Alle* [Prosperity for Everyone]. The little paper was illegal in Austria-Hungary, but Schwarzbard still intrepidly promoted it door to door, refusing the pittance normally paid by the group's "anti-militarist fund" for distribution work. At the time of his trial, Ramus remembered Schwarzbard as "absolutely honest," a character trait that was—according to Ramus's values—only enhanced by Schwarzbard's participation in the saccharin smuggling used to help finance the movement.[130]

Schwarzbard gave more than he took, and often complained about the "heroes" who sought to exploit the goodwill of hard working comrades like himself. At many places in his memoirs Schwarzbard distinguished between "good anarchists" and "bad anarchists." The latter contributed to his rather bleak view of individual human behavior, in which he was more akin to his future friend Emma Goldman than to his "*Rebbe"* Kropotkin.[131] No matter how ignoble the behavior of individualist Anarchists may have been, it could not shake his belief in the movement's ideals.

While Schwarzbard busied himself with work and agitation, he moved from place to place within the Empire—often by foot. He claimed this nomadic life was

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[130] Grossman Letter, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38695. Ramus's comments on smuggling were recorded in an investigative report on Schwarzbard of unknown authorship written in German at the time of the affair, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 37696. Saccharin was developed in the first decade of the twentieth century as a substitute sweetener derived from coal tar. The Austrian and German governments criminalized it ostensibly because of health risks, but they really wanted to protect the important sugar beet industry. Demand for saccharin remained nonetheless high among "housewives" as a money saver, encouraging smuggling from Belgium and Switzerland. See "Saccharin Smuggling," *The Independent*, April 17, 1913, 882-3.

[131] According to Alice Wexler, Goldman "never shared Kropotkin's unwavering faith in the revolutionary potential of the masses. She combined his ideal of a libertarian society organized into communes and collectives with a strong Nietzschean individualism, and she often took a dim view of "the ordinary man." Alice Wexler. *Emma Goldman in Exile: from the Russian Revolution to the Spanish Civil War,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 242.

because his work was seasonal, but politics and a restless nature were also behind it. Schwarzbard's trade allowed him, at a moment's notice, to pack up and head for another city or town. He always took along his two most treasured possessions, his work papers and tools, sometimes supplemented by a bundle of propaganda. In this way he left Budapest at the end of 1907. He worked for a short while in St. Gotthardt on the border between Steiermark (Styria) and Hungary, but missing the life of a bigger city (and perhaps Jewish company), he decided to try his luck in Vienna.[132] As was always his lot in the Empire's capital, he had none, and unable to find work, departed for Znaim (Znajmo) in Moravia in February 1908. He worked there for the Gollerstopper clock factor, returning to Vienna on June 10 of the same year.[133]

Schwarzbard rented a bed in a house on the Augarten Straße 40/26, Vienna II, but on those nights when he didn't make the early curfew, he slept over at the Emigrant Library on Hannover Straße.[134] Here he exchanged news of potential work and revolution with other emigrants:

> You met there Russian sailors (the "Potemkins"), Socialist Revolutionaries, Socialist Democrats, Anarchists, Bundists, etc.... When you had a few pennies (in Austrian money), you could get lunch in the restaurant across the street for a few Hellers... The Russian revolutionaries believed themselves beaten but not vanquished. Very slowly, but surely, they continued to smuggle literature (revolutionary), some arms and explosives.[135]

Summer was the slowest time for his trade, and he searched in vain for employment through the *Jüdische Arbeiterverein* at Tabor Straße 59. When he heard

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[132] Schwarzbard, *Legend.*

[133] Vienna police protocol, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 41942.

[134] Ibid. 41924.

[135] Sholem Schwarzbard. Extracts from an autobiographical account translated from Yiddish into French for the investigation of the shooting of Symon Petliura, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38563.

Anarchist comrades were planning a "surprise" for Emperor Franz-Joseph's sixtieth jubilee, Schwarzbard sold his modest possessions and left Vienna on June 30, 1908. With two companions he walked down Linzer Straße, in the direction of Tyrol where they hoped to find work. They reached only as far as Neulengbach, 38 kilometers west of Vienna, when what Schwarzbard called their "*Spaziergang*" (pleasure walk) was cut short.[136] Hungry and exhausted, they stopped for the night at the "*Kaiser-Königlichen Nacht Asyl für Touristen*" [literally The Royal Imperial Night Asylum for Tourists]. The word "Asylum" led them to believe such hostels were free and intended for all comers. For a brief moment, Schwarzbard's attitude warmed to the Habsburg Empire, but they soon realized they had made a terrible mistake. Detained as under-aged travelers, they were locked in an unofficial prison where they languished six weeks.[137] The three companions were lice-ridden, sick and near death before they heard from a more experienced prisoner that they must somehow arrange for their own release. On hearing this, Schwarzbard managed to get word to his anarchist comrades in Budapest. Pierre Ramus sent 75 Kronen from the group's "anti-militarist fund" for their release. Schwarzbard left the holding cell of the Neulengbach hostel in early August 1908, retreating back to Vienna where more unpleasantness awaited him.

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[136] The French stenographer at his trial, who had a miserable time with the eastern and central European names used in testimony, recorded the name of the Austrian town as "Nallimbar." *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39531.

[137] Twenty being the age of majority, Schwarzbard paid dearly for an earlier lie to Austrian officials post-dating his birth date from 1886 to 1888. To be consistent, he gave the same date of birth at his Paris trial. See Ibid. 39470 and 39549.

## 3.4 The Vienna Expropriation

Schwarzbard felt responsible for the money taken from the movement's meager resources, but could not pay it back while suffering through his longest employment drought since arriving in Austria-Hungary.[138] This extended streak of hard luck was the background to his arrest for burglary inside the wine bar "Passecker" in Siebenstern Straße on the morning of August 17, 1908. Although Schwarzbard testified to police that he been misled by a stranger who took advantage of his circumstances, it is more likely that the incident was part of his "childish expropriation methods for Anarchist causes...."[139] On the night of August 16 Schwarzbard and his "unknown accomplice" entered the bar at around nine p.m. His companion paid for their drinks, and then departed while Schwarzbard stole away into a corner, waiting to be locked in overnight.[140] After the establishment closed, Schwarzbard broke into the till using a flashlight and tools provided him by his accomplice. He removed what he claimed was around 50, but the establishment said was 143 Kronen.[141]

The next morning Schwarzbard was discovered inside and arrested. He only had 23 Heller on him, having passed the stolen money through a gap in the rolling blind where his partner retrieved it from outside.[142] During initial questioning Schwarzbard gave his mother's maiden name, "Weissberger," as his own. He also

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[138] Schwarzbard, "Legend."
[139] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 317. See also Schwarzbard "Legend."
[140] Schwarzbard, "Legend."
[141] Ibid.
[142] "Is Schwarzbard a Burglar? The Story of his Supposed Robbery in Vienna," *Die Neue Welt,* November 11, 1917.

claimed to live in Kolomea, Galicia with his parents "Isak" and "Chaja."[143] When the police found out the information was incorrect, Schwarzbard told them, "I gave a false name to the police because I was ashamed and didn't want my name to appear in the papers."[144] The story was feasible because Schwarzbard expected to be hired by a clockmaker in Vienna as soon as the industry picked up again in the fall, and involvement win criminal activity would have hurt, if not ended his chances of getting the job.

A different reason for Schwarzbard's cover-up was presented to the assassin's defense attorney Henry Torrès in a letter from October 8, 1927, just ten days before the trial began in Paris. Schwarzbard's old Comrade Rudolf Grossman (Pierre Ramus) wrote from Vienna that "a close friend" who knew the assassin in 1907 had told him that Schwarzbard's accomplice had been an infamous anarchist nicknamed "Peter the Painter" [*Peter der Maler*]. Perhaps using the same source, the Vienna Jewish paper *Die Neue Welt*, also reported that Schwarzbard had worked with a "well-known" Anarchist named Peter the Painter, claiming the latter was of "Ukrainian nationality."[145]

If true Ramus's story is true, Schwarzbard once teamed up with one of the most violent figures of the 1905 Revolution. Peter was not a Ukrainian, however, but a Latvian exile named Janis Zhaklis a.k.a. Peter Piatkov or Peter the Painter.[146] The 1905 Revolution had been especially violent in Latvia where it fed off both

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[143] Vienna police protocol, Schwarzbard Papers YIVO, 41937. Schwarzbard also mentioned Brody in Galicia as a part of his background, but in what context is not clear from the protocol. In any case, the Vienna police found this story to be false as well.

[144] Ibid. 41942.

[145] "Is Schwarzbard a Burglar?"

[146] Phil Ruff, interview for program "Lost Steps" on *Resonance FM.* London, January 10, 2010. http://www.loststeps.org/tag/peter-the-painter/.

social and national discontent. At the time, Zhaklis helped form "fighting organizations" in the capital Riga. These held out for three full months against a siege by tsarist troops. In that time, Zhaklis earned a reputation for merciless treatment of anyone he considered a Russian ruling class oppressor.[147] As an exile, among other activities, Peter the Painter (Zhaklis) began an international "finance campaign" that involved expropriation attempts from Boston (July 1908) to the famous "Houndsditch" robbery (December 1910). The latter resulted in the death of three London police officers and the "Siege of Sidney Street" in London's East End—a siege led by the Interior Minister Winston Churchill and 750 police officers.[148] If Ramus's claims are true, Schwarzbard's expropriation in Vienna was a relatively quaint episode in this same international campaign.

Corroborating Schwarzbard's story, Ramus claimed that Schwarzbard was "innocent" in the Vienna expropriation, having been recruited for it by 'Peter the Painter.'" Under interrogation, Schwarzbard refused to surrender the name of Peter the Painter because the latter was an experienced smuggler and anti-tsarist propagandist. In Ramus's words "because Schwarzbarth knew that the imprisonment of 'Peter the Painter' would hurt the anarchist movement, he took the deed on himself in the interest of the movement to which he belonged."[149] Schwarzbard's silence about such "friends" was understandable, and especially after he killed Petliura. More importantly Zhaklis, a man who unapologetically used

[147] Phil Ruff, interview.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ramus letter to Torrès, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38695-6.

violence in the struggle for his class and nation, may have been an early influence on Schwarzbard.

Whomever he was protecting, when the Kolomea story was discovered to be a ruse, Schwarzbard confessed, slightly less untruthfully, that he was born in Balta in 1888 and gave them his real name. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Balta police questioned Schwarzbard's father on behalf of their Viennese colleagues about a wayward son. The old man naturally thought his younger son Shmuel, who had indeed been born in Balta in 1888, had been arrested. Sholem's official use of the name "Samuel" of course added to the confusion.[150] The report back by the Balta police, as recorded in the Vienna protocol shows that Schwarzbard's past looked far better to Vienna police than it otherwise would have because he used his brother's name and date of birth:

> Petit bourgeois [*Kleinbuerger*] Isaak Itzko Schwarzbourd claimed that the young man [*Bursche*] arrested in Vienna was his son by birth Samuel (Shmul) Schwarzburd, who had left Balta a year earlier for Odessa in order to find work. His son is a lathe assistant.... during his stay in his homeland Shmul Schwarzburd's behavior was impeccable (*vom tadellosem Benehmen*).[151]

Despite his efforts to fool the police, Schwarzbard's fears about damage to his reputation were realized after serving four-months hard labor between September 1908 and January 1909. After that he only found odd labor jobs until he left Austria-Hungary for good later that year.[152] According to one source, Schwarzbard received

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[150] The whole thing is somewhat reminiscent of Sholem Aleichem's comic monologue, "Before the Draft Board," a story based on a series of tragic mix-ups between a Jewish father and the Russian draft board caused by Yiddish variations of the name Isaac.

[151] Vienna police protocol, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 41940.

[152] The sentence included one fast day per month. Schwarzbard himself says nothing about serving hard labor other than his boast that Mikhael Bakunin had once been held in the same prison. This might indicate that Schwarzbard served his sentence in the "grim fortress" of Olmütz (Czech Olomouc), Moravia 200 kilometers north of Vienna, where Bakunin had been treated with particular

a particularly harsh sentence as part of the Empire's crack down on immigrants associated with increased political tension after the Empire's annexation of Bosnia.[153]

Released from prison in the middle of winter, Schwarzbard's future in Austria-Hungary looked bleak. Avoiding Vienna, he made the 400-kilometer trip to Budapest, but was again arrested, this time in possession of radical literature.[154] After three more weeks in prison, he was sent out of the city for vagrancy, but claimed it was actually because he had openly admitted his Anarchist convictions to the Budapest police.[155] Schwarzbard returned to Lemberg where he joined up with a "bad commune" made up of fellow Russian Jewish anarchists. After going into debt on their behalf, he left these "heroes" to their own devises, traveling south a few rail stops south to Stryj, but found no work there. Staying in Galicia, he made his way to Skole in the Carpathanian Mountains where he loaded lumber and worked as a farmhand. It was here he fell seriously in love for the first time in his young life.

### 3.5 Broken Words, Broken Heart and Departure from Austria-Hungary

Schwarzbard began to write poetry in this period, possibly encouraged by the heightened sense of individualism that emigration and Anarchist philosophy

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severity in 1851. Bakunin was eventually sent back to Russia, and it is quite possible Schwarzbard feared the same fate. See Anthony Masters, *Bakunin: Father of Anarchism* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1974), 114.

[153] "Is Schwarzbard a Burglar?" *Die Neue Welt.*

[154] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39533.

[155] During his trial, representatives of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency researched Schwarzbard's Budapest police record, and concluded that he had been sent out of the city as an "unemployed foreigner." Reported in *Der Moment* (Warsaw), October 24, 1927.

brought with them. Unfortunately, the very experiences that led him to poetry helped undermine its quality. His early works are too subjective, becoming lost in the labyrinth of a self that refuses to distinguish between reality and its own desires. Schwarzbard resists the limits necessary in a successful poem, often exploring natural, political, mythological, biblical and psychological aspects of an experience in a single work. Thus, social outrage combines with meditations on gods and mountains, anger with melancholy and ecstasy. In he end, his hope and despair know no bounds, and neither does the frustration of his reader. The critic Shmuel Niger traces the impotence of Schwarzbard's muse back to this disconnect between dream (desire) and reality (effective writing):

> In the book there is less lyricism than in the author, and the meaning of verses is found in how they give us the feeling that this man, who wrote so unpoetically, is a man with a poetic temperament. He lacks the ability to sing himself out in poems, but he wants, he wishes, he is dying to sing himself out. He's seeking the lost melody of his soul. Without it he cannot live. He distinguishes himself with a highly developed I-consciousness—and because of it longs for self-expression. He carries himself around with his muteness, with is stuttering, like the poet does—with his word.[156]

Schwarzbard also had tremendous difficulties expressing love in his poetry, which entered his life in a serious way towards the end of his stay in Austria-Hungary. While working as a laborer in Skole he considered marrying a local Jewish girl. Schwarzbard never mentions her by name, but speaks of the relationship in a 1914 letter from Paris to his father. He reminds him that the girl's family had been pious. They did not expect him to revert fully into the ranks of the observant, but insisted that Schwarzbard maintain the appearance of piety. Such compromise was

[156] Shmuel Niger, rev. of *At War with Myself,* and *In the Tide of Times* by Sholem Schwarzbard, *Tsukunft*, August 1934, 730. Besides the two memoirs, Niger also comments on Schwarzbard's poetry in *Dreams and Reality*. This quote is in reference to the latter.

impossible for him: "You know the truth, that this would have been untrue and wrong from my side, and also a great desecration of the love that I hold holier than everything in the world.... believe me, they wanted nothing more from me, for them it was enough for me to wear a mask; in my heart I could be whatever I liked, but heaven forbid, don't show it openly."[157]

The holy love he refers to is that for his father, the only human being who ever evoked genuine romantic warmth in his poetry and memoirs. He goes on to describe how the girl's family "excommunicated" him for not fasting Yom Kippur, and laments their lack of understanding for his idiosyncratic form of piety: "You know—they don't know—that I lay the whole day on the highest of mountains in the region and suffered and cried over their helplessness.... the trees and clouds that hung over the mountains, also the cold, quiet earth that I rested on like a snake, these are my witnesses."[158] Part of a ubiquitous self-righteousness, Schwarzbard liked to see himself in the role of the Prophets—whether biblical, Nietzschean or revolutionary—and clearly does so here, saying that he was not "guilty" in the break-up, and concluding that the girl had not been worthy of his love.

Between the fall of 1909 and his arrival in Paris in late January 1910, Schwarzbard made a number of short stops. Leaving Skole bitterly disappointed in the girl and her family, he moved on to Boryslav to work in the Galician oil fields. A short time later in Drohobych the members of local Paole Zionist Club made a positive impression on him, Schwarzbard already showing his openness to political persuasions different from his own, including those with a strong element of Jewish

[157] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 53.
[158] Ibid. 58.

nationalism. Still unable to find work as a clockmaker, he realized he had become a *persona non grata* and left Austria-Hungary, making for Zurich via Vienna and Graz.[159] He again had a difficult time securing work as a watchmaker in Zurich, but did manage to join another disappointing Anarchist commune. This time the members were "international" and not "Russian-Jewish," but the result was the same—Schwarzbard paid and the "communists" played. Forced into manual labor, Schwarzbard sarcastically related the following story from his life in the Zurich commune:

> More than once it happened that I went and hauled a cart full of steel up a steep hill, through the city, and a pair of my "communists" were taking a walk, and seeing me carry the heavy cart, they would turn their heads and pretend not to see.

Schwarzbard's experience in Switzerland was not all bad, however, and he recalled being happily engaged with the revolutionary movement and befriending a "diamond of a man," Professor Akser, whom he met through a Budapest vegetarian named Migre Yusetz. Schwarzbard passed his limited free time with these two "good" Anarchists. Out mountaineering one day, he noticed how he was again in the proximity of the great, nearly falling to his death from the same cliff that had tragically claimed the life of the German writer Georg Büchner.[160]

## 3.6 Schwarzbard Arrives in Paris

While Sholem served out his time for the Vienna expropriation, his brother Shmuel had moved on to Paris via Italy and Marseilles. Helped by friends from

[159] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 46-48.
[160] Ibid. 50.

Budapest and Vienna, Shmuel was soon in a position to invite his older brother to settle in the City of Light as well. Traveling over Grenchen and Biel, Sholem reached Paris shortly after the great flood of January 1910.[161] Paris kept Schwarzbard in one place for the next four years. Neither threatened by nor sufficiently threatening to the great city, he kept out of jail. Indeed, Paris suited him better than any place he had yet lived. In the years before the war he moved from job to job, but he always worked in his trade, having trouble only in the beginning.[162] Schwarzbard had fond memories of his first months of unemployment, however. Living with his brother, he was able to soak in *la belle époque à la bohème*, visiting museums and writing poetry.[163] There was also plenty here to stoke his revolutionary imagination, and during his trial he recalled with great excitement his impressions of Bastille Day in July 1910:

> I saw the joy of the entire people, the satisfaction and the celebration, a holiday where all are equal, a holiday that united all people, without differences of faith and nationality. Then I jumped for joy and danced over the streets of Paris together with everyone else. Up to that time I had never felt joy and a new world opened up for me.[164]

He was usually less enthusiastic about France, and this was one of the few "patriotic" statements he ever made about his new home. Unlike Zurich, Budapest or Vienna, however, the French capital would always have a place for the clockmaker once he started working. Now twenty-three years old, he left behind life

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[161] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 48-49.

[162] From the available biographical sources we know that Schwarzbard worked on what he called big clocks for Frédric Mauthé, 60 Rue Bondy, between late March 1911 and September 1912. From September to at least December 1912, he worked for Louis Goldfein and Co. Horlogerie de Précision, 13 Rue du Faubourg, and between May and July 1913 for J. Simon, 14 Rue de Rivoli. At the time he volunteered for the war he was working for La maison Pinot et Corbard, Rue de Temple 132. See Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72497, 72498, 72449, 39437.

[163] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 50.

[164] Ibid. 210.

in a commune, finding a room of his own about which he wrote an amusing little poem called simply "*Mayn Voynung*" [My Apartment]:

> *di trep, vi der migdl, iz gedreyt*
> *in himl azh aruf,*
> *un di vos geyen op un uf,*
> *shtern bloyz dem shlof*
>
> *a fensterl, tsvey tsol kvadrat,*
> *vos kukt aroys in dakh*
> *un dos iz gor, un dos iz nor*
> *un mer nisht, mer keyn zakh. . .*
>
> [The stairs, like Babel's tower twists
> Up to the very sky,
> And those who go up and down
> Disturb only your sleep.
>
> A window, just two inches square
> That looks out on the roof
> And that's all, that's all there is
> And no more, not one thing more][165]

This is one of Schwarzbard's better poems, and not least of all for the touch of humor it introduces to his writing. The people stomping up and down the Tower of Babel don't disturb the Divinity as in the story from Genesis, but only the poet's sleep. Schwarzbard's sense of extraordinary personal suffering is still present, but a countervailing sense of humor now tempers his reaction to a life stripped down to nothing yet again. Besides a liberal society and a sense of humor, Schwarzbard found another treasure in Paris—his future wife Anna.

[165] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 50.

3.7 Schwarzbard Meets his Life Partner Anna

Schwarzbard's relative permanence in Paris had a lot to do with a sensitive, yet remarkably resilient young woman Khane (Anna) Render with whom he fell in love toward the end of 1910.[166] Like him she was a Jewish immigrant from Ukraine, but she was a big city girl from Odessa. He met her as the cousin to a friend's wife. From the outset, the relationship was stormy, but the two soon committed to each other, although they waited nearly four years to marry.[167] Sholem fell hard for Anna, telling his father in a letter: "I cannot explain this to myself, and I can't bring myself to control the feelings of love I now have."[168] There was more sociopolitical than sexual guilt in these words. In the radical circles he frequented his new relationship was frowned upon, and Schwarzbard took criticism from this quarter very seriously: "Now that I'm in love, they shout that I'm hopelessly lost.... some say that someone who is willing to die for a woman will never go to die for another ideal. And maybe they're right and perhaps it is a sin for me to fall in love at such an ominous time."[169]

When he announced his engagement to a gathering of friends and comrades he made up a short, metaphysical tale to explain his decision. In the story, a lonely ascetic dreams he arrives at the pearly gates and sees all the animals and humans entering paradise in pairs. He is told that alone he can never enter the garden. Awaking from the dream, the ascetic abandons his lonely path forever. When Schwarzbard concluded his story, he walked across the room and kissed Anna,

[166] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 50.
[167] Ibid. 51.
[168] Ibid. 52.
[169] Ibid. 54.

letting all present know that he, like the ascetic, would no longer be alone. Probably less delightful for the guests than his theatrics, Schwarzbard used the opportunity to recite some of his poetry, including the following romantic indulgence:

> *Ikh vel, tayere, dir shenkn oytsres, brilyantn,*
> *di shtern fun himl on a tsol!*
> *un vel dir bakleydn in faynste gevantn,*
> *mit blumen fun berg un fun tol!*
>
> *Ikh vel dir oykh vinter blumen farshafn,*
> *un flekhtn fun frostikn shney dir a kroyn,*
> *ikh vel fun eyz-franzn un prekhtike shtofn*
> *dir vebn un shmidn a himlshn tron.....*
>
> [I will, my dear, give you treasures, jewels
> The countless stars of the heavens!
> And will dress you in the finest robes,
> With flowers from mountain and valley!
>
> I will find you flowers even in winter,
> And will braid you a crown from frosty snow,
> I will weave for you and forge
> From icicles and elegant cloth a heavenly throne...][170]

He claimed these verses were all the "riches" he could offer Anna, but despite their charming naïveté, Schwarzbard's ego corrupts one his few complete love poems. Indeed, the “I" that begins three of the eight lines overshadows the Beloved with all he will do for her. There is no description of the Beloved, only promises of beauty derived from his hand. The poem attests to an obsessive need to prove himself to his bride, a need that would continue during the war when it became a metaphor for demands to prove himself to the world.

Schwarzbard's depictions of his relationship with Anna again reveal a man fundamentally suspicious of women as emasculating and self-serving. He only

[170] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 52.

addressed his father with the type of feeling usually reserved for romantic interests. His tenderness for his father became proverbial at the time of his Paris trial, in large part due to the widespread publication of a 1912 poem called "*Mayn foter a matone*" [A Gift for my Father], which included the lines:

> *Ikh hob gefilt in vaytn land*
> *dayn tsart un libe foter-hand;*
> *mir dukht oft oys, du shteyst far mir —*
> *ikh tulye ayn mayn kop in dir*
> *un fil a foter-voremen-harts,*
> *vos klapt fun freyd un ziftst fun shmarts.....*[171]
>
> [I've felt in a distant land
> Your gentle and loving father's hand;
> It often seems to me you stand in front of me
> I tuck my head in you
> And I feel a father's warm heart,
> That beats for joy, and sighs in pain...]

These lines were penned around the time of he announced his engagement to Anna, but he never wrote with similar affection of her. In the same letter, Schwarzbard apologizes to his father for investing his love in a woman, as if he had betrayed the old man's trust in so doing: "Tender hearted father! I've fallen in love! You will maybe find this awkward, to fall in love now.... I haven't been able to withstand the difficult journey, however. Is not my past longing for you guilty in my feelings of love? Or maybe my heavy heart, my super human suffering..."[172] The reasons Schwarzbard mentions for his "fall" all have to do with his own past, his own pain, his own self. He completely ignores the things in Anna that presumably made him love her so madly, instead criticizing his fiancée:

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[171] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 72.
[172] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 52.

> She is not one of those that say, "Take me with you, I will follow you, I will run after you into the desert, in exile because I only want your love! No, father! My present love is not like this either. She also wants a comfortable life, but I won't give my calculation, as long as there's love! Otherwise I would soon be poisoned from my own poison, and drowned in my own spleen! My hatred itself would have burned me up in the fire and in the inner burning of my heart would have killed me.... Now I am again a human being! I love like a child![173]

Even when announcing his engagement, Schwarzbard's sense of duty trumps his love life. Thus, in the second part of his letter home, he turns to a more serious subject: Jewish revenge. Schwarzbard tells his father of plans to form a "*brider-farband*" with some Jewish comrades, called the *Bney-Yankev* [The Sons of Jacob]. It was to be a league dedicated to exacting Jewish retribution based on the bloody example of Genesis 34:

> [The club, kj] will have the same character as the "Sons of Jacob": For one drop of innocent blood, for one violated Jewish girl, we will destroy all their cities.... We've decided to take a head for a head, for example, Purishkevich,[174] Lüger[175] and their ilk. Once and for all we are going to show the world that we are Jews, and as such we will deal bitterly with our enemies. Our motto: "Tremble! For a day is coming, an ominous day of reckoning for all blood-thirsty beasts!"[176]

Schwarzbard and his fellow Sons of Jacob perhaps followed the example of Pinchus Dashevsky, who attempted to kill the antisemitic agitator Krushevan after the Kishinev pogrom of April 1903. Dashevsky himself had created a Jewish terrorist organization called *Tehiya.* Schwarzbard's membership in *The Sons of Jacob*

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[173] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 53-4.

[174] Vladimir Pureskevich was an official of the Romanov Dynasty and founder of the "Black Hundreds" (The Union of the Russian People) who were behind many of the worst pogroms in the early twentieth century. He was particularly fond of making and supporting blood libel accusations. Professor Eugene Orenstein provided me with this outline Pureskevich's sad career.

[175] Karl Lüger was mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910. He did much to popularize antisemitism as the leader of the Christian Social Party. Emperor Franz Joseph annulled his first two mayoral victories, but by 1897 even he could no longer defy the popular will. I again tapped Professor Eugene Orenstein for his understanding of Lüger's place in the history of antisemitism.

[176] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 51.

indicates the extent to which he took antisemitic trends seriously even before the war and revolution. He used the relative freedom he found in Paris to prepare a militant response to Jew-baiters in his former countries of residence, Russia and Austria-Hungary. Thus terror, or its possible use, was a part of Schwarzbard's Jewishness even at this early date.

Schwarzbard's next fight, however, would be for France. As was the case for many Jewish soldiers in the World War, the experience made him acutely aware of belonging to a people that transcended the rifts that tore Europe apart. With Schwarzbard, the potential for Jewish awareness and engagement always lay just beneath the surface, ready to emerge if conditions were right. This happened when he joined in Jewish self-defense in Russia's 1905 revolution, and again with the *Sons of Jacob* in Paris. In the years to come, the World War and the next Russian Revolution again created such conditions, as would, of course, the arrival of Hetman Petliura in Paris in 1925.

## 4. Defending the Republic and his Honor (August 1914—August 1917)

### 4.1 The Pride and Dilemmas of an Anarcho-Jewish Volunteer

Though he looked much younger in photographs from the time, Sholem Schwarzbard was nearly twenty-eight years old when the First World War began. Like many eastern European Jewish emigrants in Paris, he volunteered. His final act as a civilian was to marry Anna on August 24, 1914. At six a.m. on August 26, he departed Gare de Lyon in a train full of recruits.[177] Not yet a French citizen, he was assigned to the Foreign Legion's 1st Regiment (*Le prémiere régiment étranger*) training near Lyon. Anna disliked his decision to fight, but any complaints she may have had did not register with her duty-driven husband.

More troubling for him was how to reconcile the decision to volunteer with his antimilitarist convictions. The different reasons he gave in later years for volunteering attest to his inability to do so. He was, of course, not unique in this, and a controversy that broke out in the Anarchist world over the pacifist issue can be seen as a metaphor for Schwarzbard's individual struggle with it. Most leading voices in the movement stood against what they considered an imperialist war unleashed by reactionary states. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in New York, and Schwarzbard's old Comrade Pierre Ramus in Vienna, were among those who remained true to the letter of their pre-war antimilitarism, calling on young

[177] Typically, Schwarzbard says nothing about the abrupt farewell to Anna in any of his memoiristic writing.

Anarchists to resist the *furor patrioticus* possessing Europe.[178] The most venerated living theorist of Anarchism, Peter Kropotkin, saw an exception in France, however, defining it as "the embodiment of the spirit of freedom in Europe, that stood against the barrack-discipline-spirit of the militaristic Prussian-German Junkertum."[179] For Kropotkin France clearly stood on the side of right, and he issued a call to arms in her defense. The editor of New York's *Fraye arbeter-shtime* remembered the paper's careful approach to the controversy that ensued:

> We could not bring ourselves to belittle Kropotkin's opinion, to consider him senile, or as a betrayer of Anarchism. We looked for an explanation and justification for his position, and found it in his long-standing enthusiasm for the ideal of freedom that France had spread throughout the world.[180]

Although Schwarzbard never shared Kropotkin's enthusiasm for France, with the old Anarchist's blessings, he and other volunteers on the side of the Entente could temporarily shelve their antimilitarism and remain within the Anarchist fold. Paralleling Kropotkin's thinking without ever admitting a direct influence, he claims that in 1914 he found himself "in France, in the land that was the first to lift up the fight for equality and freedom.... like thousands of others, I believed that the land was threatened by German militarism..."[181]

In a slightly different account, Schwarzbard claims he ran "voluntarily in the fourteenth year to defend France, weak and insulted, against the 'barbarians.'"[182] In

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[178] Joseph Jacob Cohen. "*Di Yidish-anarkhistishe bavegung in Amerike: historisher iberblik un perzenlikhe iberlebungen"* [The Jewish-Anarchist Movement in America: Historical Overview and Personal Experiences] (Philadelphia: Radical Library, 1945), 324.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 209.

[182] Reyzn, *Leksikon*, s.v. "Sholem Shvartsbard." In a related example, Schwarzbard claims to have testified that he "immediately joined up with the French Army as a revolutionary, wanting to defend whatever remained for us of the great French Revolution." Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 355.

this explanation, Schwarzbard's sarcasm begins to suggest a greater degree of discomfort with his decision to volunteer, the quotation marks on the reference to German "barbarians" accentuating a fundamental difference between Schwarzbard and Kropotkin's opinions of France. This was not merely an ideological difference, but one based on very different responses to darker aspects of French society experienced first-hand. Unlike Kropotkin, who's belief in France stayed strong despite three-years spent in a French prison for membership in the First International, the Legion's brand of militarism and barbarity had an enduring, negative effect on Schwarzbard attitude to his adopted country. He complains that the professional legionnaire's "only duty is the cruel, inhuman soldierly discipline..." He goes on to say that, "in their work "civilizing" the quiet inhabitants of Africa: killing the men, raping the women, and through various military reports, they reach a certain rank; become a corporal and receive a copper, soldier's medal. This is the sum of their morality, their life motivation and goal."[183]

Unlike the Jews who volunteered in Germany, Schwarzbard also faced the troubling reality that to fight for France necessarily meant to fight for the Tsar—the ultimate barbarian for Jews.[184] While they may not have had 1789 on their side, Jewish German volunteers could easily motivate themselves for the fight against

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There is no record of this testimony in the stenographic notes from the Petliura trial. Schwarzbard does praise the French Revolution during the trial, but not in the context of his decision to volunteer.

[183] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself*, 36. Another former legionnaire, the Yiddish journalist N. Frank, who would later cover Schwarzbard's trial for the assassination of Petliura, commented how the idealism of many Jewish volunteers ran headlong into the reality of the Legion's professional mercenaries for whom "the rifle was a passion, a toy, almost happiness." See N. Frank, "*Soydes fun fremdn legion*," [Secrets of the Foreign Legion], *Haynt* (Paris), August 26, 1928. Schwarzbard also never showed the plainspoken gratitude of a Jewish volunteer like Lazare Silbermann, who wrote his wife on August 7, 1914 that he wanted to do his duty for France, a country "about which we have nothing to complain..." See the letter of Lazare Silbermann in *Paroles de Poilus: Lettres et carnets du front 1914-1918* (Toulon: Soleil, 2006).

[184] The Franco-Russian Alliance (1892) bound the two countries in the fight against Germany.

Russia, the home "of the 'Protocols,' the pogroms, destitution and persecution," while Jewish volunteers in France had to live with the fact that they were in part fighting and dying for their greatest enemy.[185] This was, of course, all the more troubling for emigrants like Schwarzbard who had fled the tyranny in Russia, and Schwarzbard addresses the issue both in his memoir, and in the two poems he composed on Jewish themes on the front.

At this early stage in his soldiering, however, despite being surrounded by Jewish Russian recruits, many of them radicals like himself, Schwarzbard felt like a man set apart, thrown uncomfortably back on himself by his lack of national and temporary eclipse of his international, revolutionary convictions. A tattered impression of this personal side of his war experience comes through in a second reason he gives for volunteering: "At the time of the war I ran away to hide in the trenches, so that I didn't have to look on passively and so I wouldn't have to hear rumor of the suffering of the world."[186] Even in this quote, dominated by the first person ("I ran away..." "I didn't have to look..." "I wouldn't have to hear...."), not far beneath the surface lies the desire shared by Jewish Russian volunteers not to be considered *embusqué* [a shirker]. Schwarzbard gives unforgettable expression to this latter concern in a letter ostensibly written by a volunteer named Friedman, but whose ideas and experience are nearly identical to his own. Friedman tells his father that if the Jewish immigrants had not volunteered there would have been pogroms in France of a very peculiar sort:

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[185] Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust: revised edition* (New York: Franklin Watts, 2001), 63.

[186] Letter from Sholem Schwarzbard (Paris) to Dr. Y.M. Zalkind (London) from November 2, 1925, Schwarzbard Papers YIVO, 41953.

> Pogroms you ask? Never fear father! Not, heaven forbid, like those in tsarist Russia. Here they would have had a completely different character: French women, whose men left to die for "their" country, would assault the "foreign" men, hit them, murderously pound them down... such a pogrom would be a bigger disgrace to live through than to be throttled by some hooligan in an attic or basement...[187]

In a third explanation for volunteering, Schwarzbard combines individual and Jewish motivations, moving beyond shame to a positive desire to excel as a fighting man, and to prove himself to the French by mobilizing the Jewish willingness for self-sacrifice he had inherited from his forefathers:

> And I also understood that the war would not establish justice in the world, that we had all been deceived like a blind flock of sheep. So what remained? *Kiddesh ha-shem*! [martyrdom] No one should throw it in our faces that we are cowards—and this is why we volunteered for the French army. We also couldn't look on while our neighbors; French acquaintances were torn from their families by force and driven to their deaths.[188]

Schwarzbard moves from his disillusioned "I," to a highly motivated "we" arising out of the unique position of Jewish volunteers. This was the most emphatic reason Schwarzbard ever gave for volunteering, but like the others it focused on French opinion—a Jew's need to prove himself to his neighbors. As part of an upbraiding from Anna recorded in his prison journal Schwarzbard gives one further reason for volunteering—ambition:

> It is I who sings your praises and make you look good. I would never let the world know the truth! I don't tell anyone, but I know. Why did you run to the

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[187] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself,* 137. Yehuda Bauer finds a similar feeling characteristic of Jewish volunteers on both sides of the conflict: "Jewish enlistment appears to have been prompted by a basic feeling of insecurity in the Gentile environment and a consequent desire to prove a loyalty equal to, or beyond, that shown by others." Bauer, *Holocaust*, 63.

[188] Quoted from a chapter of his war memoir that was left out of "*In krig mit zikh aleyn*" called "Between Two Feelings." This chapter appeared appeared in the *Parizer Haynt*, May 9, 1928. The context for this reflection on his reasons for volunteering is the mutiny of Russian volunteers in the Legion in late June 1915.

> war? Why did you fly with a rifle to Russia? Why have you done all these things to me? You think I don't know: You wanted to be a big man, huh?...[189]

If Anna's accusation is true, Schwarzbard perhaps makes for a less noble figure, but also a stronger one, going to war for reasons of his own and not merely driven there by history and circumstance. Of course, exactly what Sholem Schwarzbard was thinking and feeling when he volunteered in 1914 is impossible to say with any certainty, but the many reasons he gave for doing so in later years attest to just how little peace he found with the decision. Arguably, the blood he spilled for France deepened a sense of moral debt that he paid off, at least in part, with the blood of Symon Petliura.

## 4.2 Training for the Legion in Lyon and Avignon

Schwarzbard's thirty-five-man company was made up mostly of Jewish Russian volunteers. They trained alongside Chinese, Africans, Arabs, Indians and "races that ethnographers perhaps don't even know exist."[190] In this, the Legion kept Schwarzbard in circumstances he had known throughout his life, being most intimately involved with Jews, but at the same time associated with an extremely diverse mix of ethnicities. Subject to the Legion's relentless drilling, ethnic differences between recruits were soon forgotten, however. He complained about the Legion's "seven circles of hell," but also expressed pride when he successfully

[189] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 306-7.
[190] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself*, 36.

passed through them, boasting in a poem that he would no longer "prove his strength" with words, but in deeds.[191]

Worse than the physical challenges, life in the military put Schwarzbard's sensitive nature into a tragic bind. He wanted to be not just a good, but an exceptional soldier, yet continued to hold deeply embedded anti-authoritarian and pacifist convictions. Schwarzbard's Jewishness increased the strain, compelling him to disprove stereotypes of Jewish martial ineptitude. At night, when his brain was a "windmill" and his heart was "sand," his irrepressible individualism reasserted itself in Yiddish poems of revolt that expressed thoughts he perhaps dared not write in French.

Written in October 1914, one of Schwarzbard's first poems from basic training, *In shlof....* [In Sleep....], described "seeds" gathered during the day's training that passed like soldiers in revue at night.[192] These seeds bore the dark fruit of anxiety for the battles to come and for the ever-present threat of landing in the Legion's infamous penal battalion.[193] In a second, similar poem from October, *In shlofloze nekht* [In Sleepless Nights], Schwarzbard complains that even the night no

[191] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 60. The special need of Jews to prove themselves finds telling expression in the difference between the French and Yiddish inscriptions on a monument commemorating the Jewish soldiers fallen for France in the Second World War. The French reads, "*Honneur et gloire/Aux combattants juifs/morts pour la France,"* while the Yiddish reads: *"Eybiker ondenk di yidishe/kemfer gefaln far frankreykh/un farn koved fun yidishn folk."* [In eternal memory of the Jewish fighters fallen for France and for the honor of the Jewish people].

[192] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 32.

[193] These were the Legion's *"bats d'Af"* [battalions of Africa], that Schwarzbard called "African Siberia." Albert Londres considered these battalions worse than anything in Dante's inferno. See Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews and the French Foreign Legion* (New York: Ktav, 1975), 10.

longer gives him peace. Shadows on the barracks walls “punish" him, threatening his equilibrium, and depriving him of much needed rest:[194]

*Zey nemen on gayster geshtaltn*
*Un minen zikh un makhn grimasn;*
*Kh'shoyder.... zey kumen mikh vargn*
*Di shlangn, zey viln mikh baysn!*

[Taking on ghostly shapes they quiver
Change their colors and frown
They come to choke me.... I shiver.
The snakes, would bite and bring me down!][195]

Tortured nights did not prevent Schwarzbard distinguishing himself as a quality recruit.[196] For his skill as a marksman he was nicknamed “Wilhelm Tell” by fellow legionnaires, and in October was selected to train as a machine gunner in Avignon. His new barracks was a chateau built for the "anti-pope" at the time of the medieval split in papal authority.[197] Although Schwarzbard's nights were still cheerless in this "castle of the devil," he nevertheless showed a distinct pride in the historical significance of his new quarters.[198] Indeed, a poem written at the time gives the distinct impression he felt the place somehow fit his destiny. After two weeks in Avignon, Schwarzbard’s unit transferred to the front near Reims for lessons in historical humility.

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[194] Schwarzbard included two very different poems under the same title in *Dreams and Reality*. The first was written on a rainy night and plays on a trope of dripping. While the rain drips on the roof of the barracks, his heart drips in is chest. The trope is in fact so prevalent in his poetry, one has to wonder whether Schwarzbard was influenced by Paul Verlaine's famous "*Il pleure dans mon Coeur*": *Il pleure dans mon Coeur/Comme il pleut sur la ville/Quelle est cette langueur/Qui pénètre mon Coeur?* Both of Schwarzbard's "sleepless" poems end with the warrior poet's focus set on the soldier standing guard while he lies in his bunk secretly awake. Attesting to his conflicted feelings about existence in the Legion, in one poem he turns his gaze on the guard as a source of comfort, while in the other he “feels in the step of the guard, the threatening breath of the "corrupter." For the second “In Sleepless Nights…” Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 21.

[195] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 30.

[196] Ibid. 32.

[197] *“A ovent mit Sholem Shvartsbard,” Haynt* (Warsaw), November 4, 1927.

[198] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 35-6.

4.3 In the Trenches: Champagne

When Schwarzbard's unit reached the front in the Champagne region temperatures were dropping with the arrival of the war's first winter. He campaigned throughout 1915, the bloodiest year of the war for the French, their armies suffering 335,000 dead and countless more wounded. The Legion took exceptionally high losses, Schwarzbard surviving some the bloodiest encounters of the war without serious bodily harm. He did not exaggerate when he called his survival "miraculous," his regiment's 4,000 men being repeatedly "thrown into the furnace":

> In its first action, charging in the face of machine gun fire, across trenches and barbed wire, it had been virtually annihilated. Recruited up to strength again, it had gone on thus through the entire war, depleted almost to nothing over and over again—a sort of sacrificial corps, ever at the worst place.[199]

A month after his deployment, the Battle of Champagne began on December 20, 1914. Not part of the main attack, Schwarzbard's unit was involved in short, bloody skirmishes between zigzag lines of trenches that "swallowed... regiments, battalions and divisions" whole.[200] There could not have been a form of warfare less suitable to his expansive, impatient personality, and his initial excitement was soon

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[199] Szajkowski, *Legion*, 26. The Legion was hit exceptionally hard, but the French Army in general suffered more than others in the First World War. As Eugen Weber has said: "1,000 Frenchmen were killed day after day, nearly 1 of every 5 men mobilized, 10.5 percent of the country's active male population. That was more than any other Western belligerent would suffer. The British counted half as many dead and missing, Germans and Austro-Hungarians, who had incurred heavy losses, never got as far as 10 percent. About 1,400,000 French lost their lives; well over 1,000,000 had been gassed, disfigured, mangled, amputated, left permanent invalids. Wheelchairs, crutches, empty sleeves dangling loosely or tucked into pockets became common sights. More than that had suffered some sort of wound: Half of the 6,500,000 who survived the war had sustained injuries. Most visible, 1,100,000 were those who had been evidently diminished and described as *mutilés*, a term the dictionary translates as 'maimed' or 'mangled,' and English usage prefers to clothe in a euphemism: 'disabled.'" Eugen Weber, "A Wilderness Called Peace," in *Voices and Views: a History of the Holocaust,* ed. Debórah Dwork (New York: The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, 2002), 53-6

[200] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 49.

followed by a period of crisis. Written on January 21, 1915, Schwarzbard's first poetic offering from the front "*Kum shoyn vos shneler*" [Come More Quickly Already] was a plea for relief. He already sensed his "sacred" ideals melting like "iron and steel" in the furnace of the conflict.[201] In fact his ideals had already suffered meltdown, along with those of many of the Legion's other Russian volunteers—both Jewish and non-Jewish. In early 1915 the first tremors of discontent were felt in the ranks. These grew into full-fledged mutiny by June. In a letter to the French high command from February 23, 1915, the Russian military attaché in Paris, Colonel Ignatieff, began to speak openly of "*un sentiment de mécontentement*" among his countrymen fighting in the Legion.[202]

With his first flurry of front poems, Schwarzbard expressed the dark mood in his own clumsy way with words. On January 22, 1915, he wrote an extended meditation on a wounded soldier slowly expiring in no-man's-land. Pleading for help, the doomed man hoisted a white flag, but the soldiers on both sides of the line did nothing: "*Zey hobm gekukt, gekukt un gezen/gekukt un gezen un gelozt im oysgeyn!*" [They looked, looked and saw/looked and saw and let him die!][203] The poem is called "*Un ikh hob gezen. . .*" [And I saw...] Typically, the "I" of Schwarzbard's narrator is tortured by moral insight he assumes is lacking in his

[201] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 41.

[202] Found in the *archives militaire de la Vèmé Armée,* in Vincennes, France. SHD, 19N840. Available online at: http://pages14-18.mesdiscussions.net/pages1418/forum-pages-histoire/autre/revolte-legionnaire-russes-sujet_11426_1.htm.

[203] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 59.

brothers-in-arms, whom he calls “cruelly cold warrior scoundrels” [*beyz-kalte kriger-gazlonim*].[204]

The poem reflects the stark contrast between the Legion's volunteers and its hardened professionals, yet there is also something personally revealing in how Schwarzbard sets himself apart from his fellow soldiers. Reflecting his alienation more generally, the tendency in his war writing was to escape the contradictions and helplessness of his situation through personal triumphalism or moral indignation. In poems of the first sort, Schwarzbard champions an abstract belief in ultimate victory, in those of the second in ultimate justice. At least on paper, both tendencies obscure the immediate physical and psychological horror of war that engulfed him. For their concrete imagery and conceptual clarity, the two poems Schwarzbard wrote on specifically Jewish themes during the war represent exceptions to this tendency. Although this first bloom of Jewish awareness was short-lived, it was significant biographically for showing the potential depth of Schwarzbard's Jewish imagination.

## 4.4 Schwarzbard's War Poems on Jewish Themes

This initial period of discontent in Champagne yielded Schwarzbard’s only two war poems dedicated to Jewish themes. Looking back on the life of the assassin, some observers saw the war as the catalyst in Schwarzbard's return to his Jewish roots, but in his poetry from the war the same universal and personal themes

[204] All of Schwarzbard's war poetry was published under Schwarzbard's penname "*Bal-khaloymes*" [Dreamer]. Bal-khaloymes speaks directly in the voice and from the experience of his creator, making the poetry extremely valuable to the biographer.

that dominated his pre-war creations continued to be the priority. Importantly, the Jewish poems were written around the time of Russian revolt in the ranks of the Legion. The Russian military attaché in France, Colonel Ignatieff, singled out Jewish volunteers for the lion's share of the blame. Making a strong distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish Russian legionnaires, he praises the latter in a letter to the French High Command:

> It is absolutely necessary for me to point out the tremendous difference that exists between the two very distinct categories of Russian volunteers. The first.... ran spontaneously to offer their services to France, friend and ally, and combat the common enemy. This category also has a large number of educated men and cultured: students, artists, engineers, lawyers, men of letters, etc... Everyone in this category that you could call the volunteers by "conviction".... are motivated by a patriotic ideal and full of zeal and goodwill. They ask nothing more than to fight.[205]

Ignatieff contrasts these exemplary soldiers to a far less noble "second category" of volunteer:

> As to the second category of Russian volunteers who, unfortunately, are more numerous, it for the most part consists of Polish Jews, emigrated from Russia who live wretchedly in Paris with their large families and scratch out a living practicing different professions such as tailors, hat makers, shoemakers, shoe salesmen, etc... The war threw this whole world literally on to the street. They chose to volunteer to avoid dying of hunger and to secure bread for their families...[206]

Delving deeper into this racially based apology for his troops, Ignatieff goes on to blame poor morale among Russian volunteers not only on Jews, but also on what he considered the degradation of fighting next to Africans. Of course, the French high command did not necessarily accept Ignatieff's analysis of the situation, and Schwarzbard nowhere complains about antisemitism in his French commanders,

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[205] Letter from Colonel Ignatieff to the French high command, February 23, 1915, *Justice militaire Vème Armée, SHD,* 19N840.

[206] Ibid.

but his two Jewish poems give a unique view into the special pressures felt by Jewish volunteers in this period of discontent among Russian soldiers on the front.

Written on January 25, 1915, the first poem, "*Shtil iz di nakht...*" [Quiet is the Night...], introduces images from a rabbinic midrash into the scarred landscape of the Western Front. The poem begins with an evocation of the front's oppressive silence that, like the soldier's life, can be broken by the next explosion. A nearby graveyard adds to the sense of foreboding for soldiers who were "not alive and not dead, without peace and without will" as they prepared to go over the top:

> *Un azoy vi di beyner fun sheyvet Efraim,*
> *vos hobn gevalgert zikh in tol fun Yizrael*
> *oykh hobn gerirt fun di griber di meysim,*
> *gegartelt, batsoygn mit fayl un mit boygn*
> *getribn, geyogt fun a vilder nekome*
> *tsu got, tsu dem himl, tsu erd un tsu mentshn,*
> *tsu ales vos s'hot zey getribn tsum goyrl*
> *un darfn itst shitsn di bitere sonim —*
> *kemfn mit zeyere eygene brider...*
>
> [And like the bones of Ephraim's Tribe
> That were scattered in the Valley of Jezreel,
> The dead men now stirred from the trenches,
> Belted, and armed with arrow and bow
> Driven, flushed out by wild vengeance
> Against God, against heaven, against earth and against men,
> Against everything that drove them to their fate
> They must now defend their bitter enemies—
> To fight with their own brothers....][207]

Devoid of patriotism, Schwarzbard's "dead men" find a reason to fight in "wild vengeance" against God, earth and men, but they spare the enemy soldiers in the German trenches. The poet addresses an absurd situation in which of men have "to fight with their own brothers" through the lens of Rabbinic tradition. According to

[207] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 65-6.

the Babylonian Talmud, Ephraim was a tribe noted for its warriors. The latter miscalculated the time for the Exodus out of Egyptian slavery, leaving thirty years before Moses' divinely sanctioned deliverance. They were defeated by the Philistines, and only ten survived to tell of the rout.[208] In one legend, Moses and the children of Israel avoid the place where "their bones were strewn in heaps along the roads," God having threatened to deny them access to the Holy Land if they entered a graveyard of rebels.[209] Reversing rabbinic interpretations, Schwarzbard makes heroes of Ephraim's warriors. They are no longer cursed as in Moses' day, rather exemplary and celebrated for their inner strength.

In an important letter from the front, Schwarzbard tells his father of a conversion experience to a Jewish God that he associates with the warriors of Ephraim. He recalls standing alone at his post on a dark night, when a voice descended from the dark heavens, saying:

> Go to the Valley of Jezreel and gather together the thirty thousand heroes of Ephraim. Those that didn't wait for the Redemption to come, but brought it themselves. Those who preferred the choice of death by starvation and of burning deserts to the slavish "fleshpots" of Egypt—and divide them in three groups. Give each a pot and in each pot place a fiery cinder and break it over the heads of your enemies. Take with you Aaron and Gideon, and the brave women Deborah and Judith, and also the prince Jonathan with his weapon carriers.... Go to the gates of Jerusalem and gather together the brave, old heroes, those who defended the gates of the city....[210]

Schwarzbard's angel reminds him of a student in Kishinev who, unarmed, defended himself against hooligans in the pogrom of 1903, but also tells him it would be

[208] *Babylonian Talmud*. Sanhedrin 92b.
[209] *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. s.v. "Ephraim."
[210] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself*, 133.

"better to teach him to hold a gun in his hand."[211] Schwarzbard's voice then supersedes that of the angel. He revels in the potential for Jewish power in the hundreds of thousands of soldiers learning to fight in the World War. Schwarzbard proudly tells his father that he has changed and is no longer afraid and no longer cries. He can now withstand anything, even pogroms. He claims his comrades on the front no longer whisper about him behind his back, and have stopped advising him to report sick. He now feels "healthy as a giant," and proudly proclaims that his neurotic self was gone forever. He also attributes the change to a letter from his father received just before he had his cathartic vision:

> Your last letter... brought me great joy. Your blessing helped me tremendously. "The God of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah will stand by you in your need, my child! He, the God of our Prophets, he will protect and shield you from all those who would do you harm!" Thank you, father! I accept this God! The God of martyrs, of holy men, and not the God of *ushpizin*,[212] the God of slick, [hypocritically] pious Jews.... Oh, the God of our Prophets—He is truly great, powerful and exalted. He doesn't want prayers.... He despises slaves.... He's not after bribes.... the blood and fat of oxen won't appease Him.... He is a God and loves men, those men who can sacrifice themselves for a great ideal.[213]

Influenced by the angel and his father, Schwarzbard found in Ephraim ground on which to make a stand, and though his Jewish interests remained ephemeral during the World War, the path that eventually led to the Torah of militancy he preached after the assassination of Petliura had been opened.

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[211] *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Ephraim," 134.

[212] *Ushpizin* are the seven "guests, " Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David, traditionally invited into the booths erected for the Jewish holiday Sukkoth. Schwarzbard proposes a new kind of Jewishness based on a militant tradition distinct from the more ritualistic and dogmatic forms of orthodoxy. The distinction parallels one famously made by Michah Yosef Berdichevsky between Judaism of the "sword" and Judaism of the "book," although he never explicitly mentions the latter anywhere in his writing.

[213] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself*, 135.

Five days after writing his first poem on a Jewish theme, Schwarzbard composed his second and last. It was called "*A yidisher keyver*" [A Jewish Grave].[214] The poem begins with a description of a graveyard "blooming" with wooden crosses. Turning away, the poet spots a solitary "Jewish grave": *"Un vayt fun di ale. An eynzamer keyver/ a yosem, farblondzhet tsvishn di vegn..."* [And far from them all, a solitary grave/an orphan, lost among the roads....][215] There is no cross to adorn this fresh grave, only a small tree, its bitter roots entangled with the sinews of a dead Jewish soldier buried there:

> *A bleykher, farkholemter darinker bokher*
> *gelebt hot in fremde, in andere veltn;*
> *farmogt hot keyn goyel, keyn eyntsikn korev —*
> *di velt zikh gekumert on im hot gor zeltn*
> *zayn foter in shlakht — zayne sonim farteydikt.*
> *gekemft, farteydkt un oykhet geshtorbn,*
> *zayn muter fun dorf iz fartribn gevorn*
> *un in di pogromen gefaln a korbm.*
> *Di shvester getrofn der zelbiker goyrl,*
> *der bruder far frayhayt gekemft vi di heldn,*
> *geshtorbn af kidesh-hashem vi di oves...*
> *un er iz gekumen zikh frayvilik meldn.*
> *un shtendik in kamf iz er der ershter geshprungen,*
> *dos blut fun a makabi in im hot geflosn,*
> *un flink vi a leyb in shlakht un tsum ringen,*
> *fun di khashmoynim di lere genosn—*
> *iz eyn mol in a vildn shreklikhn onfal*
> *der ershter in fayer gelofn, zikh tsaygn,*
> *gerufn, ermutikt tsum kamf di khaveyrim,*
> *biz vanen der toyt hot getsvungen im shvaygn,*
> *Itst valgert zikh ergez a farloyener keyver,*
> *farvorfn un fremd fun toyt un fun lebn,*
> *fun zayne khaloymes in kamf ba zayn lebn—*
> *dos beyml der eyntsiker eydes geblibn...*
>
> [A pale, dreamy, skinny young man
> Lived in strange, in different worlds;

[214] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 16-7.
[215] Ibid. 16.

He had no savior, not one relation—
The world seldom paid him much mind
His father in battle—defended his enemies.
Fought, defended and also died,
From her village, his mother was driven
And then fell a victim to pogroms.
His sister met the same fate,
His brother fought for freedom like a hero,
Died a martyr like his fathers before him...
And he came and volunteered freely.
And in battle always the first to jump in,
The blood of the Maccabees flowed in him,
And swift like a lion in battle and to wrestle,
From the Hasmoneans he enjoyed learning—
Once in a wild, terrible attack
He was the first to run in the fire, to prove himself,
Called out, made brave his comrades for battle,
Until death forced him to silence,
Now somewhere there lays a lost grave,
Misplaced and estranged from death and from life,
Of his dreams in battle during his life—
The little tree is the only remaining witness...][216]

The poet doesn't say for which side the dead soldier had fought, focusing instead on what David Roskies calls the "total and terrifying isolation felt by Jewish soldiers fighting in the Great War...."[217] The little tree symbolizes this isolation, as out of place in the carnage as the dead soldier buried beneath it. It is also a hopeful sign, however. The tree is natural, unlike the forest of crosses nearby. The trope of isolation is intensified by memories of father, mother, sister and brother that make his distant death all the more painful. The tree stands not for creed or faith, but for the organic connection to a people set apart that Schwarzbard was beginning to feel more powerfully in himself. He is now a Hasmonean and Maccabee, and even the revolutionary fight falls under a Jewish rubric.

[216] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 16-7.
[217] David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse,* 137.

Nowhere else in his poetry was Schwarzbard's imagery so clear, or content so precise as in these two Jewish poems. Still they were sobering meditations, awareness of himself as a Jew only aggravating his sense of isolation on the front. This feeling must have been especially difficult to endure for a man so in need of companionship.[218] Perhaps solitude and the feeling of being "at war with himself" were too much, or perhaps revolutionary suspicion of chauvinism reemerged, whatever the reason, Schwarzbard's Jewish voice fell silent. His next poems returned to personal recollections of erotic disappointment and hopes of martial triumph. After that, Schwarzbard wrote no more poetry until the fifth of April by which time he had reached a new low, expressing his anger on the impossibility of heroism in the trenches, and warning young recruits to guard themselves against the naive optimism with which he had entered the fray. Typical of his ups and downs, however, new hope engendered by spring weather and the promise of a major offensive lifted his mood again in late April and early May 1915.[219]

## 4.5 Arras (April-August 1915)

After passing six long winter months in Champagne, Schwarzbard's unit transferred north to Arras in April 1915. There were rumors of a massive offensive that would put a quick end to the war. Schwarzbard and the other "exhausted troglodytes" were "brought back to life" after the bloody winter of 1914-15: "We all

[218] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 48-9 and 37.

[219] Ibid.29. Although Schwarzbard included no more explicitly Jewish content in his poetry after the two poems penned in Champagne, in his memoir he tells a number of Jewish anecdotes, including the story of an unlikely reunion between a Jewish legionnaire and his brother, a German soldier taken prisoner by his unit. He also notes a German prisoner swaying back and forth over a Hebrew prayer book and thanking God that he would now survive the war to return to his wife and children. Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself*, 207-9.

found ourselves in the highest spirits. After cruel, cold winter in the trenches we finally saw broad green horizons lay before our eyes after a long march north from Champagne."[220] Even more ready than usual to celebrate an end to limitation and revel in the immensity, Schwarzbard described his happy mood in a poem called "*Ikh ayl zikh..."* [I'm in a Hurry....]:

> *Ikh ayl zikh, bin shtark umgeduldik,*
> *hob nokhgelozt endlekh di tsoym.*
> *dos ferd yogt geshvind, vi an odler,*
> *in vaytn umendlekhn roym.*
>
> [I hurry along, am mighty impatient
> I've finally left the barrier behind.
> The horse rushes swift, like an eagle
> Into wide unending space.][221]

While it lasted, Schwarzbard enjoyed the movement, but on the morning of the attack, May 9, 1915, he remembered Anna's "nestling arms." Like an inscription on his own gravestone, he used the Jewish calendar year to date a poem written just before the great battle began. It was ominously titled, "*Mayn letster vunsh..."* [My Last Wish....].[222] Schwarzbard's descriptions of the attack are anemic, and fail miserably to describe one of the bloodiest days in the history of the French Army. Unconsciously shielding himself from memories of the horror, his words lift him out of the action, rather than involve him in it. A general picture of the chaos emerges in his memoir, however.[223] Given the impossible goal of capturing the infamous "Hill 140" near Carency, most of Schwarzbard's unit was killed or wounded. After an initial, very costly success, the Legion was forced to abandon the hill, lacking

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[220] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself,* 94.
[221] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 38.
[222] Ibid. 22.
[223] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself,* 56-67.

reserves to stave off a German counterattack. The futility of the effort doused Schwarzbard's rekindled enthusiasm for the war. Claimed a success by the French high command, he wrote of the "victory" with the bitterest sarcasm in the days that followed. On May 15, 1915 he challenged the Generals' claims with the words: "Enough! Enough with being the victor/Enough with swimming in blood...."[224]

Between this first major attack in Arras on May 9 and a second on June 16, Schwarzbard wrote his most thematically consistent group of poems—all of them against the war. He was not alone in his despondency. The entire unit shared his dark mood after the second massive attack at Arras on June 16. The battle left only 930 of 5000 legionnaires able to fight, and the Russian volunteers verged on open revolt. Making matters worse, rumors spread of a circular issued by the High Command that offered Russian volunteers a chance either to return home or transfer to a unit of the regular French army. That promise was never honored, and in late June 1915 the Legion's Second Regiment (Schwarzbard was in the Legion's First Regiment) began the "revolt of Carency," disobeying orders to return to the front from rest areas.[225] Nine of the mutineers were executed, including some Jewish volunteers, while eighteen were sentenced to hard labor. The affair caused an uproar in Paris.[226] At the time still an anarchist syndicalist, Gustave Hervé wrote to Jewish volunteers at the front from his paper *La Guerre Sociale*: "Forgive those miserable non-coms who have been calling you *sales youpins* [dirty Jews] and *mangeurs de gamelle* [opportunists], you who came forward of your own free will

[224] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 28.

[225] Zosa Szajkowski, *Legion*, 30. Szajkowski errors in dating the revolt before the second attack on June 16. It did not in fact happen until after that attack.

[226] Letter from the Commander of the French Fifth Army Guillaumat from June 22, 1915.

full of enthusiasm, ready to give your blood for France, the symbol in your eyes of all liberty, all moral grandeur. Forgive them, they know not what they do."[227]

Fortunately for Schwarzbard, the Second Legionnaire Regiment revolted first. The action taken against the mutiny of the Second was so controversial that when Schwarzbard's First Regiment also ignored orders to move to the front they were treated leniently.[228] While the High Command decided how to proceed in their case, Schwarzbard's unit was imprisoned in a barn guarded by Senegalese legionnaires. Half of the mutineers wanted to return to the front before they were shot like their comrades in the Second Regiment, the other half wanted to hold out until guaranteed the promise of the circular would be honored.

Schwarzbard claimed that "in his head" he was with those who wanted to give in, but he felt obliged to stay with the others. He also claimed to have been the only participant in the revolt to be punished: "Because the revolt of the Second Regiment had caused such a stir in Paris we got off easy.... I alone was detained by my captain, who gave me fifteen days prison. Go try and tell someone that I, the only victim, was the one who was less guilty than anyone..."[229] After serving a short prison sentence, Schwarzbard returned to the Legion for only a few weeks in late

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[227] Szajkowski, *Legion*, 32. It is interesting to note that Hervé would later politically turn to the right, and joined the chorus of Schwarzbard's detractors on the French right during his affair.

[228] This was certainly part of the reason Schwarzbard was sure to correct presiding judge Flory on his military record during his trial: Flory: "You voluntarily joined, at the end of August 1914, the Second Legionnaire?" Schwarzbard: "The First." *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39472.

[229] Sholem Schwarzbard, "*In velt-krig un nokh im*," [In the World War and after it] *Haynt* (Paris), May 9, 1928. This version of Schwarzbard's memoir is, for the most part, the same as that published in book form in 1933. No mention is made in the latter of Schwarzbard's arrest for his part in the revolt, however. Compare Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself,* 87-93.

July and August 1915 before being transferred out of the Foreign Legion to a unit of the regular French army.

4.6 The 363rd Regular Infantry Regiment (August 1915-March 1, 1916)

In August Schwarzbard and twelve other Russian Jewish volunteers were chosen for duty in the regular French 363rd Infantry Regiment stationed 500 kilometers southeast of Arras in the Vosges Mountain region. Though a far quieter sector than either Champagne or Carency (Arras), he became increasingly irritable, his feelings of isolation and impatience reaching crisis levels in the new surroundings. The Legion maintained a good level of segregation between its ethnic groups, but now, for the first time in his life, Schwarzbard found himself outside some form of Jewish "ghetto." He did not react well to the change.

He was required more than ever to maintain a brave front. Legionnaire Tretiack, another soldier transferred from Carency, had only good to say about Schwarzbard's presence in their new company: "He was the most agreeable person that I knew in the regiment. What heart—a good, sensible boy loved by everybody.... I saw him as a lone volunteer on the most perilous missions, as if he wanted to keep others from mishap."[230] Tretiack recalled Schwarzbard once telling him, "I am a volunteer and I do what I have to do. What is more, I am a Jew and my conduct has to be exemplary. I must leave the French with a good impression."[231] Tretiack described Schwarzbard as the most light-hearted and encouraging to his fellow

[230] Letter signed Tretiack to unknown recipient in French, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 37060.
[231] Ibid. 37060-1.

soldiers despite his bad French.[232] A small man, his French comrades in the 363rd dubbed him "*le petit horologer*" [the little clockmaker], a nickname that stayed with him the rest of his life.

Poems from the time of his service with the 363rd Regiment reveal that beneath the "light" facade Schwarzbard was a deeply troubled man. The titles reflect loneliness, darkness and despair: *"Af der vakh"* [On Guard] *"Nakht klangen"* [Night Sounds],*"Falsher alarm"* [False Alarm], and *"Santinel"* [Sentinel]. All situated at night, darkness becomes a metaphor for Schwarzbard's state of mind. Written on November 4, 1915, the last poem in the list, "Sentinel," provides a good example of Schwarzbard's feelings of oppressive solitude. Standing guard as the "one and only" [*eyntsik eyner*], he asks the darkness:

> "*Mayn gever iz shtayf, farglivert*
> *shteyt mir ba der rekhter hand*
> *vemen zol ikh den bashitsn —*
> *vu vet zayn mayn foterland?*
>
> [My gun is stiff, congealed
> It stands by my right hand
> Then whom should I protect?
> Where will be my fatherland?][233]

In quoting this poem, the historian Zosa Szajkowski attributed it to "the Jewish legionnaire Sholem Schwarzbard while on guard duty somewhere in the Vosges Mountains during World War I."[234] Szajkowski was mistaken in one detail. Schwarzbard was no longer in the Legion when he wrote this, but already assigned

[232] Tretiack letter, 37061.
[233] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 10.
[234] Szajkowski, *Legion,* 11.

to the 363rd, where his lack of patriotism was felt more acutely than in the so-called "Jewish Legion."

In a poem called "*Far vos?"* [Why?] from this period (there are two poems with this title in *Dreams and Reality*) Schwarzbard asks, "Why, why have you come to me? I am nothing more than a *goles-mentsh* [an exile], a wanderer; life and the world are wild and strange to me." Such feelings of alienation intensified when Christmas heralded the onset of a second bitter winter on the front. In a poem called *Tsu vaynakht* [To Christmas], religion becomes the impassable no-man's land separating him from his French comrades. Inverting the Christian messianic image of "the thief in the night," the starless night falls like a "bandit." The second stanza ends with "dark spirits swirling" around the solitary guard. He describes the terrifying effect they have on him:

> *Ikh shtey dort in mitn, iber dem opgrund,*
> *gedrikt un gebundn fun pakhed tsum ort;*
> *mir drot fun fornt a shreklikher munster*
> *un epes nisht zeybares unter mir loyert. . .*
>
> *ikh shtey af mayn postn azoy vi nisht zikher*
> *s'tantst, s'treyselt dos gever in der hand,*
> *ot fangen on kneytchen zikh, kortshen di knien*
> *nor fest mikh halt unter di finstere vant.*
>
> *Vist iz der opgrund, toyt shtil arum:*
> *tsaytvayz hert men dos klingen fun glok:*
> *dos zeynen zikh makrev di gloybns farfirte*
> *tsum Moylekh, tsum Momoyn, dem goldenem bok...*
>
> [I stand in the middle, above the abyss,
> Pressed and bound to the place by fear;
> I'm threatened by a terrifying cathedral before me
> And something invisible stalks me below...
>
> I stand at my post, as if I'm not sure
> In my hand the rifle dances and shakes,

Suddenly my knees start to buckle and bend
Only the dark wall supports me.

Void is the abyss, everything is dead still:
Sometimes a bell is heard ringing;
That is the approach of believers seduced
By Moloch, by Mammon, by the Golden Calf....][235]

Not since writing "A Jewish Grave" the previous January had Schwarzbard expressed such an acute awareness of his alienation from the war's Christian aspect seen here as idolatry. For the lonely guard, the shadowy cathedral across no-man's land is a temple for the enemy's pagan sacrifice. Just as Schwarzbard felt a connection to Jews fighting across the lines for the German army, Christmas made him aware of a similar connection between Christian soldiers on both sides. What was a comfort to these, made the Jewish soldier swoon. He feels himself surrounded, pursued from every direction. Like in a nightmare he cannot call out, or turn to anyone for relief, the celebration of a Christian holiday undermining his stability more than combat ever could.

Feeling increasingly estranged from his fellow soldiers and oppressed by the war, Schwarzbard begins to think of escape. In a poem written on February 18, 1916, "*Ba a breg fun taykhl....*" [By the Edge of a Stream....], he asks the happy, clear, free waves to take him away with them down the wide river.[236] Three days later, on February 21, 1916, he seeks "a light that shines from afar...." and calls out into the abyss, "come my child, let us get ready to leave faster still...." This is not the light of

[235] I am forced to translate the Yiddish "*goldener bok*" as the "Golden Cow," because the literal translation as "golden goat" makes a farce of what Schwarzbard clearly intended as a very serious poem. In any case, this seems to be what Schwarzbard had in mind, the "*bok*" being used as a convenient rhyme with "*glok.*" Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 12.

[236] Ibid. 23.

resilient hope that Schwarzbard had earlier conjured in his despair, but rather a light calling him finally to succumb to the death he had avoided through sixteen months of combat.

Schwarzbard had finally caught what the legionnaires called "*la cafard*" [the cockroach]—a suicidal state of battle fatigue.[237] He described his condition: "I was in a depressed state. I felt deprived of my will. I didn't have the slightest desire, or the slightest inspiration. I let myself go without caring about anything that might happen. Oh, time! What terrible god, full of wrath, created you and gave you the power to take everything on your wings that move without respite into eternity?..."[238] The despairing mood experienced in milder forms many times before became acute, and the French Army, engaged in the desperate defensive of Verdun to the north, looked unlikely to send him home in glory any time soon. It offered him instead the dismal prospect of a slow-bleeding war of attrition in an obscure sector of the front.

Not long after this, on March 1, 1916, Sholem Schwarzbard found his way off the Western Front. It was on this day that he won the *Croix de Guerre*. His citation read: "Excellent soldier. Always volunteered for dangerous duty. On the first day of March 1916, at La Chapelotte, while standing guard at the end of an advanced trench, he was seriously wounded while throwing grenades."[239] His fellow soldier Tretiack remembered that Schwarzbard had volunteered that night to relieve a soldier named "Gazela" from Monaco who had taken ill. Manning a forward trench

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[237] Szajkowski, *Legion*, 9-10.

[238] Comments to the untitled French translation of the poem "*Ba a breg fun taykhl*," Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71303.

[239] *Le Figaro*, May 19, 1927.

close enough to the enemy lines to toss grenades at them, he was hit by a German bullet. Tretiack himself was on duty that night, and later heard how Schwarzbard had been taken out of the lines mumbling, "*Ce n'est rien, ce n'est rien.*"[240]

A poem, *Un er hot zi gelibt...* [And He Loved Her...], written on the day he was wounded, suggests there may have been more than bravery motivating his actions that night. Indeed, Schwarzbard may well have facilitated his escape from the Western Front. The poem gives clear expression to the weight of expections, the Beloved making fame the price of her love:

> *— du vilst gelibt oykh zayn? Dan mustu groys vern,*
> *un vayt un breyt dayn nomen klingen zol,*
> *fil on di velt mit dayn rum un renome,*
> *nor dan, nor dan, vestu gelibt oykh zayn…*
>
> [So you also want to be loved? Then you must become great,
> And your name must resound far and wide,
> Fill the world with your fame and renown,
> Only then, only then, will you also be loved.][241]

The Beloved's request is both cruel and absurd, being made to a man lost in the hopeless anonymity of the trenches and engulfed by constant reminders of his personal insignificance. The pressure to prove himself concentrates in the "snake gaze" of the Beloved, which must be endured while she scoffs at every sacrifice he offers. The Beloved disdains his "weak and sickly" demeanor, but still presses him "falsely" in her arms, making repeated demands for glorious deeds. "His contemplation thrown away, he flung himself into the fray," that day's strange conflation of dream and reality bringing him to the thin line between life and death:

> *Un vayt in der shtiler un tunkeler nakht*

[240] Tretiack letter, Schwarzbard Papers, 37061.
[241] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 53.

*hot a shos in der luftn funandergekrakht*
*un zinloz fartrunken, in blut ayngerikht*
*der toyt hot geshmeykhelt dem held in gezikht…*

[And far off, in the calm and dark night
A shot rang out in the air
And senselessly delirious, steeped in blood
Death smiled the hero in the face....][242]

With *And He Loved Her...* Schwarzbard possibly set for himself what proved to be a near fatal test of manliness. As the poem predicted for its hapless hero, Schwarzbard himself was shot and lay in a pool of blood. Besides piercing his left lung, the bullet shattered his left omoplate and tore the brachial plexus. Doctors gave him small chance of survival, but he pulled through. Only five days after receiving the wound, on March 6, Schwarzbard sent Anna a simple message that showed his optimism and his Romantic streak intact: *Je vais mieux. Je vais vu* (sic) *le soleil a Paris dans quelques temps*.[243] Although the message was taken down in another hand, he managed to sign this note to his partner of five years, "Schwarzbard." Freed from the trenches, another challenge to his patience began as he endured the long convalescence for a wound that plagued him the rest of his life.

[242] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 56.
[243] Official letter of the Ministry of War from soldier Schwarzbard to Madam S. Schwarzbard, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72505.

## 5. The Russian Revolution (August 1917-December 1919).

### 5.1 Brest, Archangelsk, Petrograd, Odessa

Schwarzbard spent the next year-and-a-half slowly recovering from his wound. He was from hardy stock, and despite suffering through shock therapy, by August 1916 was able to work fifteen hours a week out of his home for a nearby clockmaker.[244] Sources say very little about his attitudes or activities in this period, but in mid-August 1917, he decided to forego an army pension and return home to join the Revolution. He left hastily—Schwarzbard usually preferred things that way—after a rare opportunity arose to reach Russia by sea. The French were shipping home Russian wounded from two divisions sent by their ally the Tsar in the spring of 1916. Neither a surfeit of rowdy males, nor seas infested with German U-boats deterred Anna from joining her husband on his revolutionary adventure.[245] The Schwarzbards departed Brest together on August 22, 1917, undertaking a treacherous nineteen-day voyage to Archangelsk aboard an old transport ship called "Melbourne."[246]

Schwarzbard's accounts of the sea voyage are vague and conflicting, but he does mention rumors that a soldier had been "thrown in the sea by his political enemies."[247] He gives no further details, but the political atmosphere on board was apparently tense. None too surprisingly there is evidence that Schwarzbard

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[244] Schwarzbard's Paris working papers, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72504.

[245] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 61.

[246] Archangelsk is a major shipping port in northern Russia located due east from Petrograd where the Dvina River mouths into the White Sea. During both World Wars it played a vital role in maintaining trade between Russia and her western allies.

[247] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 62.

contributed to the friction, though precisely how is not clear. When the ship arrived in Archangelsk on September 4, 1917, the following report was filed by a Lt. Col. Dukacinsky: "Four of these volunteers, named Djaparidze, Neisky, Schwartzbourd and Berkourz tried to spread unfortunate propaganda on board. They left the ship at liberty. The Russian authorities should be informed about them." [248]

At his trial in 1927, the report was used to challenge Schwarzbard's testimony that he had been sick the entire voyage. He told the court that Anna was only allowed to sail with him as the wife of a political refugee, and that this explained why his name was included among the agitators: "My wife did not have the right to leave with me. But my wife didn't want to be separated from me, she wanted to go with me. In Russia I was a Socialist before becoming an Anarchist. The consulate of the Provisional Government still gave my wife a passport where it said: wife of a Russian political emigrant. With this passport my wife had the right to return to Russia with me."[249] Schwarzbard then explained that because he told the consulate he was a Socialist he was automatically suspect in the agitation.[250]

Whatever transpired, they reached safely. Schwarzbard surrendered his French uniform to the authorities and went ashore with Anna. What he did in the north of Russia during the month of September is as unclear as the voyage. In a sketchy official autobiography written for the investigating judge in 1926, Schwarzbard contended he had forgotten the name of his commanding officer, but

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[248] Russian government report on the arrival of the *Melbourne* in Archangelsk, September 4, 1917, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38090.

[249] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39554.

[250] For anyone familiar with Schwarzbard's revolutionary zeal in his memoirs it would be difficult to believe he was not involved in the agitation.

that he had been an "interpreter attached to a mission of French officers sent to Russia to maintain the morale of Russian combatants."[251] This remained his story until he went to trial in 1927, where prosecuting attorney César Campinchi successfully challenged him on it:

> Campinchi: Finally, I conclude that contrary to what you declared; you in no way took part in a French mission.
> Schwarzbard: No.[252]

Campinchi did not pursue the matter, and Schwarzbard said nothing more of this early period other than contending that as a soldier returning from France he was automatically transferred to the Russian army under Kerensky, but did not serve because of his wound.[253] Schwarzbard reveals frustratingly little about his attitudes towards the competing parties in the Revolution at the time. Typically, he focused on the thrill of it all, remembering his excitement hearing the words "brother and comrade" on everyone's lips, and rejoicing to see the Peter and Paul Fortress (the Tsar's Bastille) converted into a prison for reactionaries.[254] One gets the impression from Schwarzbard's memories of his first days in Russia that he and Anna were still very much revolutionary tourists. In early September 1917, they

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[251] Sholem Schwarzbard's untitled ms. autobiography from December 22, 1926, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 41955.

[252] *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39555.

[253] Ibid. 39563-4. Schwarzbard complained about Henry Torrès's strategy to make of him a French hero and patriot, but this was also a part of how he wished to present himself to the court as the French mission story attests. Schwarzbard was well aware of anti-Communist sentiment in France, and that the prosecution wanted to take advantage of it by making him out to be a Bolshevik agent. He therefore tried to make his reasons for returning to Russia as legitimate in French eyes as possible without losing the integrity of his story. Overall, he and Torrès did a good job keeping his revolutionary work under wraps. For example, in his final argument, Torrès claimed Schwarzbard had simply pursued his trade as a clockmaker during his time in Russia. The prosecution did not know their Russian Revolutionary history well enough to do more than vaguely associate the defendant with the Bolsheviks, and Torrès was never seriously challenged on his "clockmaker" alibi. Fixing watches was one of the few things Schwarzbard did not do during his stay in revolutionary Russia.

[254] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 62-3.

traveled south to familiar territory in Ukraine. It was here that Schwarzbard began his more serious engagements with the Revolution.[255]

## 5.2 Reunion with his Father and another Balta Self-Defense Effort

Immediately after their arrival in Odessa Sholem visited Balta. His father Itse "stared his eyes out" in anticipation of his eldest son's return.[256] The reunion, like his departure ten years earlier, was overshadowed by anti-Jewish violence—Balta again living up to its reputation as an "infamous historic city of pogroms and bloody happenings."[257] The three-year scourge of pogrom atrocities between 1917 and 1920 began with excesses perpetrated by the Tsar's battered armies, and unfortunately Balta was on the path of retreat for a column of pogrom-hungry reservists. Within days of arriving home, Schwarzbard sensed the "pogrom mood" growing, and immediately set to work combating it.

Seen as a Frenchman, experienced soldier, and "good Jew" [*slavne zhid*], Schwarzbard was welcomed into the counsels of the local military commander when he came upon his camp outside Balta. The new Socialist leadership of the army pled for restraint from the troops, but they were written off as Jewish lackeys.[258] Seeing that a pogrom was inevitable, Schwarzbard hurried back to the city to organize the self-defense. Now over thirty years old, Schwarzbard

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[255] Schwarzbard claimed he went south after General Kornilov's failed putsch against Kerensky's government in September 1917. Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 63.

[256] According to his testimony during his trial he met his "parents." This would have included his stepmother, but not fond of the woman, he makes no mention of her in his memoir. *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39513. As a memoirist, Schwarzbard tended to ignore those closest to him, and he also says nothing about Anna from the time between landing in Archangelsk and their return to Paris.

[257] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 63-4.

[258] Ibid. 64.

complained about young Jewish volunteers "reared in a dark, poisoned atmosphere, without faith, without revolutionary tradition, without ideals, nourished only by the bitter present of a chaotic today!"[259] Schwarzbard interpreted their reluctance to accept his military advise as arrogance. He was also "irked" by the disrespect they showed pious Jews who, unlike 1905, provided generous material support to the self-defense. Compared to 1905, this self-defense effort was a success, and the Jewish militia kept the reservists at bay. From hastily constructed barricades Schwarzbard and his young comrades watched as the ill-equipped soldiers passed without incident from the Polish to the Turkish side of the River Kadyma.

Itse Schwarzbard, now sixty-three years old, again helped organize and man the barricades. Like his son, the old man chastised the young fighters for their conceit, and warned them against placing too much confidence in their revolvers when faced with better-armed and more experienced fighters. He advised them to meet the threat soberly, with a willingness to die defending their people. Fortunately, the soldiers were demoralized, disorganized and mostly unarmed.

After the pogrom threat passed, Schwarzbard returned to Odessa around the time of the October Revolution, but soon received word that his father had taken seriously ill.[260] He returned to Balta, but was back in Odessa in just two weeks. He doesn't say whether his father, "the dearest and best" that he "possessed in the world," died during or after the visit, but it is likely that Itse passed away that fall of 1917 because Schwarzbard never mentioned his father alive after this point. Avoidance of the subject falls in line with Schwarzbard's characteristic reticence

[259] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 65.
[260] Ibid. 76.

about painful experiences. For Sholem Schwarzbard, the death of his father represented the greatest possible personal loss, but a series of demoralizing defeats followed hard on its heels.

## 5.3 In the Red Guard

Schwarzbard returned to Odessa armed with a cavalry carbine given him out of gratitude by the Balta self-defense organization. It was a precious gift in chaotic times, and he immediately put it to use for the Revolution, throwing himself "body and soul" into the Emigrant-Anarchist Section of Odessa's Red Guard.[261] Schwarzbard's detractors often claim he fought in the "Red Army" or "Red Brigades," but these designations are too imprecise, meant more to associate Schwarzbard falsely with the Bolsheviks than describe details of his life. In fact, Schwarzbard fought with units made up mostly of Anarchists and Jews like himself—two groups innately hostile to the Bolshevik centralization of power. Although such units sometimes worked with the Red Army proper in the fight against common enemies, they were nevertheless stubbornly independent revolutionary fighting organizations. The Red Guard was the first of three such fighting groups Schwarzbard joined while in Ukraine. Relatively little is known about the history of Red Guard militias that formed throughout Russia, but it is telling that this gap in the historiography is at least partially due to the difficulty

[261] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 77.

later Soviet scholarship had finding a politically acceptable place for them in the "official history" of the Revolution constructed in the 1920s.[262]

A spontaneous manifestation of revolutionary zeal made up mainly of ex-soldiers and workers, the Red Guard stood "far apart from the Party's Committee and all Party organizations," welcoming every variety of revolutionary.[263] It also had a "colorful mix" of ethnicities, but Jews were the majority in a predominantly Jewish city like Odessa, and Schwarzbard remembered the Red Guard club as "a Jewish state in a House of Study."[264] While it was at times wildly democratic, the Red Guard also maintained a disciplined hierarchy; only giving the impression of the "den of thieves" some claimed it to be.[265] Over time it grew increasingly independent of the Odessa soviet, and especially when the latter came under the control of the Bolsheviks in April 1919.[266] Just before Schwarzbard arrived in Odessa, the Red Guard took on three important duties in the city: maintaining general order, protecting the factories and preventing pogroms.[267] In its ranks Schwarzbard could use his hard-won military knowledge both to fight reactionary

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[262] Tanja Penter, *Odessa 1917: Revolution an der Peripherie* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 171. Penter's book is the best source for information on the local Red Guard in Odessa. For an overview of the Red Guard's unique role in the Revolution throughout Russia see Rex A. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militias in the Russian Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984).

[263] The mix included Anarchists, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Maximalists as well as Bundists and Labor Zionists from specifically Jewish parties. The political profiles of these groups are reasonably well known, but the difference between Maximalists and Socialist Revolutionaries perhaps requires more detailed description. The former were the extremist, breakaway wing of the Socialist Revolutionary party, condoning the immediate implementation of the party's revolutionary, mostly agrarian agenda, as opposed to the gradualism and reformism of the party's mainstream. Of course, the Socialist Revolutionary Party, even in its milder forms, had a reputation for terror that deservedly surpassed Socialist Democratic Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Anarchists of this era.

[264] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 77.

[265] Penter, *Odessa*, 167.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid. 164.

forces vying with the Reds for control of the city at the end of 1917, and to protect Odessa's Jews.

In late November 1917, Schwarzbard presented the commander of the Red Guard, a twenty-year-old Jewish metalworker named Moyshe Kangun, a plan to take the city from the Haidemaks and *Rumcherod* with a minimal loss of life.[268] Kangun rejected the plan as "too complicated," but Schwarzbard believed resistance to it was rooted in the inexperience and arrogance of revolutionary leadership. In any case, the attempt failed miserably, and Kangun was killed. At his usual place in the vanguard of ill-equipped sailors, workers, and Anarchists, Schwarzbard saw that courage had not been lacking, and he remained convinced if his more considered strategy had been implemented the attack would have succeeded.

On January 14, 1918, the soviets and Red Guard finally carried out a well-planned takeover of all the major institutions in Odessa. After a partially successful Haidemak counterattack, Schwarzbard again threw himself into the thick of the fight, leading an attempt to recapture Odessa's Central Station. Bravery again outstripped planning, and Schwarzbard found himself part of a desperate retreat through courtyards and over frozen rooftops to save his life. Despite such setbacks,

[268] Penter, *Odessa*, 167, footnote 266. The Haidemaks supported the newly formed Ukrainian Central Rada, a left-leaning nationalist body that vied for Ukrainian autonomy in the wake of the February Revolution. Among its leaders was the charismatic journalist Symon Petliura. The *Rumcherod,* in contrast, supported Kerensky's provisional government in Petrograd. "*Rumcherod*" stood for the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Romanian Front, Black Sea Fleet and Odessa Oblast." It was the nearest thing to a city government in this chaotic transitional period, and with members of varied political leanings, shifted loyalty between the Haidemaks and Red Guard. The *Rumcherod* was short-lived, as was the Central Rada that was disbanded during the German occupation of Ukraine beginning in March 1918. The Rada, however, had managed to lay the foundation for the Ukrainian Directory that Petliura came to control after the Germans and their lackey, the Ukrainian Hetman Skorapadsky, abandoned Kiev and the Ukraine in December 1918. The period of the most severe pogroms perpetrated by Petliura's armies, those in Berditchev and Zhitomir in January 1919, and that in Proskurov in February 1919, began shortly after the reemergence of the Ukrainian national movement under the Directory.

an important change was taking place in Schwarzbard's position in life as a member of the Red Guard. On the Western Front, he never advanced beyond the rank of private, but in the month-long struggle that secured Odessa for the first Workers' Soviet, Schwarzbard spontaneously took on the leadership role he always desired. Denied a traditional education and never happy in his trade, he discovered a previously unknown confidence in martial skill honed during the war. He was also now able use that skill in causes closer to his heart than the French Republic: the Revolution and Jewish self-defense. Indeed, violence became integral to his sense of self-worth in this period, and contributed to the thrill he found riding on history's storm.

## 5.4 Schwarzbard's Role in the First Workers' Soviet

In January 1918, Revolutionary forces secured control of the city, and "the short epoch of the First Workers' Soviet" began. In Schwarzbard's opinion, this was the only truly revolutionary period Odessa would know.[269] He initially frequented the Anarchist Club "21" at 21 Peter Veliki Street (a requisitioned brothel). The place teemed with energy, and with the city government in disarray, many people trusted the club as a courthouse to settle disputes. Anarchists more interested in power

[269] When thinking about Schwarzbard's time in revolutionary Russia, it is important to distinguish between this first period of rule by the Workers' Soviet between January and March 1918, and the second, dominated by the Bolsheviks, which began in April 1919. As Schwarzbard put it, "The first Soviet of 1918 was put together by different political parties and groups and knew nothing of centralization." Schwarzbard, *In the Tides of Time,* 109. That centralization would, of course, be the hallmark of Bolshevik rule. The difference in the two periods can perhaps best be understood looking at the difference in the educational work Schwarzbard undertook in each period. Here in the first period Schwarzbard was able to establish an independent Anarchist school, while in the second he would be a functionary of a larger school system. Although he was disappointed about the demise of his independent school, and despised centralization as a matter of principle, he did enjoy his work for the Bolshevik school system.

than justice soon betrayed that trust, and Schwarzbard began frequenting a new Anarchist club at Gogolskaya 5 in the mansion of an exiled magnate. Not hesitant to take from the rich in the cause of Revolution, he boasted that "the Anarchists were able to occupy the house in the proper manner, taking the old clothes and a couple of cars, horses, furniture and different weapons."[270]

Such requisitions from privileged classes were common, and Schwarzbard himself led an Anarchist group that forcibly occupied a seaside mansion belonging to a machine manufacturer named Birnboym. They used the estate for a "Free Rationalist Children's School and Shelter".[271] The lady of the house, a Mrs. Birnboym, at first resented the take over, but she soon recognized the seriousness of the project, and came around to assist Schwarzbard and his comrades with the children. This project was short-lived as were all Schwarzbard's undertakings during his stay in Russia, and he was soon called away from his school to defend the Revolution with arms.[272]

## 5.5 Otriad Roshal

The Rumanians had reached the Dniester, and Schwarzbard left his school to join Anarchist comrades on the front near Tiraspol. He was part of the newly formed "Roshal" battalion, named for the young Bolshevik martyr, Semyon

[270] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 104-5.

[271] Ibid. 105.

[272] Under German occupation these properties were returned to the city's elite, and Schwarzbard had an uncomfortable run-in with Mrs. Birnboym. She told him that after he left for the front the school fell apart, and many things were stolen from her. She also bragged that she had been right all along in her many philosophical arguments with Schwarzbard, and that the time for his ideals had not yet come. Schwarzbard recalled the exchange making him feel uncharacteristically reticent: "To tell the truth, I lacked the courage to contradict her observations, and was happy when I found myself back on the streets." Ibid. 115.

Grigorevich Roshal, a hero of the Revolution in Kronstadt.[273] At first poorly organized, the unit came under the command of the infamous Bolshevik General Muraviev, a man Schwarzbard disdained for "hypnotizing" Odessa's youth, and sending them on a disastrous "children's crusade" against the White armies of Generals Denikin and Kaledin.[274] If Schwarzbard disliked Muraviev, he respected the revolutionary commander Grigory Ivanovich Kotovsky, who had made himself a legend over the years terrorizing landowners. Schwarzbard gave an adoring description of this fighting man: "A solidly built, lean man with broad shoulders, a high muscular chest, his body as a whole that of a strong athlete. A large, square head, a dark face, a wrinkled forehead and eyes that never rest for a second and bear witness to much hard experience... [275]

Muraviev's agitation, Kotovsky's strength and a surprisingly easy sortie into Bender across the Dniester gave the Roshal battalion sufficient confidence to prepare an attack against Rumanian forces.[276] They turned "from hunter to hunted," however, when the Central Powers unleashed an offensive of their own against

[273] Roshal had been executed by the Rumanians in Yassy shortly before the battalion was formed. Again, Schwarzbard said nothing this or his other fights in defense of the Revolution during his investigation and trial for the murder of Symon Petliura.

[274] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 128-9. Perhaps because he was at the front and did not experience it directly, Schwarzbard never mentioned the "reign of terror" Muraviev began in Odessa, although it may have contributed to his disdain of the Bolshevik leader. Muraviev disarmed the indigenous Red Guard of which Schwarzbard was such an enthusiastic member, with soldiers under his direct command. An eyewitness to Muraviev's methods named Dekterev remembered: "Hangman's justice was a common phenomenon and combined with every kind of excess that arose out of a false understanding of revolutionary duty and revolutionary discipline." Penter, *Odessa*, 409.

[275] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 130-2.

[276] This city just west of the Dniester is called Bender in Moldavian and Yiddish, Bendery in Russian and Ukrainian and Tighina in Rumanian.

Odessa.[277] Almost cut off, Roshal caught the last train back to the city. In Odessa they withstood a German attack while the "movers and shakers of the Soviet" fled by sea.

Heading north in hopes of regrouping, Schwarzbard and ten comrades were separated from the battalion near Novoukrainka.[278] On a difficult retreat east through Yelisavetgrad (Kirovohrad), Znamenko, Kremenchug and Poltava, Schwarzbard remembered receiving threats from Ukrainian peasants: "Oh, you Jews, you wanted to grab our land and rule over us. Now you'll get yours, *hayda* (word used to start horses). Brothers, let's disarm them and hand them over to the krauts." In response, Schwarzbard went for the circle of peasants with the butt end of his rifle, "as is proper for them":

> You dismal boors, we are fighting the enemies of Russia that want to swallow up and take the land, and you accuse us? The Germans come with the princes, who will take the land from you. You will become eternal serfs to them like your parents were. We are Jews who own no land, and who won't allow the Germans and the landowners to steal the earth from you. Are you still not satisfied, and will hand us over to our common enemy?"[279]

In his story, the peasants changed their attitude toward them, but Schwarzbard remained suspicious, unable to decide if his gun or his words had done the trick.

Managing to reach Poltava, Schwarzbard's little group heard from Kotovsky's soldiers that the remnant of the Battalion Roshal was in Kharkov.[280] The Germans had not yet arrived, but the local soviet had abandoned the city and morale was low, meaning they probably rejoined their unit sometime shortly after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on March 3. In late May 1918, the battalion was near Sinelnikov

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[277] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 133.
[278] Ibid. 133-4.
[279] Ibid. 136.
[280] Ibid. 139-40.

and Ekaterinaslav. They disobeyed an order to defend a hopeless position near Verkhnednieprovsk, and became a rogue unit. On the outskirts of Sinelnikov Red Army units attacked them while they slept. The Roshal Battalion surrendered its arms and dispersed, but not before twenty-four of their number had been killed by their fellow revolutionaries.[281]

## 5.6 Retreat to Occupied Odessa

With the Revolution in Ukraine temporarily suppressed under the German occupation, Schwarzbard returned to Odessa in the early summer of 1918. He says very little about what he did between June 1918 and April 1919 (during the German and French occupations), but in the summer of 1918 he was living by the sea in Odessa's tenth district.[282] He also spent several months suffering through and recovering from a bout with typhus in this period.[283] After German defeat in November 1918, the French occupied Odessa until April, 1919. About the role of his adopted country in revolutionary Russia Schwarzbard only quipped sarcastically: "Odessa had the honor to see a raid by the French and the Greeks."[284] This "raid" failed to control the situation, and by March 1919 Odessa was on the verge of anarchy when the French and their Greek allies decided to evacuate. The *Odessa*

[281] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 140-1.

[282] Schwarzbard ran into his brawny hero Kotovsky in civilian clothing in Odessa during the summer of 1918. On his way to the beach with some children, he saw Kotovsky, slapped him on the shoulder, and shouted out his name. Kotovsky turned violently, but seeing the children and recognizing Schwarzbard, was content to scold Schwarzbard vehemently about such heedlessness under German occupation. Schwarzbard admitted his foolishness. While such admissions of fault were a rarity for Schwarzbard, the incident typified his uncontrollably exuberant personality. Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 132.

[283] Ibid. 142. Also Schwarzbard, *Ma Autobiographie*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71827.

[284] Ibid.

*News* reported, “Never before has Odessa passed such a nightmarish situation. The population is succumbing.... to starvation and cold.” Anti-Jewish violence soon also contributed to the nightmare when the Hetman Nikifor Grigoriev, fighting with the Reds, filled the vacuum left by the French in early April 1919.[285] Grigoriev, a bitter antisemite, loosed his army on the city until he was finally ordered to the Rumanian front by the Soviet leadership.

Grigoriev changed sides (he was mostly on his own), unleashing a devastating spree of pogroms in cities, towns and villages on the Steppes. His troops were responsible for the pogrom in Holoskov that took the life of Schwarzbard’s uncle.[286] Schwarzbard's first cousin, Phillip Morrison living in New York (Morrison had changed his name from Shvartsbord when he immigrated), told the Yiddish daily *Forverts* at the time of the trial that Schwarzbard had sent a letter in the spring of 1919 with the news his father (Sholem’s uncle) had been killed in a pogrom. At the time Sholem advised him: “The whole world is bathing in blood. The whole world has gone mad. Your father died a martyr. You should not think of revenge.”[287] As more and more reports of pogroms reached Odessa during this time, Schwarzbard recalled only being able to "bite his lip in pain."

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[285] A man with a very high opinion of himself, Grigoriev claimed that while Germany could not defeat the French he had successfully, "kicked the chair from under Clemenceau." See Elias Tcherikower, *Di Ukrainer pogromen in yor 1919* (New York: YIVO, 1965), 292.

[286] The town is called Oleskov in some Yiddish dialects. Is called Holoskiv in Ukrainian, and Goloskov in Russian. Again, I am indebted to Professor Eugene Orenstein for the complete list of the town's name.

[287] *Forverts*, June 7, 1926. On a list of ten relatives Schwarzbard lost to pogrom violence the name “Isroul Moshkovitch Schwartzbard” is included for the city “Goloskoff.” The latter probably was one of the many erroneous transcriptions of eastern European towns during the affair. Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72241.

## 5.7 Schwarzbard Works under the Bolsheviks (April-June 1919)

Typical of the chaos and paradoxes of the Civil War, Grigoriev's plundering and antisemitism began the epoch of the Second Odessa Soviet which brought the city under the increasingly iron-fisted control of the Bolsheviks.[288] Although Schwarzbard disdained Bolshevik centralism he, like many Anarchists, was willing to work with them in building revolutionary society. By spring 1919, he had sufficiently recovered from typhus to seek out a role for himself in the new regime. He first approached the Secretary of the Odessa Soviet, Sasha Feldman, with a plan to restart his Free Rational Kindergartens and orphanages. Feldman referred him to Professor Shtchepkin, the Commissar of Education. Unfortunately, Shtchepkin, a Socialist Revolutionary, had effectively been replaced by a young Bolshevik Commissar with no interest in Schwarzbard's plans, and no need for his services.

Word of the rejection reached the Commissar for Products, who made Schwarzbard an intriguing proposition: "Hey Frenchman, you want to do something for children, right? I will make you the director to supply children's hospitals, schools and other children's' institutions." Schwarzbard accepted, and was kept busy requisitioning supplies through the spring and early summer of 1919. Short-lived like all his endeavors in Russia during the Civil War, this and the foundation of the Free Rational Kindergarten during the first Worker's Soviet, remained the only jobs Schwarzbard found genuinely gratifying in his entire working life:

> I let myself be satisfied with this work. The first thing I did was to collect a lot of children's supplies like sugar, milk, rice, barley, cocoa, crackers....

[288] Sometimes fighting with Petliura and the Directory, sometimes against, but always primarily with himself in mind and much Jewish blood on his hands, Grigoriev was executed by the Anarchist peasant leader Nestor Makhno on July 27 1919. Tcherikower, *Di Ukrainer pogromen*, 302.

> gathered in one place and asked to be given the details from all the children's institutions about the number of children and what supplies they needed. Besides this I began supplying all the city kitchens with food and distributed food for children in certain poor neighborhoods that had no such institutions.... in this way 36 children's' kitchens were created throughout Odessa.[289]

Better suited for active work than the solitude and patience required of a clockmaker, he excelled as a requisioner. It happened to be a position much resented by enemies of the Revolution, but other than Mrs. Birnboym, Schwarzbard ignored objections from this quarter.

## 5.8 The International Division and the 1919 Pogroms

The gratification Schwarzbard found in his work under the Bolsheviks was disturbed by the continuing reports of pogroms reaching the city. Once again he dropped commitments to education in order to fight reactionary armies, this time however it was arguably as much to defend Jews as the Revolution.[290] Which priority was foremost in Schwarzbard's mind is impossible to determine from the sources, but it clear that his priorities where changing, or at least expanding in a Jewish direction the summer of 1919.[291]

Schwarzbard joined the "International Division" in June 1919, and was immediately sent to the "Kiev Line" south of the capital city on the Dnieper—an area

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[289] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 122.

[290] Because the prosecution made a concerted effort to implicate Schwarzbard in cooperation with the Bolsheviks during his trial, Schwarzbard said nothing of his campaigning with the Red Guard, Otriad Roshal and the International Division. He instead claimed that in the summer of 1919 he felt he must leave Odessa "to bring security" (*"pour porter secours"*) without giving any specifics about what that might mean, but implying the security was for the Jews alone and not the Revolution. *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39516.

[291] In contrast to his testimony during the trial, in his memoir Schwarzbard's revolutionary priorities dominate, the pogroms arising wherever the Revolution lost control and reactionaries of whatever stripe took over.

devastated by pogroms. Somewhat reminiscent of the Foreign Legion's ethnic mix, the division was made up of "Jewish self-defense otriads, the renowned Otriad Spartacus, some Bessarabian otriads and a small Chinese otriad," supplemented by assorted Labor Zionists, Anarchists and Peasant Communists.[292] Perhaps because it was an Anarchist unit, Schwarzbard did not describe himself as an officer, but he was often on horseback, and because of his military experience seems to have taken on a leadership role.[293]

The division arrived first in Tcherkas on the Dnieper, a city ravaged by Hetman Grigoriev's troops a month-and-a-half earlier (May 15 and 16, 1919) when a pogrom left nearly a thousand Jewish dead.[294] Unable to hide their distress over the devastation, Schwarzbard and his companions were asked by an old Jew: "Why are you so surprised?" The old man then claimed Tcherkas, a city with over fifteen thousand Jews, had fared better than the countless villages and towns whose Jewish population were completely wiped out.

Schwarzbard and his companions sought out the Labor Zionist Club, whose surviving members told them a story of betrayal. Before the pogrom, the Jews of Tcherkas had armed over 600 men, responsible to maintain order and defend against pogroms. Of the armies that captured the city in the following weeks, the

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[292] Sholem Schwarzbard, *Di internatsyonale divizye*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72443.

[293] In an oral history interview, the old Anarchist Morris Ganberg claimed he was in the division with Schwarzbard. Although not completely reliable, Ganberg's description provides a very feasible picture of Schwarzbard in a leadership position: "In Odessa there were several anarchist groups. The one I joined, called the *Anarkhicheskii Otriad* [Anarchist Detachment], was headed by Sholem Schwartzbard, who had been decorated for heroism in the French army during the war. He was a brave man and a first-class marksman, who never wasted a bullet. Our detachment fought against the *Petlurovtsy,* the *Denikintsy*, and other White forces during the Civil War...." Avrich, A*narchist Portraits* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 375.

[294]For an overview of Grigoriev's pogroms, including Tcherkas, see Tcherikower, *Pogromen,* 303-332.

Reds, and later Petliura's Army, both allowed the Jewish militia to keep their arms and carry on their work. It was only when Hetman Grigoriev captured Tcherkas that local Ukrainians, who had been cooperating with the Jewish militia up until that time, turned hostile, first disarming them and then killing many of their number.

After leaving Tcherkas, Schwarzbard witnessed devastated Jewish lives in smaller towns and villages first-hand. He described some of his experiences in a series of vignettes that were edited and published in London's *Arbeter fraynd* by his friend and mentor Dr. Zalkind some time between 1920 and 1923.[295] The first story, "The Uncircumcised Will Hear," recounts an encounter with an old man in Zhidovska Hreblye, a town whose name Schwarzbard would repeat many times in the years ahead, including once during his trial.[296] After a pogrom, the old man had locked himself in his home, and was reluctant to open the door for his heavily armed visitor. When Schwarzbard spoke in Yiddish, he allowed him enter:

> When I came into the room a terrifying pictured opened in front of me: a shot up, broken mirror, torn walls, the sofa torn from bayonets, a chopped up table with mutilated chairs, a broken bed with shredded linens, in the middle of the room a heap of all manner of broken vessels, and in a corner sitting on the ground an old Jew in a roughly mended capote and barefoot, with swollen

[295] Dr. Yankev-Meyer Zalkind was Schwarzbard's closest friend and mentor after he returned to Paris in 1920. Well-educated (he received his Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Bern in 1904), pious, yet fiercely independent, he was the ideal person to fill the role Schwarzbard's father had earlier played in his life. A capable linguist (it is said he could work in twenty languages and speak fourteen), he knew that Schwarzbard's deepest personal "ambition" was to become a "professional writer," but also recognized the need rigorously to edit his work. After he had refined them, Zalkind published Schwarzbard's sketches in his paper, the *Arbeter fraynd* in London. At one time an important paper for Jewish Anarchists in Whitechapel, the *Arbeter fraynd* was originally edited by Rudolf Rocker between 1905 and 1914. Zalkind single-handedly revived the paper between 1920 and 1923. When these stories from Schwarzbard were "published in almost all the Yiddish papers" after the assassination of Petliura in 1926, Zalkind complained that they failed to credit their source. Dr. Y.M. Zalkind. "*Shvartsbard als yid un als mentsh*" [Schwarzbard as Jew and as Human Being], *Haynt* (Warsaw), July 15, 1926.

[296] The town can no longer be found on maps of Ukraine, having been completely wiped out during the Second World War.

eyes from which big tears rolled down on his sunken, bloodless cheeks. "Look what they've done to us!"

Schwarzbard broke down and wept.[297] The old man admonished his visitor to be strong: "*Vayn nit, mayn kind, di areylim veln derhern. . .*" [Don't cry, my child, the uncircumcised will hear...][298] Schwarzbard's weeping only became "heavier and more convulsive," the admonition perhaps reminding him of the constant need to maintain a brave face during his five years soldiering. The old man himself then began to cry, telling Schwarzbard of eight family members killed in the pogrom: "Why, why did they kill us? So many years living together, what did I do to them?" Schwarzbard returned to his unit, unable to forget the words, "Don't cry, my child, the uncircumcised will hear..."[299]

One important aspect of this and the next story, "By God, a Comedy!" is how Schwarzbard had the option to present himself as "Jewish" or "non-Jewish" more or less at will. In the previous story, Yiddish was a shibboleth to gain the trust of a local Jew, but his uniform, blonde hair and lack of Jewish features allowed him to hide that identity if he so desired. In this next story, Schwarzbard's "non-Jewish" aspect reveals how much the average soldier was assumed to be an enemy of the Jews. Schwarzbard enters the empty courtyard of a well-to-do peasant, and finds a prayer shawl and phylacteries. The ritual objects conspicuously out of place, Schwarzbard suspects foul play, and angrily shouts: "Hey *khazayin* (householder) come out or I will shoot you!" An old peasant emerges from the shrubbery, and

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[297] Alter Kacyzne used this scene to create Act One, Scene Two of his play "*Shvartsbard: a sintetisher reportazh."* See Alter Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard: sintetisher reportazh in dray aktn un zibn bilder* (Paris: Komitet far yidish un yidisher kultur, 1980).

[298] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 155.

[299] Ibid. 156.

denies at gunpoint Schwarzbard's accusation that he had robbed his Jewish neighbors. At first afraid that Schwarzbard wanted to kill two Jews he was hiding, he finally reveals their presence and begs for their lives. The Jews emerged from the bushes to tell how their village suffered a pogrom by Zelyony's Greens, and how the old peasant had saved them. When Schwarzbard revealed that he was a Jew, the peasant was so relieved that he broke out in laughter. After a meal of fresh bread and buttermilk, the good-hearted rustic chuckled, "By God, a comedy!"[300]

The next story, "A Hidden Jew," tells of a Ukrainian village, Pyadevka, that prospered despite the Civil War, and of a lone Jew working there who asks the soldiers to keep the place secret so that he will not be overrun with competitors. More important biographically than the story itself, Schwarzbard mentions that he entered Pyadevka with a comrade named Ilye Teper. Teper survived the Civil War, eventually settling in Palestine. During Schwarzbard's affair he sent a letter testifying to the defendant's good character during the Revolution. Teper remembered correctly that Schwarzbard had run popular soup kitchens in Odessa, but was incorrect to blame the pogrom in Tcherkas on Petliura, when it had actually been Grigoriev's troops that had destroyed the town. Teper remembered Schwarzbard as an excellent soldier despite his lame left arm. He further remembered him as a "sensitive and very gentle man," but also one who fought fiercely and in a mood of vengeance. According to Teper, he was a man of "very pronounced national sentiment," despite his anarchist political opinions, who was devastated by news of pogroms and profoundly disturbed at the sight of defiled

[300] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 156-9.

Jewish ritual objects. Finally, Teper remembered that Schwarzbard spoke bad Russian and worse Ukrainian, but was nonetheless valued by the peasants for his "good heart."[301]

The next story in the series, "Samson's Death," joined "The Uncircumcised might hear..." described above, as favorites of the Yiddish press immediately following the assassination of Petliura.[302] Near Trypylla (the home and base of Hetman Zelyony), eighteen members of the International Division were taken prisoner by the "Greens." Word got back to the division about the noble death of one of the unfortunate soldiers, a Jew nicknamed "Samson the Mighty." While the other doomed prisoners either shook with fear, reflected silently or cursed their fate, Samson, the story goes, shouted: "Comrades! We have to die anyway; our fates have been sealed; but why should they have it so easy? The dogs should pay for our lives!" Samson attacked the Haidemak guards huddled in a circle smoking and drinking. Schwarzbard delights in his description of the ensuing scrap, "He choked two to death with his hands, collapsed the lungs of a third, ripped the eyes out of a fourth, and bit the ear off of a fifth etc.... until he [Samson, kj] fell down, cut to pieces by Haidemak sabers." As the hero's limbs lay quivering on the ground, the young officer in charge of the Haidemaks commented, "Now there was a strong young man, although he had a Jewish mug!"

Schwarzbard's time with the International Division came to an inglorious conclusion in August 1919. The unit first suffered heavy losses in a trap set by Zelyony's and Solokov's troops. Falling for a stereotype of their Ukrainian enemy,

[301] Deposition of Ilye Teper, December 1926. Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38978-9.
[302] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 162-3.

they believed the report of two prisoners that Zelyony's troops were drunk on liquor plundered in pogroms and in no condition to fight. Instead of an easy victory, the International Division was caught in a deadly crossfire.[303] What remained of the Division was sent to head off Petliura's forces marching on Kiev near Khrestinovke, but they were again defeated. This was the only time Schwarzbard ever fought directly against Petliura's troops. Hearing reports of similar setbacks all along the front, the International Division disbanded. Schwarzbard retreated to Kiev with the remains of other Red outfits and many Jewish refugees.[304]

In Kiev he awaited the arrival of Petliura's troops from the west and Denikin's from the east. Schwarzbard was impressed by a "fiery" speech from the Bolshevik leader of the Ukraine, Christian Rakovsky, "prophesying" the defeat of Denikin outside the city, given just before the Reds evacuated at the end of August 1919.[305] After a month in Kiev during which he witnessed many atrocities, Schwarzbard managed to make his way back to Odessa. He traveled by rail through Poltava, Kremenchug and Nikolayev. On Yom Kippur, October 3, 1919, he returned to Odessa on a boat called "Sofia" where he reunited with Anna. After what had been a devastating odyssey through a landscape scarred by civil war and ethnic hatred, he was forever a changed man.[306]

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[303] Although he never explicitly stipulates the fact, Schwarzbard was sometimes a foot soldier and sometimes a cavalryman during the Civil War. In this final battle he mentions "galloping," and was presumably on horseback. Schwarzbard, *In the Tides of Time*, 165.

[304] Ibid. 166.

[305] Ibid. 167-8.

[306] For anecdotes from his turbulent journey between Kiev and Odessa see Schwarzbard, Ibid. 174-177. Looking for Jews on his way back to Odessa, he claimed that in the 48 hours he spent traveling between Kiev and Poltava—normally an area with many Jews—he saw only Jewish corpses.

When he arrived Denikin's White Army was in control of the city and Schwarzbard's troubles continued. With things not going well for the Revolution in Ukraine, he had been out of uniform since Kiev, but his name was found in the papers of the Commissar Sasha Feldman who had only recently been executed by the Whites. In fear for his life, Schwarzbard "incidentally " heard that as a French volunteer he could secure free passage back to France through the consulate in the city. [307] In late December 1919, he and Anna sailed for France aboard a boat named "Nicholas I" after the same Tsar who had forced his great grandmother to maim his grandfather Moyshe's hand to keep him out of the Russian military.[308] They traveled second class over Istanbul (New Year's 1920), Mersin, Iskenderun, Beirut (were he was for some reason invited to meet the new King), and Port Said. They landed safely in Marseilles after five miserable days tossed on a stormy sea.

[307] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 178.

[308] Nicholas I, who ruled from 1825-1855, is remembered among Jews for his extreme antisemitism.

## 6. Back to Paris and Civilian Life (January 1920-May 25, 1926)

### 6.1 Sholem and Anna Settle Again in Paris

After disembarking in Marseilles, Sholem and Anna were back in Paris by late January 1920. Schwarzbard must have been exhausted. During his years in Russia he had been active in Odessa's Anarchist circles, worked for children's causes, and fought mostly losing battles against Haidemaks, Rumanians, Germans, Austrians, Greens, Whites and even Reds. He did all this while suffering the lingering effects of a severe war wound and a bout with typhus. More challenging than the physical strain was the psychological burden of vanquished dreams. Schwarzbard often mentioned the latter, but seldom complained about the material hardship he endured:

> Early the same year, 1920, I settled down again in Paris that I had left three years earlier with a light heart and in a happy mood. I returned with a broken heart and heavy spirit.... I had simultaneously lost the dream of my youth and the belief in the future...[309]

None of this prevented the couple from quickly re-establishing themselves in Paris. After trying different places they rented a small, one-room flat at 20 passage de la Folie Méricourt in the Jewish working class district of Belleville. This was their home for the next six years, the most stable period in Sholem and Anna's tumultuous life. In May Schwarzbard finally received the army discharge pending since 1917. Between his pension and Anna's work as a seamstress, Sholem opened a little clockmaker's shop at 82 Boulevard Ménilmontant near *Père Lachaise* cemetery. For the first time in his life he was a full-fledged member of the petit

[309] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 179.

bourgeoisie, a fact that only aggravated a growing uneasiness brought on by ghosts from the past and despair for the future.

To escape feelings of irrelevance, Schwarzbard pursued his political and poetic interests with renewed energy. Turning first to poetry, he gathered the means to self-publish *Troymen un virklekhkayt* [Dreams and Reality] under his penname Bal-khaloymes [the Dreamer] by September 1920. It was small volume consisting mostly of war poetry, but also included some material from before the war, and two long poems written since his return from Russia. Marred by printing errors, it was nonetheless an attractive little book that included occasional Art Nouveau flourishes and ornamental images of muse and harp. Attesting to his literary ambitions, Schwarzbard used the front page to advertise three more works soon to be released by Bal-khaloymes: *Yugnt un libe: der tsveyter band lider un poemen* [Youth and Love: the second volume of lyrics and poems]; *Briv fun der fremd: ertseylungen un milkhome-bilder 1914-15-16* [Letters from a Strange Land: Stories and Image of War 1914-15-16]; and *Fun tifn avadoyn: a tog-bukh fun di yorn 1917-18-19 in Rusland* [From the Depths of Destruction: A Journal from the years 1917-18-19 in Russia]. None of these were actually published in book form until fourteen years later under different titles and in his own name.[310]

[310] The second book of poetry was never published, while "Letters from a Strange Land" became *In krig mit zikh aleyn* (*At War with Myself*, 1933), and material for "From the Depths of Destruction" was included in *Inem loyf fun yorn* (*In the Tide of Times*, 1934).

## 6.2 The Poetic "Prologue" to Assassination

Beyond his interest in the publication of earlier manuscripts, Schwarzbard composed his first new poems since the World War. He chose one of these, a long poem called *Prolog* [Prologue], to open *Dreams and Reality*. The violent imagery at the beginning of the poem reflects the troubled state of mind of an immigrant, demobbed soldier, disappointed revolutionary and traumatized Jew. It revisits the triumphalism found in some of his early war poetry, but the tone is more emphatic, the challenge to prove oneself no longer coming from the outside world or the Beloved, but directly from internal imperatives found in the poet warrior himself:

> *A pantser shmid dir oys fun shtol un ayzn shtark,*
> *a tsvey-zaytik sharfe shverd in hand, im grayf on fest*
> *un gartl on di lendn mit alerhand gever,*
> *un kum aroys mit mir in feld, in velt "arene":*
> *Bavayz dayn kraft! Ikh heys! Fir-oys mayn bafel!*
> *Fun toyzend heldn — eyner blaybt, un, dos bistu der held![311]*
>
> [Forge yourself a suit of armor from steel and iron true,
> With a double-edged sword in hand, hold it tight
> And hang on your loin all arms within reach,
> And join me in the field, in the world arena:
> Prove your strength! I command! Carry out my order!
> Out of a thousand heroes—one remains, and, you are that hero!]

At the time of Schwarzbard's trial for the murder of Petliura this poem, like all his militant works, would be ignored. Only the Yiddish press showed any interest in Schwarzbard's writing, but they sought out gentler material. It would not be until 1934, seven years after his acquittal, that Shmuel Niger came forth as the first critic willing to use *Prologue* as a proof text in a devastating, yet insightful psychological critique of Sholem Schwarzbard and his work. Niger claimed that Schwarzbard's

[311] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 5.

"dream of heroics," already present in the war poetry, expands in the poem to become "a dream of the heroism of revenge." *Prologue* apparently provides Niger ample evidence for his thesis, including the following lines that the critic claimed reveal a mind set on the redemptive potential of retribution:[312]

> *S'farzist dem ziger im der zig!*
> *Vi honik iz der royb, vi nektar di fartsikung.*
> *un veykh....s'kilt dos harts zikh azoy gut in dir*
> *ven mit festn fus du tretst dayn opfer on*
> *un dayn shtarker orem gelekhert hot di brust fun dayn bezigtn korbm,*
> *vos goysest unter dayne fis.....*[313]
>
> [Victory sweetens the victor!
> The spoils are like honey, like nectar the prey.
> And gentle.... the heart cools so pleasantly in you
> When you step on your sacrifice with firm foot
> And your strong arm has opened the breast of your defeated victim,
> Who dies in agony beneath your feet...]

Niger disliked the poem as an expression of Schwarzbard's "helplessly naive" and egocentric muse but acknowledged its biographical significance, and must have recognized its debt to Bialik's classic pogrom poetry.[314] For the critic, *Prologue* proved that years before the assassination, Schwarzbard's inner rage had already primed him for vengeance.[315] Niger was thus the first to use Schwarzbard's writing

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[312] Niger, *Tsukunft* review, 731.

[313] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 5.

[314] Ruth Wisse recognized Bialik as a groundbreaker for his use of graphic pogrom imagery to provoke a Jewish response. Bialik, however, "in no way questioned the evil of violence itself." See Ruth Wisse, "*Speaking of the Devil in Yiddish Literature*," in *Jews and Violence: Images, Ideologies, Realities,* Studies in Contemporary Jewry, an annual. XVIII. Ed. Peter Y. Medding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63. For all its faults, *Prologu*e arguably wins for Schwarzbard a rather unique place in Jewish literature for its early embrace of violence, without reservation, as something good, even healing. Though he doesn't mention it, Niger was in a position to recognize how unique this poem, despite its aesthetic flaws, really was.

[315] Although undated, judging from tone, content and the way it synthesized a number of previous motifs, Niger was correct to identify the time of composition to the critical juncture in his life when he returned to Paris. As a good friend and literary ally of Sholem Asch, the critic might have known something about the poem from him as well. Asch befriended Anna Schwarzbard during the affair, and his fictional biography of Schwarzbard written shortly after Petliura's assassination,

to shift the focus from objective historical imperatives satisfied by Petliura's death to Schwarzbard's subjective need for vengeance. *Prologue* exposes the extreme nature of this subjectivity. The poet's indulgence in gore and erotic transgression (the hero's lust "cooled" by his act) set him apart from his Jewish literary contemporaries. The desire for "paeans," "respect," "laurels" and "praise," also reflects pagan and not Jewish values, Schwarzbard making his gladiator a law unto himself, subject to no Caesar beyond his own ego.[316] Niger failed to stress the role of the ego strongly enough, however. As written, *Prologue* is a song of martial glory, not revenge—the latter only available to the poem through the critic's knowledge of the asssassination. Introducing the metaphysic of justice necessary for revenge betrays the poem's function as a paean to the Will. Lacking the anachronistic biographical knowledge Niger relies on, the poem stands out even more grotesquely as a testament to Schwarzbard's self-obsession.

If one moves beyond the discreet content of the poem as Niger did, however, *Prologue* does indeed seem to express a poetic compensation for Schwarzbard's repressed self—a self shaped and distorted by war, revolution and, above all, pogroms. The poem imagines that wounded self unleashed on a "sacrifice" that remained beyond the author's reach until Petliura's arrival in Paris. Niger goes on to argue that the poem exposes Schwarzbard as a psychological cripple, passionately aspiring to, but fundamentally incapable of expression through art—a failure with fatal consequences for the Hetman:

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*Ver iz der "merder"?* [Who is the "assassin"?], attests to the author's familiarity with Schwarzbard's life and work. After Schwarzbard's acquittal, Asch came to know the assassin personally.

[316] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 5.

> If Schwarzbard were truly a poet he would have perhaps been spared perpetrating his act of revenge. He would have avenged himself on the pogromchiks—in verse. He would have pronounced a loud "*shfoykh-khamoskho"* [pour out your wrath], and his heart would have been lighter.... The passion given expression in a work of art is a passion that has already been fulfilled if the expression is a successful one. With our Schwarzbard the expression falls flat, it is not complete, not strong—he had to speak revolver language.[317]

After the opening stanzas, *Prologue* continues in a similar vein, picturing the hero with a bloodied sword raised high above his head. Adoring onlookers, inspired by his "brilliance and victory," raise their eyes, sing his praise, and show "deep respect." They then bow their heads before him, keeping the hero "holy" in their hearts. Again, for this hero only the Self is sacred. Like the God of Genesis he orders, "*der viln zol geshen!*" [Let the will be done!], words that themselves become "holy and precious like the word of God." The hero's queen—the "most beautiful of the female sex"—comes to him in a garden palace, where birds sing her lover's ultimate praise: *"Mentsh! Vu bistu, groyser held,—baziger fun dayn got!....."* [Man! Where are you great hero—conqueror of your God!...].[318] Although his critique was harsh both aesthetically and personally, Niger was perhaps somewhat merciful on the Jewish avenger in overlooking lines like these.

Not mentioned in the review, a second poem from 1920 called "*A vet..."* [A Wager...] directly supported Niger's revenge theory. This long parable in verse

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[317] Niger, *Tsukunft* review, 731. Recited during the Ashkenazi Passover Haggadah when the door of a Jewish home is opened to the Prophet Elijah (the herald of the Messiah) with the words: "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen who have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and lay waste his dwelling place (Psalms 79:6-7). Pour out thy wrath on them, may your blazing anger overtake them (Psalms 69:25). Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord (Lamentations 3:66). I am again indebted to Professor Eugene Orenstein for the description of this portion of the Passover liturgy.

[318] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality,* 7.

includes lines that justify violence in the right circumstance, making its dedication to Lev Tolstoy—one of the most famous of pacifists—mildly ironic. The poem tells of a wager between the sun, and the wind and clouds, to see who could first make the peasant remove his coat. The victor would win forever the "throne of the heavens." The wind and clouds release their fury in vain, the peasant only wrapping his coat tighter around him against the storm. The sun in her turn warms the peasant at work in his field until he removes his coat, and she thus emerges victorious. Though this is clearly a parable for the power of enlightenment over force, the sun showed herself capable of violent self-assertion elsewhere in the poem, reducing the storm clouds to harmless white wisps with her heat. That the sun was capable of such aggression shocked her challengers:

> *S'iz dan vild un shtark fardrosn*
> *Af der zun dem vint un shturem:*
> *Iz den virklekh zelkhes meglekh,*
> *Az di zun, di tsarte, shtile*
> *Mit ir liblekh kheyn un shmeykhl*
> *Optun aza zakh zol kenen,*
> *Iz dos meglekh tsu bagrayfn?...*[319]
>
> [Then wildly and mightily upset
> With the sun, were the wind and storm:
> Is such a thing really possible?
> That the sun, so delicate, quiet
> With her lovely charm and smile
> Should be able to do such a thing?
> Is this possible to understand?...]

For Schwarzbard's muse even the highest natures contain a latent and legitimate destructive power. While *Prologue* anticipates the violence of assassination, this poem predicts the reaction to violence by those who knew

[319] Schwarzbard, *Dreams and Reality*, 76.

Schwarzbard best. Like the wind and storm in his parable, Schwarzbard's friends were shocked by his resort to assassination. Indeed, Sholem Schwarzbard was a man capable of being a dear friend, but also a bitter enemy.

### 6.3 *Zeitgeist*: Between War and Peace

Schwarzbard considered himself a pacifist, but he had developed greater competence in violence than peace. Like Europe of the 1920s, which criminalized war while seething with revanchism that would lead to an even larger conflagration, Schwarzbard played host to an explosive mix of idealism and anger. This internal conflict expressed itself in titles he chose for publications like "Dreams and Reality," and "At War with Myself." As a Jew, the inner tension was amplified further. The memory of pogroms and continued growth of antisemitism demanded Schwarzbard do something about the Jewish voice inside, but wouldn't this mean surrender to chauvinism and final defeat for his dream of universal peace? Like many others, Schwarzbard was unable to make, or even clearly formulate this choice. Instead, in the years leading up to the assassination, he uncomfortably hosted his Anarchist revolutionism alongside the growing awareness of a deeper connection to and responsibility for his fellow Jews. When the two finally combined with each other and with Schwarzbard personal failures and frustrations, the formula proved fatal for Symon Petliura.

In the Paris years leading up to the assassination, Sholem Schwarzbard felt alone with his violent meditations, but the old non-violent consensus among Jews was crumbling in more places than just his tortured inner world. As it had done for

Schwarzbard, the World War and Revolution placed a gun in the hands of thousands of Jews that in previous generations were mostly occupied with Torah and trade. In a 1921 poem called *Dos lid fun mayn glaykhgilt* [The Song of my Indifference], the Soviet Yiddish poet Dovid Hofshteyn curses the "sober shopkeepers," the "fanatics," and the "intransigent pedants," who gave birth to their opposites—great men like Marx, Einstein, Heine and Spinoza. Leyb Bronshteyn (Leon Trotsky) also made Hofshteyn's list of Jewish greats. The poet saw the latter as the embodiment of a new Jewish confidence and strength enjoyed in Soviet society in this early, genuinely optimistic period of Bolshevik rule:

*Hert!*
*fun brust,*
*vos farhilt iz mit alter pakhdoynes,*
*fun yidishe tsiterike klapndike tseyn*
*rayst zikh a kol a geviter—*
*dos redt*
*iber breyter rusisher erd—*
*Leyb Bronshteyn....*

*mayn glaykhgilt mayn groyser!*
*er gilt do far aykh nit*
*far keynem!*
*keyner do veyst nit*
*fun mayn has mayn heysn.*
*fun mayn libe mayn reyner!*[320]

[Listen!
From a chest,
That is veiled in old fears,
From Jewish tender, chattering teeth
A voice breaks out, a storm—
It speaks

[320] Dovid Hofshteyn, "Song of my Indifference," in *A shpigl af a shteyn* [A Mirror on a Rock]: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose by Twelve Soviet Yiddish Writers, ed. Khone Shmeruk (Tel Aviv: I.L. Peretz Publishing House, 1964), 249-54. In the context of the thesis it is interesting to note that around this time Hofshteyn contributed an article for a Yiddish book dedicated to the Ukrainian classicist Taras Shevchenko on the anniversary of his death in 1920. Ibid. 741.

Over wide Russian earth—
Lev Bronstein...

My great indifference!
Doesn't count for you
For nobody!
No one here knows
Of my hatred, my burning hate.
Of my love, my pure love!]

In context of the poem as a whole this "burning hate" is best interpreted in terms of ethnic violence, not class oppression, and it is no accident that in the same period Hofshteyn wrote a pogrom lamentation called "Ukraine":

*In krankn moyekh,*
*vi heyser pekh,*
*zikh shitn nemen*
*fun shtet farshvendte,*
*blutik noente*
*blutik fremde...*
*Fastov!*
*Vasilkov!*
*un nokh,*
*un nokh....*
*....fun groysn groyen land....*
*af ale—ale strekes zayne*
*shotnt zikh dayn shand,*
*Ukraine!*[321]

[In a sick mind,
Like hot pitch,
Names pour out,
Of squandered cities,
Bloody near
Bloody far...
Fastov!
Vasilkov!
And more,
And more...
...from a big, grey land...
On every—his every stretch of land
Shadowed is your shame,

[321] Dovid Hofshteyn, "*Ukraine,*" A Mirror, 246-9.

Ukraine!]

There were many other examples, especially in Soviet Yiddish literature, of writers that combined pogrom mourning with a call to arms. A poet warrior and martyr of the Revolution, Osher Shvartsman, commands his Yiddish reader to "steel up" his hand because "the black mother night is torn in pain." Even in translation this simple line communicates the worst horrors of pogrom violence. For Shvartsman, however, no explicit mention of the Jewish nature of the tragedy is necessary for the "enemy at the gates" will be forever banished with the establishment of universal justice. It was precisely this hope that Sholem Schwarzbard claimed to have lost with his pogrom experience.

Looking ahead for a moment, in his 1934 play *Shvartsbard: a sintetisher reportazh*, Alter Kacyzne imagined a meeting between Sholem Schwarzbard and Osher Shvartsman in a house devastated by a pogrom. The two discuss the relative merits of revenge and revolution as a response to the horror surrounding them:

> Schwarzbard: Where should I go? I can't leave this place. It's as if I were tied down here, as if the house belonged to me, and I to the house. I stand like this and contemplate the sweetness of revenge.
> Shvartsman: Revenge—on whom? On drunk Cossacks—cannon fodder? On their Hetmen? On a misled people?
> Schwarzbard: On those who misled them!
> Shvartsman: You mean Petliura? First off, he himself is misled; second, he's a human being. How very little such revenge can satisfy! No, brother, you have to go over all of Ukraine with the tractor, over the whole land, over the whole world! Then you will plant something new...[322]

Kacyzne brings Schwarzbard and Shvartsman together as two men making their way from the service of the word to the service of the deed, but by very different paths. In Shvartsman, Kacyzne creates an effective foil to Schwarzbard's feelings of

[322] Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard*, 41.

Jewish vengeance, the former representing a more typical response that found channels for pogrom anger other than actual revenge—in his case the discipline and cause of the Red Army. Kacyzne's Schwarzbard on the other hand, in his individualism, impatience and simplicity wants to respond to the tragedy directly, not abstractly.

Kacyzne was acutely aware of Schwarzbard's Anarchist mindset, and it is key to understanding the integration of Jewishness into his revolutionary worldview in the period between his return from Russia and the assassination. For a novel begun in Paris in 1923, *Daltot nehoshet: sipurim* [Gates of Bronze], the Hebrew writer Chaim Hazaz created an Anarchist character named Sorokeh who shares Sholem Schwarzbard's ideological make-up. Unlike other characters in the novel that, like Kacyzne's Osher Shvartsman, are under the discipline of their party affiliations, Sorokeh is "torn between his universalist humanitarianism and the woes of his own people."[323] Robert Alter's comments on this character could just as well refer to the real-life Anarchist Sholem Schwarzbard:

> Sorokeh the anarchist is driven on an unchartable zigzag course by passionate impulse; his Communist rivals follow a straight line of murderous abstraction. In the foreground of the novel, we see the purity of Sorokeh's motives; in the background, we get an occasional glimpse of the awful consequences of his utopian activism—in the rape and destruction unleashed upon the countryside by the anarchist bands he has helped to organize. As a voice in the ideological debate, what sets him apart from the Jewish Bolsheviks most decisively is that his feelings are still palpably in touch with the living Jewish people caught between the millstones of the Revolution.[324]

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[323] Paul Avrich says of this aspect of the movement: "Anarchism, for all its international pretensions, for all its faith in the unity of mankind, has always been divided into national and ethnic groups…. Nor should this be surprising. For anarchists, cherishing diversity against standardization and uniformity, have always prized the differences among peoples—cultural, linguistic, historical—quite as much as their common bonds." Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits,* 315.

[324] Robert Alter, "Shtetl and Revolution," in *Defenses of the Imagination: Jewish Writers and Modern Historical Crisis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publishing Society of America, 1977), 205.

Alter further notes how Sorokeh, unlike more "disciplined" Communists, carries in him all the various stages undergone by Russian Jewry, integrating the new, but also maintaining the old. It is a complex admixture, but it offered relative independence, and because of his struggle to maintain his personal autonomy in a world buckling under to centralized authority, Sorokeh emerges as a strong character from whom great things are expected:

> He's a party all by himself."
> "How do you mean? A one man party?"
> "Just what I say. He's an anarchist, and not just an ordinary anarchist, but an anarchist-individualist-internationalist."
> "Quite a stew."
> "Just wait and see. He'll be heard from. You'll see."

Schwarzbard used an individual strength similar to that of Sorokeh to avenge his people, and it possible that a part of his particular Anarchist "stew" was an Armenian example in ethnic retribution. Schwarzbard's act was foreshadowed by the assassination of several exiled leaders of the Young Turk government behind the killing of over a million Armenians in the Turkish genocidal campaign of 1915. Most famously, Soghomon Tehlirian's assassinated the former Turkish Grand Wazir Talaat Bey Pasha in March 1921. After this a series of retributive killings was unleashed by Armenians on Turkish leaders black-listed for their role in the genocide.[325] Schwarzbard never mentioned Tehlirian's example, but his defense lawyer would bring it up in some detail at his trial in 1927.[326]

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[325] Tehlirian had famously witnessed the massacre of his entire family, and was acquitted by a Berlin jury based on mental incapacity in early June 1921. Two further assassinations followed in 1921: Misak Torlakian's killed Jivanshir in Constantinople in July, and Arshavir Shiriakian's assassination of Said Halim Pasha in Rome in December 1921. The spree continued in 1922 when Aram Yerganian assassinated Behaeddin Shakir and Arshavir Shiragian killed Jemal Azmi in Berlin. Finally, in the same year Enver Pasha died at the hand of an Armenian soldier in the Soviet Union and

Outside Jews in the Soviet Union and the Armenians, there were other trends in the world to encourage a Jewish assassin as well. What Max Nordau famously called the "muscle Jew," still represented a small minority, but his influence was growing. This was true even in a western metropolis like Paris. In France the trend was embodied in the novelist Joseph Kessel, a Jewish Hemingway, who would be a vocal supporter of Schwarzbard during his affair. In an immigrant city like Paris, the trend was further encouraged by Jews from eastern Europe even before the clockmaker struck. For example, Vladimir Jabotinsky and the militant Revisionist wing of the Zionist movement declared their independence from moderate factions in the Zionist movement at a Foundation Conference held in Paris in April 1925. Jabotinsky would come to play an important role in Schwarzbard's trial.

Despite such people and movements, the overwhelming consensus in the Jewish world was against violence, and even those who supported it in the cause of revolution or self-defense, were against individual violence—especially in a Jewish cause. This consensus was explored and challenged in the 1923 story "*Tsvishn emigrantn*" [Among Emigrants] by the Ukrainian Yiddish writer Dovid Bergelson.[327] Living in Berlin, Bergelson created a Jewish Tehlirian to be the story's antihero, and in so doing provided the Yiddish world with a noteworthy literary foreshadowing of

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Stepan Dsaghigian and compatriots assassinated Jemal Pasha. For more on Tehlirian see Vartkes Yeghiayan, *The Case of Soghomon Tehlirian,* 2nd edition (Glendale Ca. 2006).

[326] *"L'assassinat,"* 340.

[327] David Bergelson, *"Tvishen emigrantn"* [Among Emigrants] was first published in 1923. It was published in book form in Bergelson's short story collection *Shturmveg* (Kiev, 1927). It was published again in volume five of Bergelson's *Geklibene verk* (Vilna, 1928), and *Dertseylungen* (Moscow, 1941). The last contained a newly reworked version that incorporated Bergelson's increasing Soviet orthodoxy. I have used the Yiddish version and taken the bibliographical information from Khone Shmeruk's anthology of Soviet Yiddish literature, *A shpigl af a shteyn"* (Tel Aviv: Di goldene keyt, 1964), 62-81. For English quotes I have used "Among Refugees," trans. Joachim Neugroschel, in *The Shadows of Berlin* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2005), 21-44.

the fate of its future avenger, Sholem Schwarzbard. Still, Bergelson's fictional character and Schwarzbard are more notable for their differences than similarities.

The story tells of the encounter between a Yiddish writer living in Berlin, and a young man who introduces himself as a “Jewish terrorist." The visitor slowly reveals his story to the writer and requests his help in securing a gun to kill his neighbor in a Berlin boarding house—a Ukrainian exile and pogromchik who had ransacked his city in Volhynia. Frustrated in efforts to find a gun, the story ends with a note from the stranger reporting he had found a solution: suicide and not vengeance.

Bergelson's character, unlike Schwarzbard, is incapable of the "one fell swoop" he proposes against the pogromchik next door, and is instead poisoned by a frustrated life and foul character. Although he poses as an avenger, the pogroms are little more than an excuse to bolster his "spite," originating in unrequited love and an awkward youth rather than historical grievances. Deformed and paralyzed, this terrorist's isolation undermines the moral seriousness required for revenge killing, and the reader anticipates both his ultimate failure to exact revenge and his suicide. The visitor's schizoid mind manifests itself unforgettably in the narrator's description of his cheeks:

> The right cheek was the same as on all faces—a cheek that wants to enjoy the world, that says: "I want to be with people." His left cheek, however, was crooked; it looked as though it were his, and yet.... It was like a cheek at war with the world.... The left cheek made the young man look ugly, but apparently he had sided with it. He reminded me of a mother who has a

> beautiful child and a freak — for justice' sake he was on the side of the hideous left cheek and bore its badness within himself.[328]

Importantly, Bergelson leaves it an open question whether the "left cheek" originated in pogrom experience or an inherently disturbed psyche seeking an excuse to meditate more profoundly on its own depredation.

The moral paralysis of Bergelson's neurotic anti-hero has no place in Schwarzbard's character, a man who powered his way out of a haunted imagination into history.[329] Schwarzbard saw himself unambiguously on the side of right, his guilt primarily in sins of omission, in the feeling he had not done enough, and not in sins of commission. On those parts of his life that potentially fell into the latter category like the World War, he tried to impose justice, even if he ultimately failed to convince even himself in doing so. Indeed, the assassination of Petliura can in part be seen as such an "imposition," representing for Schwarzbard a morally

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[328] Bergelson, "Emigrants," 22-3. Bergelson considered the image of seminal importance to the story as attested to in his 1941 addition to the title of "the Man with the Crooked Cheek." See Shmeruk, A Mirror, 773.

[329] Even after Schwarzbard's notoriety challenged the myth of the bungling Jewish assassin, this image proved stronger than his new heroic example. A failed assassin like Pinchus Dashevsky, for example, was more extensively represented in Yiddish literature than Schwarzbard ever would be. The fact that the most famous of all Jewish assassins, Hirsh Leckert, failed to kill his man in 1902 also contributed to the myth, helping insure that early on in the new era of Jewish assassins they were widely stamped *shlimmazels*, and thereby made to reinforce a non-militant Jewish self-understanding. Perhaps contrary to expectations, this image was bolstered in Yiddish literature by Hitler's rise to power. According to Ruth Wisse, Nazi valorization of violence caused Yiddish writers—who were part of a literary tradition that saw violence as an absolute evil—to distance themselves from those rare texts that dared take Jewish violence as a theme like Lamed Shapiro's *"The Cross*." In the thirties, even Shapiro distanced himself from his successful literary exploration of the theme. Wisse criticizes this tendency for naively assuming moral equivalence between Nazi and Jewish violence. See Wisse, "Speaking of the Devil." Although outside the parameters of Yiddish literature, Ludwig Lewisohn used the image of the bungling Jewish terrorist in 1938, showing how pervasive the image had become. After a "misguided young revisionist" fired on an Arab bus Lewisohn commented: " He did no damage, which is characteristically Jewish and reminds one of the old anecdote of the Jew who wanted to be a highwayman and couldn't stab his victim because he had no "meaty" (*fleishig*) knife on his person." Correcting Schwarzbard's image to better fall in line with this preconception, it is in this context that Lewisohn calls Petliura's very competent assassin "that mild little poetic man." Ludwig Lewisohn, "Moral Stupidity," *Criterion*, July 15, 1938, 13.

unambiguous act of violence to help atone for countless more problematic deeds from his past.

## 6.4 Building Jewish Connections and Commitment

Two years before Petliura arrived in Paris, Schwarzbard came in contact with two men who were to play important roles in his affair. Though both came from outside his Anarchist circle, they were interested in remembering the revolutionary and pogrom experiences that haunted him. The Labor Zionist Avrom Revutsky, a former Minister of Jewish Affairs for the Directory, corresponded with Schwarzbard over the course of a year, and came to recognize the historical value of his memoirs from the Revolution.[330] In December of 1923, Revutsky had the opportunity to visit Schwarzbard and "his very sympathetic wife" in Paris. He remembered the clockmaker as a "sincere idealist filled with profound suffering for all he had experienced."[331] Revutsky passed the manuscript of Schwarzbard's memoir on to the historian Elias Tcherikower in Berlin. Tcherikower recognized the material's historical value, but lacked the means to publish even his own extensive work on the pogroms, and nothing came of this early push to publish Schwarzbard' s memoirs.

Frustrated as both memoirist and poet, in 1923 Schwarzbard turned to journalism, writing for the international Yiddish Anarchist press. Under the

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[330] Avrom Revutsky, "*Ver hot dershosn Petliura: di perzenlekhkeyt fun Shvartsbard"* ["Who shot Petliura: Schwarzbard's personality], *Morgn zhurnal*, May 27, 1926.

[331] The day after the assassination, even before he was sure it was the same Schwarzbard, Revutsky was one of the first to publish his personal knowledge of the assassin. He anticipates the less complementary portraits that would follow his own: "The general press will certainly try to paint Petliura's shooter as a Bolshevik agent, who carried out an order from Moscow, or as the representative of some Jewish revenge organization or other. Knowing Schwarzbard, I can with absolute conviction deny these two hypotheses. Schwarzbard is too individualistic and idealistic to act for someone else, whoever that might be, besides himself." Ibid.

penname “Sholem” [Peace], he published poems and stories in London’s *Der Arbeter fraynd*, and was a Paris correspondent for New York's *Di Fraye arbeter-shtime*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, his stories for the former were edited by his mentor Dr. Yankev-Meyer Zalkind in London. Meeting him for the first time in 1920, the influence of this eccentric, yet brilliant man on Schwarzbard in the period can hardly be exaggerated. He had the education (both secular and religious) Schwarzbard admired in others and desired for himself, and in the friendship which developed between them, Zalkind became a surrogate for the clockmaker's beloved father.[332]

Providing a rare glimpse into Schwarzbard's life during this period, Zalkind remembers entering the clockmaker's tiny shop for the first time and finding it overflowing with people.[333] Squeezing in, he saw Anna sitting in one corner at her sewing machine and Sholem at his bench “not working, heaven forbid,” but discussing politics with someone in the throng. Initially concerned about disturbing Sholem, Zalkind was welcomed with “extraordinary warmth” when he was finally

[332] Zalkind was able to provide many of the things Schwarzbard had missed in his younger years in both the religious and secular realms. Born in Lithuania, his pedigree traced back to important figures like the Besht (Israel Bal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, 1740-1800) and Rashi (Rabbi Shloyme Yitskhaki, great biblical exegete and Talmudist, 1040-1105). Zalkind had also attended university in Berlin, Munich, Geneva and Bern, where he received his doctorate in Philosophy in 1904. He was a unique combination of academic, writer, orthodox pietist, Anarchist, Zionist and agriculturalist. Zalkind joined the Zionist movement early on, and helped found the settlement "Karkur" in Israel in 1913. He converted to Anarcho-communism in 1920; around the time he met Schwarzbard. This was a few years after the World War had made him a passionate anti-militarist. Despite his political involvements, which also included Jewish self-defense, he spent most his time working on his Yiddish translation and commentary to the Babylonian Talmud, a work praised by Shmuel Niger for its clear Yiddish style. Unfortunately, Zalkind's clarity did not rub off on his pupil and friend, although many of his values and ideas did. See *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* [Biographical Dictionary of Modern Yiddish Literature], vol. 3, New York: Marsten Press, 1960, s.v. "Yankev-Meyer Zalkind." For a concise overview of Zalkind's career in English, see the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Jacob Meir Salkind."

[333] Dr. Y. M. Zalkind, “*Shvartsbard als yid un als mentsh*” [Schwarzbard as Jew and as Human Being] Haynt (Warsaw), July 14-15, 1926.

introduced. Taking an immediate interest in the scholar, Schwarzbard put everything aside to engage in a discussion that lasted until Zalkind was forced to depart so as not to miss the last Metro. Back in his hotel, Dr. Zalkind wrote in his diary: "Made new acquaintance: Sholem Schwarzbard. *Ecce homo!* I believe I've found a genuine human being and a genuine friend!"[334]

At the time of the affair, Zalkind claimed that when they first met Schwarzbard was still more interested in universal revolution than Jewish issues. This began to change when Zalkind became Schwarzbard's "*rebbe*" in European literature and Jewish learning. Schwarzbard came to share Zalkind's dream to settle in Palestine, and though he had never disavowed his people even in the most intense periods of revolutionary engagement, under Zalkind's guidance his "fiery temperament" helped him make the leap from empathy for Jewish suffering to enthusiasm for the Jewish people's unique "world-historical role."[335] Combining Hegel with Kabbalah, Zalkind claimed that Schwarzbard eventually embraced the idea of the Jewish people as "scattered light" in need of gathering.[336] Zalkind proudly claimed that "under my influence Sholem Schwarzbard made that long journey, and was overtaken by a flaming love for everything that had a to do with Jews and Jewishness." Zalkind adored his student, giving the following description of his character:

> In Jewish Paris he was one of the most shining personalities I met in my life, a translucent character, who didn't carry the slightest stain on him, a man for

[334] Zalkind, "Schwarzbard as Jew."

[335] Ibid.

[336] Zalkind is specifically making secularized use of the Lurianic concept of *tikkun*, which postulates a primordial scattering of the Divine sparks [*nitsotsot*], that the righteous acts of the Jewish people restore to their proper place. See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Dorset, 1974), 139-44.

> whom principles were not mere theories, but norms to live by.... a man shot through with an insatiable hunger to serve the community without any ulterior motive and without the slightest calculation of honor or recognition, a sensitive heart whose gentle strings react to every injustice... a poet who didn't just live with his fantasy, but whose whole life was an uninterrupted hymn to the future, an man without bitterness, who can be counted on to share his small portion.... His little shop was a sort of private hostel whose doors were always open for every sufferer or heavy-hearted visitor.[337]

Though idealized and somewhat self-serving, Zalkind's opinion was corroborated in many sources. Perhaps the greatest biographical significance of this and similar paeans to the assassin is how they attest to Schwarzbard's ability to keep his troubled heart from public view until it reached a breaking point—just as he had done during the World War.

Contributing to his despair and providing a powerful negative impetus for his Jewish turn, France's neglect of the sacrifice made by Jews during the war angered Schwarzbard. His awareness of the problem came to a head during the ten-year anniversary of the great battles of the war celebrated in late 1924 and 1925. Schwarzbard noted down his impressions of the memorial ceremony held in Arras in May, 1925: "The General from our volunteer Legion did not even forget to mention the lone American volunteer who was killed... he also didn't forget the Swedes, Dutchmen, Swiss, Poles, Rumanians who voluntarily gave their lives for

[337] Zalkind, "Schwarzbard as Jew." Among those touched by Schwarzbard's warmth was the well-known Belgian Bakuninist and "authoritarian anarchist" Victor Dave. Dave calls Schwarzbard "*Mon cher comrade"* in a letter, thanking him for help and hospitality during a recent visit: "I want to use this occasion to thank you once again, and your wonderful partner, for all the generosity you showed me during our excursion to Garches." Note signed by Victor Dave dated June 15, 1922, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO 71478. Dave himself had a reputation for geniality, and must have gotten on well with the Schwarzbards. Despite philosophical differences, Emma Goldman said of Dave: "He was kindly and jovial.... He was the freest and gayest among the many comrades I met in Paris, a companion after my own heart." Immediately following his assassination of Petliura, she would have similar things to say about Schwarzbard. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life,* volume 1 (New York: Knopf, 1931), 266-7.

France. Still, he didn't spare a word for the Jews among them..."[338] On the train ride back to Paris, Schwarzbard grew determined to respond by publishing his war experience, and later in May released an article in *Paris Soir* and the Yiddish *Parizer bleter* called "Cross and Sword."[339]

Before this minor campaign for Jewish war remembrance, Schwarzbard reported on happenings in Paris of more interest to his fellow Anarchists in New York's *Fraye arbeter-shtime*. In one of these from the fall of 1924, he covered Emma Goldman's speech in the Faubourg St. Antoine for a room packed with "friends and comrades who love and respect free word and thought." Schwarzbard excitedly accepts her message, calling her "the prophetess Emma Goldman." He compares Goldman to the Prophet Deborah calling out from the same "hills of Ephraim" that were so important to the geography of his Jewish imagination during the World War. He goes on to describe the response of the audience with a typical blend of anti-authoritarianism, Greek mythology and a bleeding heart:[340]

> [Goldman] roused the sleepy spirits of the hesitant comrades, and with the heat of her fiery words warmed the frozen, cold hearts of cowardly doubters, and, as if with the magic of Medea, the moving words worked, words of the motherly heart which is wounded and bleeds over the great ruin that a group of usurpers have made experimenting with millions of human victims.[341]

Neglecting full stops, as he tended to do whenever he wrote in an excited mood, Schwarzbard saw in Goldman's "fiery" words the expression of his own bitterness

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[338] Schwarzbard, *At War with Myself*, 11.

[339] Ibid. I have not confirmed Schwarzbard's claim, but he apparently published the material for them as a separate chapter in his war memoir called "*Tseylem un shverd*" [Cross and Sword], see *At War with Myself*, 68-77.

[340] Sholem Schwarzbard (writing under the pseudonym Sholem), "*A grus fun Pariz*." [Greetings from Paris], *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, October 10, 1924.

[341] Ibid.

over the Bolshevik "usurpation" of the Revolution, and over their role in the loss of his most precious dream—humanity's utopian future.

## 6.5 Anarchist Reportage: The "Sholem" Articles

The Goldman article was just one of a number Schwarzbard published in New York's the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* under the pseudonym "Sholem. "[342] Among the more biographically significant were two concerning Léon Daudet, leader of the Royalist and antisemitic *Action française*.[343] In December 1923, Schwarzbard happily reported that Daudet, whom he dubbed "the biggest reactionary and child of darkness," had witnessed his son's conversion to Anarchism. Schwarzbard describes how Philippe Daudet walked into the office of the French anarchist paper *La Libertaire* and without disclosing his identity requested an assignment to kill a reactionary, following the example of the Anarchist assassin Germaine Berton with

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[342] During Schwarzbard's trial, the Alfred Willm questioned him on one of his articles for the paper in which he reported that Petliura and Marshall Pilsudski of Poland had signed a treaty agreeing to cooperate on a new invasion of Ukraine. Although I have not been able to locate this particular article, when Willm asked Schwarzbard how he was able to report such a "secret" treaty, Schwarzbard claimed he had read it in a Ukrainian paper. *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39569.

[343] For the first of Schwarzbard's Daudet articles see Sholem Schwarzbard (Sholem), "*A geveynlikhe geshikhte*" [An Everyday Occurrence], *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, December 28, 1923. Léon Daudet had long spearheaded opinion in French reactionary circles, and was the single most eloquent antisemitic voice in France. He sealed his reputation in the latter regard with his attack on Captain Dreyfus. See Léon Daudet. "*Le châtiment*," *Le Figaro*, January 6, 1895. It is interesting to note that Léon Daudet himself would be imprisoned in La Santé prison in June 1927, after his conviction for liable against the taxi driver who claimed his son's death was suicide (Daudet claimed it had been murder). The same judge who presided over Schwarzbard's case, Flory, handled Daudet's as well. Daudet never forgave the old man for his conviction. Ironically, Daudet was given the cell of the Jewish assassin, forcing Schwarzbard to move to the political wing of the prison. Though he was loath to give up a cell to which he had become attached, he recalled the incident with humor: "If Léon Daudet found out that he is in the cell of the Jew Schwarzbard, he might have killed himself. And comrades made it their goal to see that he was told.... they probably kept their word." Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 326. Daudet escaped the prison with the help of his political allies shortly after he was incarcerated. He was in exile in Brussels at the time of Schwarzbard's trial and wrote nothing on the affair, leaving coverage to his colleague at the *Action française* Abel Manouvriez—a man who also aspired to raise his antisemitic rhetoric to the level of literature.

whom he was hopelessly infatuated.[344] The editor, Georges Vidal, explained to the young man that there were ways preferable to terror for serving the movement. Not to be dissuaded, Philippe left a letter with Vidal, and then shot himself in a taxi as it passed St. Lazare prison where Germaine Berton was held. The *Action française* tried to cover up the scandal, but once Vidal realized that this suicide was the same enthusiast who had visited him, he immediately published the letter left him by the young man under the provocative title "The Tragic Death of Philippe Daudet, Anarchist."

A poet like himself, Schwarzbard was impressed by the young Daudet. Attempting to recreate details of the scandal for his article, Schwarzbard imagined the meeting between the editor Georges Vidal and Philippe, using it to voice an argument he had had within himself many times, and would have again when Petliura arrived in Paris two years later:

> Vidal tried to talk him out of his resolve, explaining that terror was not the final goal of anarchism. The childish little heart began to flutter, and fire mixed with tears flamed from his eyes, and more arguments poured from his mouth: "Don't you yourself know that one energetic act says more than twenty-thousand speeches?

Schwarzbard transplants the childish, fluttering heart so common in his poetry, into the breast of Philippe Daudet—the disgruntled, lovesick Royalist's son. Importantly, Sholem's sympathies clearly lay with the young man intent on proving himself through assassination, and not with Vidal's moderation.

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[344] Berton, a wily and alluring anarchist, had entered the offices of the *Action française* on January 22, 1923 intent on killing one of the two old masterminds behind the movement: Charles Maurras or Léon Daudet. Neither was available to hear what she claimed was valuable information on the anarchist movement, and she was instead shown into the office of Maurice Plateau, a young war hero and the organizer of the paramilitary wing of the *Action française*, the *Camelots du roi*. Berton shot Plateau dead and then surrendered to police after failing to kill herself.

It was the example of the twenty year-old Germaine Berton herself, however, that most impressed Sholem Schwarzbard. Covering her trial for the *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, Berton's defense gave Schwarzbard a glimpse of his future. The famous attorneys Henry Torrès and César Campinchi argued for defense and prosecution in both cases.[345] Torrès used the same strategy in both, emphasizing the legitimacy of the assassin's motive, deflecting attention from the actual killing, and turning the plaintiff into the accused. In his article, Schwarzbard praises the brilliance of his future lawyer: "The defense lawyer Henry Torrès, a young man with tremendous energy, made a fool of every witness for the prosecution."[346]

The moderate (*Radical*) Campinchi disdained Anarchists, and he relentlessly attacked Berton's character, as he would Schwarzbard's some four years later.[347] Campinchi's job was easier in the Berton case—even Torrès did not think much of her as a person—yet the prosecutor still failed to secure a conviction.[348] Impressed by her unapologetic attitude and sangfroid when pressured by Campinchi, Schwarzbard also fell for this darkly spirited and alluring *jolie laide*. He claimed that not since Charlotte Corday had French history known a heroine like Germaine Berton, "whether it be for her independent, firm demeanor, or for the act she carried

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[345] Sholem Schwarzbard (Sholem), "Germaine Berton," *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, February 1, 1924. Though the verdict was handed down on Christmas 1923, Schwarzbard's article was not published until a full month later. Schwarzbard became a French citizen on January 16, 1925, and because Russian nationals were barred legally from French courts, it is likely he created his reports from what he read in other papers. *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39470.

[346] Schwarzbard, "Germaine Berton."

[347] The Radicals were political moderates in the Third Republic.

[348] Years later in his memoir, Torrès compared his two clients, saying that Sholem was: "Modest, good, sensible, naïve, always natural, devoid of that vain pretentiousness common in avengers of the Germaine Berton variety. He did not pretend to identify himself with the cause that he served, he was simply a brave man and a brave man who was profoundly attached to his own, to his race and to his religion, a man who would have lost his self respect had he not inflicted on the guilty an exemplary punishment." Henry Torrès, *Souvenir, souvenir, que me veux-tu?* (Paris: Del Duc, 1964), 129.

out."[349] Schwarzbard's attitude to Berton's violence is unreservedly positive, and during his own trial he tried to imitate her pluck when testifying.

In a number of other trials that took place during the six years between his return from Russia and the assassination, Schwarzbard had the chance to witness French leniency in political killings and crimes of passion—many committed by emigrants like himself.[350] At the trial of the Anarchist Joseph Bonomini, the assassin of Mussolini's representative in Paris, Sholem again witnessed the defense steal the initiative from the prosecution, making themselves the accusers: "Right from the beginning... the trial was turned into a trial of Fascism and the thousands of crimes it has committed."[351] Bonomini became another role model for Schwarzbard: "The heroic anarchist Bonomini stood up and began to speak: I am an Anarchist, and it is for this reason that I am also against every dictatorship no matter where it comes from, Black or Red."[352] In his own trial Schwarzbard would likewise not hesitate to profess his Anarchism.

As these articles attest, Schwarzbard's increased interest in his Jewishness did nothing to dampen his Anarchist convictions in the months and years leading up to the assassination. With Dr. Zalkind as his example, he instead tried to maintain both and, whenever possible, to meld them together. For example, in September 1925, Schwarzbard wrote an article on the life of a comrade from named Yisroel

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[349] Schwarzbard, "Germaine Berton."

[350] For a list of the many trials and sentences that came both before and after Schwarzbard's see Ralph Schor, *L'opinion francaise et les etrangers, 1919-1939 (*Paris: La Sorbonne, 1985), 484. Schor's book is an indispensible reference for anyone wishing to place Schwarzbard's deed in the context of political assassination in the Third Republic.

[351] Sholem Schwarzbard (Sholem), "*Fashizm forn gerikht*" [Fascism on Trial], *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* October 20, 1924.

[352] Schwarzbard, "Fascism on Trial."

Lev, in which he contrasts the pogroms—associated with unclean peasant food—to the kosher air of revolution and assassination:

> A historically famous city of pogroms with strange, fat sausage-makers who were more similar to the grazing swine they bought and sold than with human beings. Here stood the cradle of Yisroel Lev.... Then, something like a burning fire in a dry forest caught up all the branches of the youth that shone and strove for a better and a finer life. The noble, heroic acts of a Lekert, a Sozonov, a Kalyayev and others reached out over cities and towns like the perfumed fragrance of a fresh breeze and planted a new faith of a sacred ideal (*religion ideal*) in their still childlike hearts.[353]

In Schwarzbard's memory, the heroes of Balta's youth were assassins. Hirsh Lekert, the most famous of Yiddish working class heroes, attempted to assassinate the Vilna's Governor-General Victor von Wahl in 1902 in retaliation for flogging May Day demonstrators; the Socialist Revolutionary Yegor Sozonov blew up the tsarist Minister of the Interior Vyacheslav von Plehwe in 1904; and the Socialist Revolutionary Ivan Platonovich Kalyayev assassinated the Russian Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich (also with a bomb) in 1905.[354] Significantly, Schwarzbard penned this paean to propaganda of the deed only a short time before learning of Petliura's presence in Paris. It suggests that not Jewish indignation alone, but also his admiration for assassins, inspired his act. Such ideological priming combined with his military experience, personal frustrations, shattered dreams, historical ambition, impulsive personality and, of course, Jewish grievances, perhaps lessen the surprise in the fact that such a "gentle poetic man" should resort to retributive assassination in response to the pogroms.

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[353] Sholem Schwarzbard ("Sholem"), "*Yisroel Lev*," *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, September 15, 1925.

[354] Albert Camus would later name the protagonist in his play *Les Justes* [The Just Assassins] Ivan Kalyayev.

Indeed, recognizing the complexities of Schwarzbard's potential motivation should not be seen to diminish, but rather complement the role of the pogroms in his decision to assassinate Petliura. In a letter to Dr. Zalkind written in the same critical period just prior to Petliura's arrival in Paris, Schwarzbard laments:

> The blood of the Prophet Zachariah hasn't settled and the 20th of Sivan won't let me live in peace.[355] What should I do if I can't forget all those bloody pogroms that played out before my eyes? I wish I were powerful enough to encompass and defend the whole world against the whole world, but because I can't do this I am depressed.[356]

Schwarzbard typically brims with prophetic pretense, dissatisfaction with everyday life, and moral responsibility for the "whole world." Further on in the same letter he says simply, "For me this [his pogrom memory] is a bloody, festering wound than cannot heal." He would soon try to heal it by mortally wounding another.

## 6.6 Petliura's Arrival in Paris and the Assassination

Around the time of this letter, in November or December 1925, Sholem Schwarzbard's life changed forever. It was a busy time for him and Anna, as they planned to move into a one room flat in the courtyard behind the shop on

[355] According to a story in Targum Lamentations—a "targum" is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible which often integrates traditional interpretations of the original text—the Prophet Zachariah's blood seethed on the floor of the Temple in Jerusalem after he was killed there. Scholars believe the story actually refers to the earlier Zachariah Jehoiada, a high priest stoned to death by the wicked King Jehoash. According to Rabbinic tradition (Sanhedrin 96b, Lamentations Rabba iv. 13), the blood of this holy man also seethed for long time. In his letter, Schwarzbard clearly relates to Zechariah, his own blood set to boil by memories of pogroms. The 20th of Sivan is a date used to remember the beginning of the Chmielnitsky massacres that began with the total destruction of the Jewish community in Nemirov in 1648. Among the dead was the venerated Rabbi Yekhiel-Mikhl ben Reb Elezor. For details concerning these two important references I am again indebted to Professor Eugene Orenstein.

[356] Letter from Sholem Schwarzbard to Dr. Y.M. Zalkind from November 2, 1925, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 41951.

Ménilmontant in the spring.[357] Though the unit was small, their rent doubled, the prospect of improved circumstances merely providing Schwarzbard with an uncomfortable reminder of his middle class status that further aggravated the dissatisfaction expressed in the Zalkind letter: "It seems on the face of things I have it very good. Many people would like to be in my position. After all I have a wife, a profitable business, am a bit known in the community, what else is there?"[358] Again, these words were written just before Schwarzbard learned of Petliura's arrival in Paris, but he already claimed that for him the "what else" was the "call" he heard inside to be the "avenger" for the hundred of thousands killed by "Chmielnitsky, Gonta, Petliura, Sokol, Zelyonyi, Balakhovitch, Denikin and others...."[359] Contributing to the malaise, his wound from the war acted up, and he began coughing up blood after even light exertion.[360]

Then two direct reminders of the pogroms hit Schwarzbard. First, a Russian friend told him how he had overheard former pogromchiks boasting of their crimes against Jews in the syphilis ward of a Paris hospital. The news brought back all the repressed horror just before he read of Petliura's arrival in Paris sometime in mid to late December 1925.[361] The chance had come to fulfill his desire, and perhaps calm his inner demons. Concealing his plan, he began asking about Petliura's whereabouts. He also carried Petliura's picture with him, cut from a Larousse encyclopedia, in hopes of spotting him in the street. According to Schwarzbard,

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[357] They actually moved in on April 1, 1926, just a few weeks before the assassination. *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39472.

[358]Schwarzbard letter to Dr. Zalkind, Nov 2, 1925.

[359] Ibid.

[360] "*Unzer Parizer korespondent bashreybt ale eyntselheytn fun Sholem Shvartsbard's tat"* [Our Paris correspondent describes every detail from Sholem Schwarzbard's deed], *Forverts*, June 7, 1926.

[361] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39483.

Jews winced at the mention of Petliura's name; while non-Jews responded with looks of "contempt and horror," typically saying something like, "*Comment! Petliura! cette canaille!. . .*" [What! Petliura! That scoundrel!...][362]

Pursuing his amateur interest in ancient history, Schwarzbard often passed his afternoons at the library. On his way home from Bibliothéque Ste. Geneviève near the Pantheon in late April or early May 1926, Schwarzbard crossed paths with Petliura for the first time near the Metro at St. Michel and St. Germaine. Following a group of men he heard speaking Ukrainian (Schwarzbard described it as a "*patois Russe*" when telling the story during the trial), he tried to make a positive identification, but could not be sure from the small picture he carried with him.[363] He ran into the same man again, and learned he dined regularly at the *Restaurant Chartier* on Rue Racine. He was still not sure it was Petliura, however. Only when a better picture of the Hetman was published in the Ukrainian émigré paper *Tryzub* [Trident] was Schwarzbard finally convinced he had his man. He had purchased a Melior pistol after reading of Petliura's presence in Paris, and began looking for a chance to shoot the man down.

During his first opportunity that presented itself, Schwarzbard kept his gun packed away because Petliura's wife and daughter were with him. A second chance came on Tuesday afternoon May 25, 1926. Petliura had just exited *Restaurant Chartier* alone, and was walking down rue Racine when Schwarzbard approached him. He first tested his intended victim's identity, asking, "Pan [Mr.] Petliura?" According to Schwarzbard, the Hetman did not answer but turned brusquely

[362] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39484.
[363] Ibid. 39485.

towards him. Schwarzbard then said, "It is you, Pan Petliura!... Defend yourself you scoundrel!" The Hetman lifted his cane in self-defense, but Schwarzbard pulled his pistol from under his coat, shooting him fives times, Symon Petliura fell dying in the gutter.[364]

Some details of the shooting would be disputed during the trial, but there is no doubt that Schwarzbard did not try to escape, but instead waited to surrender his weapon to the police. The first to arrive on the scene was an expatriate English teacher named Reginald Smith, however. Smith used lines from Shakespeare to describe the expression on the assassin's face: "Your face is like a book in which men may read strange thing" [*sic*].[365] A bit of a dramatist himself, the Englishman took his description further: "That look, I had never seen it before in my life. I've known twenty-two different countries. It was the expression of a man, who follows one idea, who was hallucinating, who wanted absolutely to accomplish something. Truly, he had the look of an avenger, of a man who had suffered much."[366]

Obsessed by the "look," Smith recalled it as that of someone living "in a dream," but the dream did not last long, and when the first gendarme arrived, he

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[364] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39492-3. Although Schwarzbard claimed he addressed Petliura in Ukrainian, it is impossible to say with certainty which language he actually used. According to the testimony of M. Boukaidjian, a passerby who witnessed the shooting, Petliura cried "*Assez, assez"* [Enough, enough] after several shots, but Schwarzbard continued to fire. This was damaging testimony, giving Schwarzbard reason to claim he addressed Petliura in Ukrainian and not French. Schwarzbard himself testified that Petliura said nothing during their short confrontation. The fact that Schwarzbard gave his testimony first is irrelevant because during the investigation he would have already heard Boukaidjian's testimony before the trial began. Ibid. 39659-39661.

[365] Ibid. 39663. I have kept the line how it was taken down by the French court recorders somewhat overwhelmed by foreign names, places and references like this one. Smith is paraphrasing Macbeth, Act 1: scene V. The passage, quoted accurately and in full, relates to Schwarzbard's life immediately before the assassination in a way Mr. Smith could not have known: "Your face, my thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters. To beguile the time, look like the time; bear welcome in your eye, your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't."

[366] Ibid. 39664.

was forced to protect the gunman from a crowd that had begun to beat him violently. Schwarzbard was ushered away to the nearest police station, while Petliura died in *Hôpital Charité* twenty minutes later. From outside the station, the Communist paper *L'Humanité* reported something similar to Reginald Smith: "It was there we saw him. In a white shirt, head uncovered, he had the bearing of a small shop owner, not turbulent. His eyes alone gleamed with a mystical light."[367] The guards were astounded by their prisoner's joy when he heard the news that the man he had shot was indeed Petliura.[368] Schwarzbard later described that moment:

> I suddenly felt strong, great and powerful as if I could give a shake and the pillars that supported this false world would tumble down. Ach! Just give me my freedom, and then try to fight with me again! Who could be my match? You want to try and test your strength with me? I am a lion… One of the titans. I no longer find myself in a cage.[369]

Six years had not diminished the anger behind the poem "Prologue," and for a short moment, Schwarzbard was able to bask in the poem's mood of gladiatorial triumph.

Helping confirm such reports, Schwarzbard appears dreamy, and perhaps a bit crazed in the mug shot taken just after the shooting, but there were tears, no mystical light, in Anna's eyes that day. The same reporter "P." for *L'Humanité* witnessed her arrival at the police station. He describes Anna as frantic when she stepped out of her taxi. Seeing her husband escorted into a car by police, she

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[367] "*Petlioura, Chef de bande contre-révolutionaire qui ravagea l'Ukraine est assassiné à Paris par un Israélite Russe,*" [Petliura, Chief of a counterrevolutionary band that ravaged the Ukraine is assassinated in Paris by a Russian Jew] *L'Humanité*, May 26, 1926.

[368] Used to thinking of police as what he called "automatons of law and order," Schwarzbard was pleasantly surprised when his guards sympathized with a deed against "the parasites." His revolutionism may have been undergoing radical alteration, but it was still alive when speaking of his French guards: " They are all revolutionaries, people who can't stand injustice, those very people I love.... I completely forgot myself, and if I hadn't felt ashamed, I would have thrown myself around all their necks, hugged and kissed them—I was so deeply touched. I wanted to cry for joy. I had not expected such sympathy from people, and especially not in the police station...." Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 226

[369] Ibid. 195.

reached out with both arms, calling to him in vain as he drove off. She ran after, finally collapsing in the street: "The police looked on, the gawkers stood astonished, I approached, hailed a taxi, picked the unhappy woman up, put her in the seat and we followed them to Boulevard Ménilmontant."[370] Schwarzbard later described the profound affect that Anna's reaction had on him:

> I sat overfull with pain as I looked to my wife. Her cry and despair abruptly pulled me down from a great height. I suddenly felt broken, my dream in which I had soared up till now was interrupted by a malicious hand, and I suddenly understood the reality. My wife's cry pursued me: "*Gevalt*! What have you done? Woe is me, woe is me!.... What will become of me?.... Why have I been punished?!.... The world is drowning in blood and she thought of herself.... I felt a painful feeling, and inwardly wished that the automobile would disappear more quickly so that I wouldn't have to hear the screams that hit me in the heart and make a terrible wound.[371]

Anna had managed to climb onto the moving car's step, clinging to the vehicle before she finally fell to the street. Struggling not to show his feelings to his police escorts, Schwarzbard's pain turned to anger with Anna:

> Ach! Women! I thought about Xanthippe, about the excommunication of Rabbi Gershom, Delilah. There are no Deborahs, no Judiths among them, no Arrias to hand her husband the bloodied stiletto she pulls from her breast saying, "Well, my husband, it doesn't hurt…" Not there! Not there![372]

This was not to be the last time Schwarzbard expressed disappointment in Anna during the affair, her criticism of his act often troubling him deeply. In this he was

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[370] "*Petliura." L'Humanité.*

[371] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 198-9.

[372] Ibid. 199. While the references to Biblical and Greek antiquity are clear, the allusion to the great medieval Ashkenazi legal reformer, Rabbi Gershom may require additional explanation. The *Herem* of Rabbeinu Gershom, a man widely remembered as the "Light of the Exile," consisted of four prohibitions: 1) the prohibition of polygamy for Ashkenazim; 2) the prohibition of divorcing a woman against her will; 3) the modification of the rules regarding those who became apostates under compulsion; 4) the prohibition of reading private mail. Schwarzbard seems to be alluding to the first, in as much as he desires a wife besides Anna who lived more like Deborah, Judith, Xanthippe or Arrias.

alone, for not even the Ukrainians and allies like the antisemitic *Action française*, chose to say anything bad about this charming woman.

In the meantime, Sholem Schwarzbard, and to a lesser extent Anna, had become front-page news around the globe. Countless interpretations of his deed, life and personality emerged in both the Jewish and world press. From this time forward his life would be defined largely from without, in numerous biographies that reflected as much the interests of the observer as the nature of the man being observed. Although Schwarzbard resisted the usurpation of his identity and mission, trying hard to place his own stamp on them, he largely remained locked in the cage of a frustrated idealist that had held him up to this, the most important day of his life.

## 7. Eighteen Months in Jail (May 26, 1926-October 18, 1927)

### 7.1 Schwarzbard's First Night in Prison

The imposing walls of Paris's La Santé Prison offered Schwarzbard temporary shelter from Anna's complaints, but its somber atmosphere also dampened his earlier euphoria. He had no clear idea how long it would be before his trial, but was familiar enough with the Assize Court to know the investigation would be thorough and that he would not soon be free again. Unable to sleep in his sweltering cell, he passed the first night explaining his act to an imaginary court. The content of his defense was typically eclectic, reflecting the many strands of his life that helped lead him to assassination, but for the first time Jewish priorities emerge triumphant. The open embrace of his people lends his prose excitement and clarity as he introduces a new, messianic self to the jury in his mind: "I am called, I declare, Sholem! The meaning of my name is peace and justice! I was born to bring peace and justice to the world, love and fairness. I have become an avenger! Now I am called Noykem, the avenger."[373] Setting himself next to Moses, he becomes a new lawgiver, bringing the commandant thou shalt not go like sheep to the slaughter. Taking the comparison with Moses further still, he recounts wielding his walking stick to beat off soldiers in Balta who attacked an old Jew: "I showed that a rod was not only created to split the sea, but also to split the heads of hooligans."[374] Now that he had followed the logic of that earlier deed through to its most extreme

[373] Schwarzbard, *In the Tides of Time*, 208.

[374] Ibid. 209. Elsewhere in his memoir Schwarzbard claimed the incident occurred in Kruti, not Balta. Ibid. 32.

expression in assassination, he found himself simultaneously freed and compelled to give Moses a militant interpretation.

Schwarzbard had never before made such bold use of Jewish content. The assassination was Anarchist in form, however, provocation and individualist subjectivity remaining important components in a dramatically expanded sense of himself as a Jew. The description he gives his imaginary jury of his mood after witnessing pogrom violence, attests to how much things Jewish and Anarchist, communal and individual were tangled up in his mind:

> My heart broken, deprived of light, my soul trampled on, trampled on my belief in human goodness—and my conscience? Oh, my conscience! My dream, my ideal, everything destroyed and trampled on. I could have torn out my heart, and cut myself into twelve pieces like they did the concubine of Gibeah.... and send out the pieces to all the lands of Israel in order to call them to revenge, when.... when.... and before my eyes I always saw a name with flaming, bloody letters—Petliura.[375]

In a few short lines Schwarzbard presents a host of reasons for the assassination, including personal disappointment, guilt, a desire for martyrdom, and revenge. For him, Symon Petliura became a sacrifice with which to address them all, and the assassination a symbolic act that meant not only vengeance, but also personal atonement, assuagement and fulfillment. Importantly, the pogroms themselves play

[375] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 209. As he had occasionally done in the past, and would do frequently in the years to come, Schwarzbard uses a story of biblical militancy to access his mood after witnessing pogrom violence. Indeed, Schwarzbard became what might be called an exegete of blood in the way he came to privilege such texts. The story of the concubine of Gibeah (Judges 19-21) tells of the gang rape of a concubine belonging to a traveling Levite by some extremely inhospitable members of the tribe of Benjamin. She dies from the abuse, and the Levite cuts her in twelve pieces, sending them out to the tribes of Israel as a call to vengeance. Schwarzbard interprets the text in unique way, expressing his desire to dissect his own body as a call for his fellow Jews to take their revenge on their oppressors. In Rabbinic exegesis the Levite receives as much blame as the Benjamites for offering up his concubine to spare himself from rape (as in the Genesis story of Lot in Sodom, the Benjamites first ask for the Levite to be given them). Schwarzbard not only condemns Ukrainian violence, but also the passivity of the Jewish world in using this story.

less of role here than his shattered dreams—vague but poignant feelings typically superseding concrete memories.

In the end, retributive assassination can be seen as a means for Sholem Schwarzbard to synthesize the Anarchist and Jewish priorities he had pursued side by side since 1920. Ironically, it was his Anarchist aspect, and the emphatic form of street killing it took, that bound him most tightly (as it turned out permanently) to his Jewishness. In the years ahead he would continue to impose Anarchist form on Jewish content like he did with Moses on this first night in prison. At the heart of his new Jewish commitment stood a desire for Jews everywhere to follow his example, to nurture a new willingness to strike back when struck, and accept the moral legitimacy of violence as a response to the hatred that surrounded and threatened them.

It was a naive notion that ignored the resistance it was sure to meet in both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds, but it matched Schwarzbard's ego and ambition, while satisfying a deeper psychological need to impose his dramatic subjective transformation onto the Jewish world at large. He put the Jewish conclusions of that night in a letter his family in Odessa: "*Faites savoir dans les villes et dans les villages de Balta, Proskouro, Tzcherkass, Ouman, Jitomir... portez-y le message édifiant: la colère juive a tiré son vengeance! Le sange de l'assassin Petlioura, qui a jailli dans la ville mondiale, à Paris... rappellera le crime féroce.... commis envers le pauvre et abandonné peuple juif.*"[376] For Sholem (Noykem) Schwarzbard "reality" was

[376] Because of its rhetorical power, I have chosen to use the French version of Schwarzbard's letter quoted by Hannah Arendt. Schwarzbard corresponded with family in Odessa in French. Arendt calls Schwarzbard's language both "moving" and "infinitely dignified." Nevertheless, it was

henceforth primarily rooted in Jewish ground, aid to the beleaguered Jewish people legitimating his violence, and perhaps helping relieve him of half-conscious feelings of guilt for blood spilt in other, now largely debunked causes.[377]

## 7.2 Some Early Responses in the Yiddish Press

While Sholem Schwarzbard tried to find new bearings in the world, others wanted to know who he was, and the hows and whys behind such a novel deed. The focus would soon shift to Petliura in trying to answer these questions, but for now Schwarzbard was the sensation, and he received nearly equal coverage with his victim. In many of these early biographical reports, getting the story right was less important than finding symbols to express the assassin's pain, and through it that of the Jewish victims he had avenged. For example, one of the more widespread biographical myths was that Schwarzbard lost dozens of relatives to the pogroms—estimates reaching as high as a hundred. This exaggerated figure (Schwarzbard actually lost around ten relatives to pogroms) usually included his father and mother, both of whom died natural deaths.

An exception to this trend was a short biography released by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency the day after the assassination. Less sentimental than other reports, it still typifies a shorthand approach to the assassin's biography used by all:

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also typically verbose, and even an admirer like Arendt needed to edit out much of the letter. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 267.

[377] Schwarzbard's change in orientation expressed itself concretely in his hope to settle in Palestine. These plans began to develop, again under the influence of Dr. Zalkind, even before the assassination. Dr. Zalkind first announced his intent publicly during Schwarzbard's imprisonment in late April 1927. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported it to the Jewish world at large on May 5, 1927.

> It appears that Schwartzbard was born in a Ukrainian town. He later emigrated to France where he kept a small watchmaker's shop in Paris. At the beginning of the war he volunteered for the French army where he received the Croix de Guerre. After the Bolshevik revolution he went to Russia where he joined the Red Army and became a commander of a regiment which fought against the pogrom bands of Petlura and Denikin. Witnessing many pogroms he swore vengeance against Petlura. Due to his dissatisfaction with the Communist regime he returned to France where he became active in the French and Jewish labor movement. He was formerly president of the Jewish Ex-Service Men of France and had intended to go to Palestine to become an agricultural worker.[378]

The Agency had put together a reasonably accurate outline of Schwarzbard's past, but many things were wrong and nearly everything incomplete. Most importantly, they mention Schwarzbard's association with the "Red Army" and "labor movement," but say nothing about his Anarchism. The Ukrainian allegation that Schwarzbard was a Bolshevik agent, soon forced the suppression of both his real and supposed revolutionary pasts, and increased the tendency to stress his Jewish motive.[379]

More sentimental takes initially jumped on the fact that Schwarzbard was a poet, Balkhaloymes's "dripping heart" seen as proof of the assassin's extraordinary moral sensitivity. His lack of talent was soon recognized, however, and the poetry and other writing disappeared from the papers without evoking serious discussion.[380] The same two stories and three poems appeared in the Yiddish press around the globe during the first days after the assassination, and the selection

[378] News release of Jewish Telegraphic Agency from May 27, 1926.

[379] Though he had both practical and personal reasons to suppress his radical past, it is important to note that Schwarzbard never fully reneged on his revolutionary, universalist self, and as a man who still clung to naive notions of plain-speaking, he sometimes let it slip out at very inconvenient moments. Such glitches were, as a rule, ignored in the Jewish world.

[380] Unfortunately, Schwarzbard nowhere says whether he was embarrassed or excited by this sudden blitz of publicity.

suggests that it was not quality alone that gagged Schwarzbard's muse.[381] The selection of poems was most revealing. All the poems published were either written before WWI, or after the nightmare of the First Battle of Arras in May, 1915, when Schwarzbard's pacifist mood was at its peak. Schwarzbard's poetic valorization of the fighter, whether pictured as *Übermensch* or *Klassenheld,* did not see the light of day.

Considering the wide spectrum of opinion represented in the Yiddish press, the near universal preference for defining his act in bloodlessly abstract terms of humanitarian justice rather than those of "Jewish vengeance" is noteworthy. The assassination made Schwarzbard an international figure, and whether the notables liked it or not, he now represented Jews to the world. Unable simply to ignore him, Schwarzbard's image had to be tamed, his act having created a direct link between his personal reputation and the memory of hundreds of thousands of pogrom victims.

Because of this popular connection, it was the populist and Zionist papers that most embraced his cause, among them the *Morgn zhurnal* in New York, the *Keneder adler* in Montreal, *Di Tsayt* in London, *Haynt* in Warsaw and Paris, and *Moment* in Warsaw—but only on their terms.[382] Even Abraham Cahan, a Socialist critical of Schwarzbard's act, allowed his *Forverts* to promote and exploit the

[381] The story "Samson's Death," with its valorization of a heroic Jewish revolutionary fighter, was indeed one of Schwarzbard's better efforts, and was published at in this early period after the assassination despite its violent content. The other story favored," The Uncircumcised Might Hear....", was a pogrom story that highlighted Schwarzbard's sensitivity to pogrom suffering. The poems selected were "My Father a Gift" (1912), "A Prayer" (May 22, 1915), and "So God Declares..." (May 23, 1915).

[382] Depending on their orientation, leftist papers were concerned with number of issues, including the "nationalism" and "chauvinism" seen the act, as well the problem of "individual acts of terror" falling outside the increasingly tight strictures of party discipline in the era.

sensation to a certain extent as part of his populist publishing strategy.[383] Cahan drew a line at actual financial backing for the Jewish assassin, however: "When the *Forward* was asked to start a public subscription for Schwartzbard's defense, Cahan, refused, but he could not attack Schwartzbard. Had he done so, his readers would have reacted unfavorably."[384]

New York's *Morgen zhurnal* had no such financial reservations. Edited by Jacob Fishman, who later became an officer for Schwarzbard's Defense Committee in New York, the paper published a direct appeal for money to help finance Schwarzbard's legal costs, which included the expensive prospect of shipping pogrom victims to Paris from around the world.[385] The response was astounding, the fund collecting over five thousand dollars within days of the appeal. When criticized by S. Rosenfeld, editor of the rival New York Yiddish paper *Der Tog*, for making a "national issue" of the affair, Fishman's response revealed the limits of his

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[383] Zosa Szajkowski describes Cahan catering to the popular mood: "Raphael Abramovitch, a Russian-Jewish Social Democrat, sent an anti-Schwartzbard article to Abraham Cahan, editor of the New York City Yiddish socialist daily, *Forward,* which Cahan refused to publish, because the Jewish masses were strongly pro-Schwartzbard." Szajkowski, "*Rebuttal*," 203.

[384] Ibid. The extent to which Abe Cahan's populist editorial policy went against his own personal feelings is well illustrated in a story told by the elder statesman of Anarcho-Yiddish journalism, Saul Yanovsky on his deathbed. After the editor rejected material Yanovsky had written for *Forverts*, the latter approached Cahan for an explanation: " 'Just tell me Yanovsky, do you know who you're writing for?' 'I write for the intelligent reader of the *Forverts*, for people who understand what they read.' 'Aha!' Cahan shouted out triumphantly, 'that's where you're so very wrong. You write for a bunch of ignorant swine, who learned to read a novel in the "*bintl brif*" [a popular advice column]—from me here in America. You write for pushcart peddlers, old women, ignorant storeowners, and all manner of young hoodlums. Do you understand me?' Yanovsky looked at him and asked: 'Comrade Cahan, is it your desire that… may you live to 120... that I repeat this at your funeral?' Cahan soured and spoke through his teeth: 'You won't live to see it!' and slammed the door behind him. Now that the angel of death stood by his bed, Yanovsky remembered the incident and regretted that Cahan's wish would soon come true. He would not be able to relate Cahan's deserved praise after his death." Yanovksy had tried working with Cahan at *Forverts* around the time of the Schwarzbard affair in 1927. Predictably, it did not work out. Cohen*, The Jewish-Anarchist Movement*, 312.

[385] The president of the New York committee was the famous New York communal activist Joseph Barondess.

support for the Jewish assassin, however:[386] "If we stand by Schwartzbard, it is not in defense of his act, but in order to bring out once and for all before the civilized world through a great trial the story of the horrible pogroms in the Ukraine which deprived Schwartzbard of his peace and self-control, which drove him to desperation and made him not responsible for the act he committed."[387] Although arrived at by any number of different routes, before the affair was over, nearly every Jewish observer adopted some version of this position where Schwarzbard was concerned. To end his challenge, Rosenfeld also asked if *Morgen zhurnal's approach* might not act as "a provocation for Petlura's followers also to make a national issue of the affair?" It was a mute point, as the Ukrainians were going to "nationalize" the affair in any case.

## 7.3 Symon Petliura's Funeral

Ironically Schwarzbard, a man who so desired martyrdom for himself, had made a martyr of his victim. Symon Petliura was often a divisive figure in the Ukrainian national movement, but after the assassination he became a unifier both for Ukrainians in diaspora and for suppressed nationalists at home.[388] Particularly controversial were his militarization of the independence movement, and his willingness to find allies that did not share Ukrainian interests beyond the fight against the Soviets. Most contentious was an alliance with Poland bought by

[386] As reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 3, 1926.
[387] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 3, 1927.
[388] The Ukrainian scholar Patricia Kennedy Grimsted says that, "Petliura's death in Paris focused international attention on Ukraine and produced a martyr to the cause of Ukrainian independence." Grimsted, "The Odyssey of the Petliura Library."

abandoning the Ukrainian majority in Western Galicia to Polish rule. Reflecting the strength of dissenting attitudes towards the Hetman before the assassinations, one Ukrainian scoffed: "That Petliura is sure putting up a good fight for Ukrainian independence! He has united with gentry-led Poland and imperialist Romania... and now he is fraternizing with Deniken, a lackey of the Tsarist regime and the old 'indivisible' Russia.... He has certainly found himself select company! Aristocratic Poland, imperialist Romania, and the monarchist Deniken—all at Ukraine's expense."[389] In some ways paralleling the fate of his assassin, Ukrainians mustered near unanimous public support for Petliura after his death, while disagreements over his policies quietly persisted.

At 3 p.m. on Sunday October 30th, a long train of mourners escorted Petliura's body through the narrow streets of the Left Bank to Montparnasse cemetery. The funeral carriage passed just a few blocks from La Santé prison where Sholem Schwarzbard dreamt of Jewish heroism, and awaited his first official investigative hearing to take place the following Wednesday. Ukrainians feared more violence against them and security was tight.[390] This did not prevent some intrepid local Jews from joining the somber procession:

> "Who would have believed it seven years ago," said one, "that we would meet here, that we would go to Petliura's funeral, and where? In Paris?..." A second said: "Where else then? Do you think in Kiev we could have joined in the streets during the funeral of the bloody Hetman after a Jewish bullet had cut him down? We would have made a pretty picture if the funeral of the new "holy man" took place, for example, on Kreshchatyk....[391] What do you think they would have done to us, these same pallbearers with their tearful faces?" "Who knows," said a third, "if they aren't weeping because their

[389] Satzkevich, *Ukrainian Diaspora*, footnote 9, 226.
[390] Y.L. Berlovitch, "*Petliura's levaye*," [Petliura's Funeral], *Haynt* (Warsaw), June 2, 1926.
[391] This is the name of Kiev's main thoroughfare.

> hearts are bitter and their blood is boiling, and there are so many Jews around and they can't lay their hands on them! Who can see into their hearts?..."[392]

As these Jews expected, the funeral passed without incident, but relations between Ukrainians and Jews, already strained by Soviet policies Jewish colonization in the Steppes and on the Crimean Peninsula, soured further after the assassination. Schwarzbard's hope to change perceptions of Jewish passivity and to instill fear in those thirsty for Jewish blood necessarily ignored such concerns. His violence did indeed increase the fear between Ukrainian and Jew, but in a more superficial manner than Jews far less Jewish than Schwarzbard who were joining the dreaded Bolshevik secret police in numbers disproportionate to their percentage of the total population. Leonard Schapiro wrote of this new role for the Jews: "For the most prominent and colourful figure after Lenin is Trotsky, in Petrograd the dominant and hated figure was Zinoviev, while anyone who had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the *Cheka* stood a very good chance of finding himself confronted with, and possibly shot by, a Jewish investigator."[393] This more general shift likely contributed to the obduracy of the Ukrainian allegation that Sholem Schwarzbard was a Bolshevik agent.

## 7.4 Anna Caught Up in the Excitement

Shortly after her husband's arrest, Anna asked Sholem in a letter, *"La boutique est encore fermé dit moi si je dois le'ouvrie. oui ou non."* If she asked out of concern over rumors of Ukrainian revenge her tone does not show it, and the rest of

[392] Berlovitch, *Funeral.*
[393] Salo Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*, 203.

the note is equally matter of fact. She tells her husband that their dog Cerber is "searching for him everywhere," and, perhaps trying to alleviate any fears he might have over her safety, that his brother and sister-in-law pass the whole day with her. Anna also shows no sign of the trepidation Sholem attributes to her in his journal, signing off affectionately: *"Je t'embrasse de tout mon coeur, ta compagne, Anna*"[394]

More than just family kept Anna company those first days after the assassination, however. In an unsigned article, the *Forverts's* Paris correspondent tells of the difficulty he had even entering the Schwarzbard's flat because it was overfull with journalists. As evening fell, he waited in a corner for the others to leave, describing Anna as a "care-worn, exhausted, sympathetic young Jewish woman." Finding a chance to introduce himself as a reporter for *Forverts*, Anna immediately sat down with him because Sholem read his paper. After explaining the general situation, she shows the reporter the *pneumatique* (express postcard) Sholem had sent her the day of the assassination. Written in Yiddish, it read:

> "My dearest, the hour has come, when I must take revenge for my unfortunate people. Petliura is responsible for pogroms in Ukraine. I will wait no longer. I must fulfill my duty. I ask you to stay calm. I alone must carry the responsibility for the act of revenge. Be well. I will not forget you..."[395]

Still looking at the postcard they heard a knock at the door. It was a Jewish family that simply wanted to see the wife of their new hero. After the family departed, Anna complained that she was tired, and the reporter quickly apologized for taking

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[394] Although they seem to have preferred to speak to one and other in French, Anna's mastery of the language like that of her husband was imperfect. I have left her French uncorrected. Note from Anna Schwarzbard to Sholem Schwarzbard, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, unnumbered.

[395] "Our Paris Correspondent," *Forverts*, June 7, 1926. Unfortunately, this interesting report was anonymous, and I have not been able to identify the journalist behind it.

her time, getting up to leave, but "no," he reports, "with my visit she was happy, after all her husband regularly buys the *Forverts*."

The *Forverts* report illustrates how Anna actually came to enjoy the attention she received after her initial shock had worn off. She was granted the right to see her husband twice a week, and on her first visit told Sholem that she had begun to understand the importance of what he had done. Pleasantly surprised with the change, on Wednesday June, 2 he wrote in his journal that his wife had "jumped from the personal onto the higher level of living for the other, of breathing with the world..." Schwarzbard remembers her "glowing" inexplicably and then telling him: "A big deal... really a big deal! You should know, my love, what's happening in the street.... the whole world is with you.... everyone is jealous of me.... many women want to be in my place."[396]

Anna's visit came at a good time for Schwarzbard, having just finished his first investigative hearing. Though he very much liked the young investigating magistrate Peyre, these hearings, most of which were conducted during his first summer in prison, exhausted and depressed him. It was the practice of the Assize court to rehearse the trial, questioning the defendant and witnesses for the state and prosecution together in the same room, and by the end of that first summer, Schwarzbard was already familiar with prosecution arguments and the unflattering picture of him they planned to present.

The first hearing covered basics like the details of Schwarzbard's life and the assassination itself, but the second, held on June 29, brought him face to face with a

[396] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 246.

Ukrainian witness. The 37 year-old Ilarion Kossenko, editor of the Ukrainian bi-monthly paper *Tryzub* published in Paris, flatly denied Schwarzbard's accusation that paper tried to incite pogrom violence.[397] Kossenko then countered, alleging, "the crime committed by Schwarzbard was not an individual assassination, but was organized and ordered by the Russian Bolsheviks."[398] The notes from the hearing contain Schwarzbard's open admission that he was a revolutionary, but one that belonged to no party and especially not the Bolsheviks.[399]

Schwarzbard remembered catering to the Christian sensibilities of the investigating judge during the Kossenko hearing: "I am a revolutionary, a soul in revolt, and can only say that I have to owe much of my revolutionary spirit to the Prophets. Your Christ was also a revolutionary."[400] The magistrate reminded Schwarzbard that as far as he knew Christ hadn't killed anybody, to which Schwarzbard answered: "It isn't always necessary to sacrifice yourself for the sins of others... You also can't turn the other cheek forever when they don't stop hitting you."[401] Kossenko provided the magistrate with a number of referrals for witnesses who he claimed could support his allegations of conspiracy, and ended by challenging Schwarzbard's ability to read Ukrainian properly. Schwarzbard noted Kossenko's "cruel appearance and.... angry eyes," the whole encounter with the "hooligan-witness" leaving him "unnerved."[402]

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[397] "*Tyzub"* translates "Trident." It is the national symbol of Ukraine.

[398] Court notes on the investigative *"confrontation*" between Ilarion Kossenko and Sholem Schwarzbard, June 29, 1926, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38074.

[399] Ibid. 38075.

[400] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 277.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid.

One of Kossenko's witness referrals was a Prague professor named Waldemar Koval who testified at the third investigative hearing on July 20, 1926 that he had seen Schwarzbard trailing Petliura near a café in the *Bois de Boulogne* "in the company of an elegant woman." Koval died before the trial, and his testimony was weakened by recollection of the man as "brunette" instead of blonde.[403] Schwarzbard laughed at the allegation, claiming the *Bois de Boulogne*, and probably the lady as well, were "too chic" for him. Forced to hear further testimony that day on Petliura's supposed friendship with the Jews, he left this hearing even more "sad and gloomy" than the previous one.[404] Schwarzbard's growing impatience with the whole process contributed to this feeling: "The trial should start already, where I will have to give an account of myself and my deeds before the entire civilized world."[405] He would have to wait a full year-and-a-half before his wish was fulfilled. In additional hearings conducted in the spring of 1927 he also had to endure the full-blown conspiracy theory of General Mykyta Shapoval.

## 7.5 An Appeal from Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman

In the initial storm of interest given Schwarzbard and his affair over the summer of 1926, it was not Ukrainian conspiracy theories and denigration of his character that most troubled him, rather interpretations and assessments of his act by fellow Anarchists and Jews. Even among Schwarzbard devotees support was qualified in some way, exception most often take to his violence. Emma Goldman

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[403] Court notes on the investigative *"confrontation*" between Waldemar Koval and Sholem Schwarzbard, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38079-80.

[404] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 285.

[405] Ibid. 284.

and Alexander Berkman were among the few who had no problem with the latter, and the world famous Anarchists published an appeal for support on the front page of the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* on Friday June 18, 1926.[406] Though co-signed, the appeal reflects Goldman's thinking. She warmly refers to the assassin as "Sholem" after introducing him as "our best comrade and friend." She further speculates that her Anarchist reader might have known the assassin from London, or perhaps even Russia in the early days of the Revolution, and asks them to imagine her shock on hearing the news of the shooting just days after leaving Paris:

> Sholem Schwarzbard from whom less than any other person one would expect he could commit such an act. Sholem, as his many friends intimately called him, is one of the dearest characters we have met; always in good spirits, ready to help and magnanimous to the highest degree. Of course, there is no reason why a person of this character should not perpetrate such a deed. On the contrary, most of the well-known terrorists, and especially from the Russian movement in years past, were all men and women of Sholem's type—very good people and extremely idealistic. It is the hardest indictment of the present order that the best idealists who see human life as the highest good are precisely those who resort to acts of individual violence… all the readers probably know him from the articles and letters he would send these last few years. His little clockmaker's shop on Boulevard Ménilmontant—one of the proletarian districts in Paris—was always the gathering point for those run out of various countries, and especially from Russia. Even though Sholem was not well provided with material goods, a needy comrade would never leave his house without a meal and a lighter spirit because Sholem's generosity and overflowing friendship shone out from his being.[407]

Goldman's praise, while hardly insincere, reflects not only Schwarzbard's character but also her approach to assassination in general. She summarized her thinking on the subject in her essay, "The Psychology of Political Violence":

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[406] Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, "*Ema Goldman un Alek. Berkman vegn Shvartsbard's fartaydikung*" [Emma Goldman and Alex. Berkman on Schwarzbard's Defense], *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, June 18, 1926.

[407] Goldman and Berkman, "On Schwarzbard's Defense."

> The ignorant mass looks upon the man who makes a violent protest against our social and economic iniquities as upon a wild beast, a cruel, heartless monster, whose joy it is to destroy life and bathe in blood; or at best, as upon an irresponsible lunatic. Yet nothing is further from the truth. As a matter of fact, those who have studied the character and personality of these men, or who have come in close contact with them, are agreed that it is their super-sensitiveness to the wrong and injustice surrounding them which compels them to pay the toll of our social crimes.[408]

Goldman most likely did not know of Schwarzbard's poetic attempts to "bathe in blood," but neither did anyone else who was willing to tell. She was more interested in Schwarzbard's reputation for goodness in the community for the way it helped promote her idea of political assassins as paragons of virtue.

For Goldman the only issue potentially holding her back from a total embrace of Schwarzbard's act was the fact that he had shed blood for Jewish, not universal humanitarian reasons. In her appeal she handled the issue with her usual ability to make her opinions on even the most controversial of issues sound like common sense. Goldman recalls witnessing pogrom devastation first-hand in 1920 while traveling in Ukraine, and shows that she grasps both the Jewish and wider ethical issues addressed by the assassination with her claim that the affair could be "transformed into a powerful and impressive demonstration against the feudal spirit of race-hatred" spreading in Europe and America.[409] Nevertheless she stresses the latter, her pogrom experience, unlike Schwarzbard's, unable to change universalist priorities. She stated this clearly in February 1927, when on a visit to Paris in the midst of the affair, she made the following comment on the subject of recent pogroms and the Jewish "nationalist" response to them:

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[408] Emma Goldman, "The Psychology of Political Violence," in *Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches,* ed. Alix Kates Shulman (New York: Random House, 1972), 211.

[409] Goldman and Berkman, "On Schwarzbard's Defense."

> The wave of nationalism of the Jews is nothing new as far as I can see. It was the same after the Kishenev pogrom and every other massacre. I know that men like Zhitlovsky and others are sincere in their nationalistic feeling and strivings. To me, however, there is nothing more reactionary than just that feeling... more than ever the last years have convinced me that there is not hope for mankind so long as they are divided through boundaries and blinded by their nationalistc viewpoints. You will find that Rudolf [Rocker] maintains the same position. I am so glad he will be able to prevent the error into which our comrades and many other well-meaning radicals fall into when they look to nationalism as the solution of the pressing problems.[410]

Nevertheless Goldman supported the assassin, keeping any reservations she had about nationalism silent in her appeal. Other Anarchist comrades associated with the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* similarly skirted the national issue, but many of these condemned his violence outright. The tepid response of his closest political allies was perhaps best reflected in the relative financial failure of the Goldman-Berkman appeal. While the religiously orientated and politically moderate *Morgen zhurnal* printed hundreds of names and collected thousands of dollars, the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* published only the following response to the appeal:

> Respected editor of the F.A.SH. This week I completed public school. In honor of the occasion my parents gave a party, in which very close friends came together, and we passed the time very nicely. I've known for a long time that my father believes that if you have party somewhere you should

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[410] Emma Goldman, *Nowhere at Home: letters from exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman,* eds. Richard and Anna Maria Drinnon (New York: Schocken, 1975), 71. Zhitlowsky once was reported to have said: "Why fool myself? I felt myself a Jew. I was happy and comfortable in my Jewish world. Jews were closer to me, more my own kind, than many Russians with whom I was good friends and closely associated because of our common views. Why fool myself? After all, I was a Jew." Goldman says the following about Zhitlowsky and her own Jewishness: "Zhitlovksy had come to America with Babushka. A Socialist Revolutionist [later an Anarchist, kj], he was also an ardent Judaist. He never tired urging upon me that as a Jewish daughter I should devote myself to the cause of the Jews. I would say to him that I had been told the same thing before. A young scientist I had met in Chicago, a friend of Max Baginski, had pleaded with me to take up the Jewish cause. I repeated to Zhitlovsky what I had related to the other: that at the age of eight I used to dream of becoming a Judith and visioned myself in the act of cutting off Holofernes' head to avenge the wrongs of my people. But since I had become aware that social injustice is not confined to my own race, I had decided that there were too many heads for one Judith to cut off." Emma Goldman, *Living My Life,* (New York: Knopf, 1931), 370.

not just eat and drink, but you should always remember some kind of a good cause and give money for it. Knowing this, I thought how I might make my father happy. And since there came on the front page of the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* an appeal from Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman... for Sholem Schwarzbard, and what an idealist he is, I understood it would be a nice party if we collected a few dollars for that purpose. And I feel really very good that I was the first and gave $5.00 because others soon followed with their money, and I send you the money with the names of the donors:

Dvoyre Rozenfeld..... $5.00
Av. Silver..... .50
Kisluk..... 1.00
Hashkele Lesh.....1.00
Butinsky..... 1.00
Moris Shtofman..... .50
Adolf Silver..... .50
A. Yanovsky..... .50
Sosnov..... .50
Shtiftel..... 1.00
A. Markison..... .50
together.....$12.00

We would have perhaps gathered more, but at the same party we also collected a few dollars for Sacco and Venzetti, which we sent over to the Workmen's' Circle. Hoping that Schwarzbard will be free, I am still your little reader, Dvoyre Rozenfeld.[411]

Despite this noble gesture, the support of the *Fraye arbeter-shtime's* editorial staff, and the Goldman-Berkman appeal, Schwarzbard felt betrayed by his Anarchist comrades. Members of Schwarzbard defense committees that formed in Paris and New York were far more moderate politically than he, and when some of the members demanded assurances Schwarzbard was no "Makhnovist" (peasant Anarchists often blamed for pogroms), his response reflects greater feelings of alienation from the Anarchist movement than from his "bourgeois" supporters:

[411] *"Far Shvartsbard's fartaydikung"* [For Schwarzbard's Defense], *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* July 2, 1926.

> The Anarchists have renounced you; they say it wasn't an anarchist deed. In general the anarchists are buzzing. Some shout that I am a nationalist, that I've suddenly become a Jew—this is considered to be a disgrace and humiliation. Others argue that Anarchism and terror are two quite different impulses. I happen to agree with these.[412]

Along with Goldman, the "nationalist" accusation Schwarzbard mentions could refer to most Anarchist commentators on the affair, but the criticism of his "terror" undoubtedly came from the movement's elder statesman Saul Yanovsky, and an article he published in *Fraye arbeter-shtime* a week before the Goldman-Berkman appeal. The "buzz" was the heated debate Yanovsky's article touched off.[413]

## 7.6 Saul Yanovsky and the Anarchist Debate

Unlike Emma Goldman, the always controversial Saul Yanovsky admits that he feels drawn to Schwarzbard as a Jew, Anarchist and writer, but also makes it clear that he plans to attack this idol of the people. He claims that "murder is murder," and then makes the more serious charge that Schwarzbard had set himself up as "judge, jury and executioner."[414] Yanovsky reveals his true feelings about the assassin toward the end of the article, claiming Schwarzbard's was the deed of a misguided individual, arising out of a "strong personal feeling" and "thirst for

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[412] Sholem Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 303.

[413] Saul Yanovsky, "*Shvartsbard un zayn tat, loyt mayn meynung,*" [Schwarzbard and his deed according to my opinion], *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* June 11, 1926. Yanovsky's roots in the Anarchist movement went back its earliest days in London. He and Kropotkin split when Yanovsksy began to question the expediency of "propaganda of the deed." He was the editor of the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* until 1919. His successor, Joseph Cohen, said of him: "From youth onward Yanovsky had the characteristic of creating more enemies than friends." His stand against the avenger of the Jews was thus just one in a long line of controversial positions. See Joseph Cohen, *The Jewish Anarchist Movement,* 465. Also see Saul Yanovsky, *Ershte yorn fun yidishn frayhatlekhn sotsyalizm: oytobiografishe zikhroynes fun a pioner boyer fun der yidisher anarkhistisher bevegung in England un Amerike* [The First Years of Free Jewish Socialism: Autobiographical Memories of a Pioneer Builder of the Jewish Anarchist movement in England and America] (New York, 1948).

[414] Yanovsky, "My Opinion."

revenge." He further contends that the assassin was at one and the same time confused, egotistical, excessively passionate, hypocritical and cold-blooded.[415] Had Yanovsky read Schwarzbard's poetry? Whatever the answer, he was one of the few observers to consider the subjective aspect of Schwarzbard's deed. On the more objective level of history and ethics Yanovsky's argument is inconsistent, ill informed and too obviously meant to defend his old stand against terrorism. His claims about Schwarzbard's character, on the other hand, while also exaggerated and imprecise, were penetrating.

In printing Yanovsky's assault, Joseph Cohen added a disclaimer, saying the opinion of the present editorial board was "completely opposite" to that of "Comrade Yanovsky." He reminded his reader that the paper had abandoned its dogma against violence (introduced by Yanovsky several years earlier) for a view that judged direct action on a case-by-case basis. Cohen rejects Yanovsky's notion of Schwarzbard's subjective "thirst for revenge," making it a transpersonal desire for justice, and then offers up the pages of the paper to an open debate, inviting letters from readers that should be as "objective and cool" as possible.[416]

They were neither. Schwarzbard supporters made passionate reference to the assassin's generous nature and righteous indignation rooted in his pogrom experience, while detractors disdained his moral hubris and faulty principles.[417] No

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[415] Yanovsky, "My Opinion."

[416] Editorial disclaimer added to Saul Yanovsky's "*Shvartsbard's tat loyt meyner meynung*." *Fraye arbetyer shtime*, June 11, 1927.

[417] In a regular column the paper ran throughout the summer of 1926 called "About Schwarzbard's Deed," the titles of pro-Schwarzbard letters tended to be emotional, while those against his deed were more stoic. For example, "Blessed be Schwarzbard's hand," "Jews must Learn to Strike Back," and "Killing a Bloodthirsty Animal is not a Crime"— all from June 25, 1926 supported

one, however, voiced the slightest suspicion that Schwarzbard had conspired with Moscow, although one contributor suggested they might be risking Schwarzbard's chances for acquittal by openly admitting the accused's association with an Anarchist paper.

Two of the more interesting contributors were Comrade Sh. Levin Schwarzbard and Comrade M. Simon. In his letter, Simon calls Schwarzbard a "murderer," condemning his service in the World War and Revolution where "…we see our Sholem on the Bolshevik front, naturally with a gun in his hand, and once again shooting left and right. Thus we are dealing with a man who loves to hold a gun in his hand."[418] Simon rejects a comparison circulating between Schwarzbard's deed and Alexander Berkman's 1892 attempt on the life of the union-busting industrialist and financier Henry Clay Frick: "Berkman perpetrated his deed and every single person felt that here a man had perpetrated a deed on principle. The idealist Berkman couldn't stand by and watch how they tortured the workers. Therefore comparing the two is like day and night." Simon remained blind to the fact that he denied Jews the sympathy he showed the workers in whose interest Berkman had struck.

In the following week's issue Comrade Levin defends the assassin with Nietzsche, the Bible and Revolution.[419] Levin first calls Yanovsky a "liar" for his insinuation that striking back was somehow not a Jewish practice. He sets the *lex talionis* against Yanovsky's intellectual pacifism, seeing in "an eye for an eye" a

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Schwarzbard, while "Not human, not Anarchist" (July 2), "Murder is Unanarchistic under all Circumstances" (July 16), "An Irresponsible Act" (Aug 6) condemned the assassination.

[418] M. Simon, "Shake Off Such Anarchists," *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* July 23, 1926.

[419] Sh. Levin, "On Schwarzbard's Deed," *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* July 30, 1926.

natural and vital ethic. Schwarzbard's act was not revenge, but the expression of a "healthy feeling" found in truly great men. For Levin, Schwarzbard was both a great revolutionary, and a hero shaken in his "deepest depths" by the pogrom tragedy: "When I heard that a young man named Schwarzbard had shot the murderer of tens of thousands of people—who slaughtered the old, women and children, raped and pillaged—a light flashed through my head, the voice is resounding of one who wakes the slaves, the worms to the original ethic "an eye for an eye!... for there is no other God, no other moral, no other ethic than life itself for which man has to fight…."[420] Levin then warns: "Woe to the people, the group, the movement that exchanges this healthy ethic for dead morality. What will become of such a people or group? Cowards, worms!"

By mid-August 1926 the debate cooled and opinions became more measured. Comrade S. Fridman had the last word. Fridman, who had followed the affair closely in the world press, comments that even the Royalist *Action Française* with its "sarcastic-ironic" handling of the affair did not surpass Yanovsky in condemning the assassin.[421] Fridman concludes with the Yiddish folk saying: "*hit mir fun mayne gute freynd, fun mayne sonim vel ikh mir aleyn oyshitn"* [Protect me from my good friends, I can defend myself against my enemies].[422]

[420] Levin, "Schwarzbard's Deed."
[421] S. Fridman, "About Schwarzbard's Deed," *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* August 27, 1926.
[422] Ibid.

## 7.7 Sholem Asch's Apotheosis of the Jewish Assassin

The folk saying used by Fridman could not have expressed Schwarzbard's feelings of betrayal during these first months in prison better, feelings that poured out against Socialists and Communists as well:

> Equally, the Communists won't have anything to do with me because I am both a Jew and Anarchist and haven't made the proper blessing and screamed that I killed a counter-revolutionary and—long live Lenin and the Bolsheviks!... Without this, the sacrifice is defiled. You need not even mention the Socialists of every ilk. They think the Communists sent me and, secondly, I've killed their best friend—a great friend of the "Israelites" and a great friend of France and a great humanitarian. And thus I stand alone….[423]

The best known of all Yiddish writers, Sholem Asch, noted the negative attitude among radicals towards the Jewish avenger: "I knew very little of him before he committed his deed, I met him a few times in passing. And afterward, when he became "famous"—the "comrades" and "friends" didn't accept that he had so "easily" become a hero. And, as is normal for our circles, people quietly started talking against him—that he is a poser, a little crazy, a fanatic. In a word, people want to cut him down to size."[424] In response, Asch made a messianic figure of Schwarzbard in a short biography called, "*Ver iz der merder*?" [Who is the Assassin?].[425]

Risking the ire of radicals, Yiddishists, radical Yiddishists and the pious all at the same time, Asch expands the resonance of the assassin's first name "Sholem," to make him a "Prince of Peace" modeled on his distant forefather, Jesus of Nazareth.

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[423] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 303.

[424] Sholem Asch, *"A bagegenish mit Sholem Shvartsbard"* [A Meeting with Sholem Schwarzbard], *Haynt* (Warsaw), November 18, 1927.

[425] Sholem Asch, "*Ver iz der 'merder?'"* [Who is the "Assasin"?], *Haynt* (Warsaw), June 7, 1926. This curious little Schwarzbard biography appeared in several other Yiddish papers at around the same time sincluding *Forverts* and *Morgn zhurnal* in New York, and London's *Di Tsayt*.

The writer utilizes images from Roman Catholic iconography to make his case. "Bread and wine" become symbols for Schwarzbard's daily life poisoned by the blood of pogrom victims, and his war wound is a "bullet in the side." Asch also takes the opportunity afforded him by his biographical passion play to cast the Jewish intelligentsia, so reluctant to accept Schwarzbard's gospel, as latter-day Pharisees. He does so by juxtaposing the "young man's" radiant smile against the "clever and shrewd smile of our over-refined intelligentsia." The young man gives his heart with every handshake, but the smiling face of the Jewish intellectual "says so much about the self… how clever we are, and how we understand everything through and through."

As the most important part of the assassin messiah's gospel, the pogroms prepared the way for the young man's martyrdom and resurrection: "And his feet had barely touched Russian soil—and his ears were deafened by cries—blood dripped from his eyes…. You all know why. It's not necessary to say it out loud. You don't talk about such things. About the violated honor of Jewish daughters you keep quiet… With your fingers on your lips!"[426] The idea of revenge becomes a "festering wound" in the assassin messiah. Suppressing the cry within, his heart congeals into a curse "that sticks in you, in me, in all of us," and in him alone it grew "into a deed—the redemption for all of us." For Asch, Schwarzbard incarnates a violent logos that redeems the world with a single Faustian deed of holy retribution.

[426] Asch himself was reluctant to present the details of pogroms in his writing. Reflecting this tendency, the epigraph to his 1919 version of the novel *Kiddesh ha-shem* reads: "We are ashamed to write down all that the Cossacks and Tatars did unto the Jews, lest we disgrace the species man who is created in the image of God."

7.8 Schwarzbard Defines the "Jewish Fear"

Despite reservations about the deed's "nationalism," the Left demanded acquittal, but perhaps recognizing the hypocrisy behind their support, Schwarzbard never lost his sense of betrayal. He responded with what was for him a rare French *tour de force*: "I have gall enough for them all... I am after all a Frenchman and know the answer of Cambronne at Waterloo…"[427] In the end even these feelings of isolation and betrayal took Jewish shape, however, as he saved the lion's share of his frustration for the pious, his wife and, ultimately, himself.[428] In an essay entitled "*Der yidisher pakhad pakhadti*" [The Jewish "fear that I feared"], Schwarzbard presents his definition of Jewishness, simultaneously condemning and praising Jewish tradition.[429]

Characteristically diffuse, disjointed and internally inconsistent, the essay is nonetheless held together by the centripetal force of Schwarzbard's passion. Usually the downfall of his creative efforts, in expressing his exasperation over the crippling dread he recognized hounding Jewish life through the centuries, it helps him break through to an unusual degree of clarity:

> Still for one thing I have to account, and that is for the Jewish fear. That particular fear, that dread, that "thing which I greatly feared" [*pakhad pakhadti*], that special Jewish anxiety, the Jewish defenselessness and

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[427] Schwarzbard is referring to what became known in France as the "*mot de Cambronne"* made famous by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*. When asked to surrender, Major Cambronne, an officer of the Old Guard, is purported to have answered "*Merde!*"

[428] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 303-7.

[429] Job 3:24-6 (JPS). The passage comes at the end of Job's first bitter complaint against his undeserved fate. A look at the context of the phrase reveals its autobiographical significance for the assassin: "My groaning serves as my bread; For what I feared [*pakhad pakhadti*] has come upon me. My roaring pours forth as water. I had no repose, no quiet, no rest. And trouble came." Schwarzbard perhaps found comfort in Job's pathos during the sleepless months leading up to the assassination, and also those which came after. It was his time of "no repose, no quiet, no rest." The entire essay is found in Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 303-307.

> helplessness, that has accompanied us since the beginning of our history, which is our first attribute and is stronger than the second—faith which is abstract… the first attribute is subjective, instinctive, deeply rooted in us, we all feel it, every individual alone and all of us together. This is the fear that falls on a man who finds himself alone in a forest among wild animals and poisonous snakes, and fears to take a step—maybe a snake will bite…[430]

Schwarzbard was excluded from the faith he mentions, saying at an investigative hearing, "I am Jewish by race and religion, but I do not believe."[431] Now that his revolutionary hopes had shattered as well, he lost even the abstract connection he liked to make between the prophetic spirit of Bible (Isaiah, Amos, etc...) and Revolution (Marx, LaSalle, etc...). In this way faith had still played a role in his life, and its loss brought him to the edge of an abyssal psychological precipice. No longer able associate himself with the Jewish people on this basis, only the "Jewish fear" remained to connect him to roots. Its hold proved to be remarkably powerful.

The biographical significance of this passage can hardly be over-stated. For the first time in his life Schwarzbard had identified a basis on which he could live fully as a Jew, and having "done enough for the Revolution," every action henceforth would relate back to it. It is important to understand that in Schwarzbard's conception this "fear" was not necessarily bad, for it brought out both the best and the worst in Jewish character. Giving an example from his experience, Schwarzbard mentions how the fear of appearing cowardly made Jews into outstanding fighters in the World War. The following passage reflects the tension between the positive and negative aspects of the fear in Schwarzbard's mind:

> Still no one would dare say that Jews are cowards, are afraid of death, even the worst enemies of the Jews are silenced. If Jews dislike wars it's not

[430] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 304.
[431] The Kossenko-Schwarzbard Confrontation, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 38075.

> because they fear death, it's their natural aversion to bloodshed... No! No one is capable of showing what the Jews have shown! Only the fear, the "thing that I greatly feared" is something completely different. No matter what happens, it always falls on the Jews. All troubles all calumnies to Jewish heads! If one Jew sins, all Jews are punished. If there's a Brodsky they scream: "All Jews are capitalists!" If there's a Trotsky: "All Jews are Communists! We are always faced with the dilemma: To be or not to be![432]

With a typically eclectic view, Schwarzbard sees the fear creating courage and cowardice, both the Jewish and the outside world playing a role in nurturing it. Schwarzbard recognized the fear's negative aspect in the Grand Rabbi of Paris, who paid him a visit during his first weeks in prison, only to chastise him with the words: "You shot a man, killed, it's not good."[433] Schwarzbard recalled his impression of the Rabbi as the latter continued to preach: "I looked at the 'Jew' and thought: 'Is it possible to recognize in this cripple [*baal-mum*] a descendent of those great stubborn men and martyrs who fought so heroically for their faith, for their people?'"[434] Schwarzbard describes a different manifestation of the fear in the reaction of pious eastern European Jews to his deed—complete denial:

> An avenger!... unthinkable, it's just another libelous accusation made against the Jews.... It wasn't the Jewish young man who killed Goliath, the wild bandit, the cutthroat, but the other way around: The Jewish young man walked along lost in thought, worried about making a living, the butcher approached him, the murderer and screamed: "*Ti Zhid?!*" (You are a Jew?). He pulled out a knife! The pale young man took a fright, and saying his prayers a miracle happened, the killer was struck by apoplexy on the spot….[435]

By the time he wrote the essay, Anna had again started questioning his decision to kill Petliura. He attributes Anna's complaints to the Jewish fear: "If it

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[432] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 305.

[433] Ibid. 235.

[434] In his choice of words, Schwarzbard perhaps has in mind the Yiddish saying: *"Der grester baal-mum iz a nar*" [The biggest cripple is a fool] He also rather callously uses his youthful advantage and vitalistic worldview against the old man.

[435] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 305-6.

weren't for the fear my wife would not come every time singing the same song: 'You call yourself a human being? A madman, a wild animal, a scatterbrain! Does a human being act like this, I ask you? So many Jews in Paris, and not one of them thought to stick up for the Jews, only a madman like yourself. Truth be told if I didn't make you look good and if I didn't clean your image, they would follow you in the streets and throw stones at you.'"[436] With the original flurry of interest subsiding, Anna faced what looked to be a very long stretch without the help of her husband. While she complained privately to Sholem, she publicly protected not only his, but also her own dignity, letting it be known through a press release in early June that she would accept no money from Jewish groups starting up collections for her:

> I am very grateful for the sympathy shown for me and for the good intentions of the collectors. I still feel it is necessary to declare that I categorically refuse to accept any financial assistance. My husband and I have lived by our own work for all these years from which I feed myself now as well. As long as I am able to work, I will always have the possibility to earn my own bread.[437]

An innately likeable character, Anna helped humanize and deepen understanding for her husband. Schwarzbard only recalled the sting in her complaints, however. Typically self-absorbed, he concludes his thoughts on the Jewish fear with a lament over the "courage" he lacked for suicide: "And if it weren't for "the fear," I would have acted differently, and saying farewell to this lying world, would have slammed the door shut and made the walls shake!... Only I am a Jew and

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[436] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 306.

[437] The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported Anna's refusal on June 8, 1926. A copy of the complete letter, "*A meldung fun froy Khane Shvartsbard"* [A Statement from Mrs. Anna Schwarzbard] can be found in the Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 37135.

am afraid…."[438] Such a conclusion perhaps shows that Anna's complaints about her husband's character flaws were not unfounded.

## 7.9 Long, Forgotten Months in Prison La Santé

Sholem concludes his essay on the Jewish fear with an image of himself curled up in a ball, frustrated by his inability to change the Christian world with shouts of "Hypocrites!..." "Barbarians!..." and "Wild Animals!...", or the Jewish world with his manly example. The fetal pose was an apt symbol for Schwarzbard's malaise over the coming months as his affair dragged on, apparently lapsing into the very forgetfulness he had hoped to dispel.[439] While Schwarzbard would have to wait until the spring of 1927 for developments to re-energize his involvement in the affair, the hard work had just begun gathering and organizing materials on the history of the pogrom era to be used in his defense. Most important was the cooperation that developed between the Jewish scholars in Berlin, Simon Dubnov and Elias Tcherikower, and Leo Motzkin in Paris.[440] Tcherikower moved himself and his pogrom archive from Berlin to Paris in August 1926, but both he and

[438] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 307.

[439] Dr. Elias Tcherikower, the topmost authority on the history of the pogroms, left Berlin for Paris where he worked with Henry Torrès as a key witness for the defense, and as their main historical consultant. Reported in *Lodzher Tageblat*, August 13, 1926.

[440] Also involved in Berlin were other Jews who had experienced the pogrom era in Ukraine, including Y. Leshtchinsky, N. Gergel and Y. Klinov. See Simon Dubnov, *Dos bukh fun mayn lebn: zikhroynes un reyoynes, materialn far der geshikhte fun mayn tsayt,* vol. 3 [The Book of my Life: Memories and Thoughts, Materials for the History of my Time] (New York and Buenes Aires: Alveltlekher yidisher kultur-kongres, 1962), 64. Although Dubnov does not mention working closely with them, London Jews also organized for Schwarzbard's defense under the auspices of the "London Schwartzbard Defense Council" led by Dr. Moses Gaster. "London's Jews Adopt Resolution Regarding Schwartzbard's Case," *Jewish Daily Bulletin,* Nov. 24, 1926.

Motzkin met regularly with Dubnov back in the German capital.[441] In his memoir, Dubnov fondly remembered cooperating on the affair:

> The tireless activist Leo Motzkin led the work of our commission. He was the head of the *Comité des délégations juives* in Paris. He came regularly to Berlin to his family. In Paris he created a "defense committee" for the Schwarzbard affair. The most famous lawyers were drawn to the committee (Torrès and others). In Berlin we created the commission of experts that prepared materials for the defense. I still remember our consultations that took place in my house between the fall of 1926 and the fall of 1927, when Schwarzbard's trial took place. Motzkin would inform us about how the research was going and how the defense was being organized in Paris, about the counter-organization of the plaintiffs—Ukrainian politicians in Paris—about the publication of our materials in French and English and about the propaganda in the press. In our talks there was a type of hidden pathos. We understood that we were standing up for someone who had himself stood up for the honor of our martyrs, and had revived the memory for an indifferent world.[442]

Outside such dedicated circles, by the fall of 1926, overt interest in the affair dropped off dramatically. Always the populist, this affected Schwarzbard badly. Making things worse, he heard of pogroms in Rumania in August 1926. If he had hoped his deed would frighten off future pogromchiks, these new disturbances proved him wrong. It was Anna who reminded him of the darker aspect of his position, and in his journal he recorded the despair touched off in him by the news: "Pogroms again! Fresh pogroms! New pogroms! Why am I so punished?! I feel like a lion in a cage, a bound and wounded animal...."[443] Perhaps unable to control her own disappointment, Anna rubs salt in this old wound freshly reopened, scolding him for naively believing his own myth: "You see how foolish you are, you thought that without Petliura there would be no more pogroms? You wanted a single

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[441] Tcherikower's archive was known as the "five crates of Jewish woe." Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse,* 140.

[442] Dubnov, *The Book of my Life*, 64-5.

[443] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 288.

swallow to bring the spring?"[444] She had a point, for Schwarzbard was indeed a man who tended to over-estimate the extent of his power and moral responsibility. At the end of August he heard more bad news when Louis Marshall of the *American Jewish Committee* condemned the assassination for recklessly endangering the lives of the Jews in Ukraine:

> While we can understand how a man who constantly broods over human wrongs and crimes and whose relatives may have been pogrom victims may find himself in such a state of mind as to be driven to so desperate, and futile an act, there is no justification for making him a national hero, or for the Jewish people to assume the responsibility for his deed. We trust that agitation along these false lines will cease before it is too late. Defense for his act should rather be sought in the field of mental irresponsibility in the juridical sense.[445]

Perhaps with the Tehlirian in mind, whose acquittal in Berlin was based on mental incapacity, Marshall was evidently not aware that a board of three psychologists had already confirmed Schwarzbard's soundness of mind in early June.

The busy preliminaries behind him, but still without a trial date, Schwarzbard endured what had to have been an excruciating wait for a man like him. As early as the end of June 1926, he complained: "Days come, gray and desert-like, that drag themselves like camels in the wilderness, and sound monotonous with their uneasy bells... has the great, incomprehensible, "someone" dozed off... and, exhausted, said: 'Shouldn't things just go how they're going?' It seems as if I

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[444] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 288.

[445] *The Twentieth Annual Report of the American Jewish Committee,* 427-8. Facsimile available on-line at http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1927_1928_10_AJCAnnualReport.pdf. Schwarzbard included his response to Marshall's criticism as part of his essay on Jewish fear: "If it weren't for "the fear," the official American Jews would not have proclaimed that I am crazy, that Petliura is guilty of nothing, and that a Jew knows nothing of revenge..." Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 306.

hear his frequent yawns..."[446] Tossed between assertive, sarcastic, contented, and despairing moods, he filled the hours writing and reading. He was thrilled to find out La Santé had a library.

He first enjoyed the works of E.T.A. Hoffman, but soon turned to French literature: "Precious books! Noble mediators between the great world-spirits and me! And the great unending quiet that surrounded me in their velvet hands, I feel as if Romain Rolland, Renan, Zola and all my authors talk with me, with heart, question me. And I have questions to ask them." Armed with a new Jewish sensitivity, one of those questions was directed at Ernest Renan over his attitude to the Jews in his book on the Nazarene: "In the end he can't help himself and throws a stone at the Jewish people, while he gives Pilate and his wild legions a stroke over their little heads."[447]

Schwarzbard also jotted down in his prison journal quotes from Gandhi taken from Romain Rolland's famous 1924 biography. None of them reflect Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, but rather his acceptance of violence in extreme cases. Schwarzbard first notes Gandhi's claim that the greatest symbiosis achieved by Buddha and Christ was that between force and gentleness.[448] He then copies, word for word, a series of passages from Rolland's book that reflect the national and spiritual circumstances in which Gandhi felt violence was justified: "In those cases where it is a choice between cowardice and violence, I recommend

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[446] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 271.

[447] Ibid. 289. During his affair the prosecutor César Campinchi claimed to share what he saw as Renan's respect for the Jews as "the world's oldest aristocracy" —a reference that must have made Schwarzbard uneasy. The *plaidoirie* of César Campinchi, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 40644-5.

[448] Sholem Schwarzbard's notebooks. Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71842. The passage is found in Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Paris: Stock, 1993), 60.

violence... I cultivate the tranquil courage to die without killing, but he who doesn't have this courage, I wish that he cultivates the art to kill and be killed before shamefully fleeing the danger..."[449] And again: "I would risk violence a thousand times before the emasculation of an entire race..."[450] Schwarzbard carefully recorded the exact dates of the letters exchanged between Rolland and Gandhi, which were from the seminal years in his biography, 1920 and 1921. In Gandhi's words Schwarzbard possibly found a weighty moral authority to legitimate his violence, and perhaps also his nationalist turn. As his imprisonment wore on, he spent more with his favorite reading—the Hebrew Bible.

Schwarzbard read in part to improve his French language and cultural fluency before the trial that he expected to take place in the winter of 1926-7. Allowed to purchase books, his shopping list reflected his efforts in this direction, and included works by Alexander Dumas, Pierre Loti, Léon de Tinseau, Margueritte, Flaubert, Hugo and a French translation of Walter Scott.[451] Schwarzbard adopted two distinct voices in his memoir, one for addressing Christians, and a second for Jews. He told his investigating magistrate Peyre that he was a human being through reason and a Jew by suffering, but he emphasized the latter when addressing non-Jews. In a short French autobiography, he placed himself in the cradle of the Nazarene to make his point:

> *Ma naissance tel du christ,*
> *Du parent persecuté errants,*
> *Mais mon étoile été L'ombre,*
> *Et les mages n'est pas venir visiter*

[449] Rolland, *Gandhi,* 43.
[450] Ibid. 43-44.
[451] Lists of purchases in Schwarzbard's prison journal, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, unnumbered.

*Le ecurie ou je suis né*

[My birth, that of Christ,
To parents persecuted, wandering,
But my star was the darkness,
And the magi never came to visit
The manger where I was born][452]

Unlike Sholem Asch, Schwarzbard did not represent himself to fellow Jews in christological terms, instead preferring to play the role of a militant messiah based in his own peculiar interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic tradition. Though consciousness of himself as Jew was growing, observance had no part in the change, and his diet was even less Jewish than his reading list. Not yet convicted, Schwarzbard was allowed to order in food from the nearby *Restaurant Chassagne.* Having given up his vegetarianism during the World War, he preferred eggs on ham for breakfast, while he alternated between beef, chicken and lamb for dinners. He also found comfort in daily café au laits, bread, salad, oranges and bananas.

## 7.10 In Cold Weather, The Affair Warms Up

With the trial now expected in June 1927, publishing and public relations activity picked up on both sides in the spring.[453] Anxious not to be forgotten, Schwarzbard welcomed any attention the affair could garner, be it good or bad. Though not one to complain about physical hardship, the prison blues he describes in his journal were surely compounded by unseasonably cold, wet weather in Paris.

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[452] Schwarzbard's French was very good, but not perfect, and I have left the grammar and spelling uncorrected. Although undated, this autobiography, based on language and content, was most probably composed while Schwarzbard was in prison, and early on when the biographical inquiries by the court were most intense. Schwarzbard, *Ma autobiographie*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 71823.

[453] On May 5, 1927, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* published the headline "Schwartzbard Trial Set Definitely for June."

Alexander Berkman was in Paris at the time, and complained in a letter to Emma Goldman: "We have had a very few hot days in April even. Then the rains started, and there has not been a day that was free from rain or the threat of rain. And it is chilly, even cold. It is 10 a.m. and I sit here in my room dressed and with my morning gown on, and still I am cold. No sunshine at all. I have not become warmed up since winter yet."[454]

Schwarzbard could take some comfort from the ardent support given him by the Jewish youth in France, and young settlers in Palestine.[455] He may have also drawn satisfaction from the emergence of a minor pogrom literature in French that took a very sympathetic view of him. It included big names like Henri Barbusse and Bernard LeCache. The talented young LeCache went in person to the Soviet Ukraine in the fall of 1926 to investigate the pogroms. In his report, he provocatively compared Schwarzbard, an eastern European immigrant, favorably to his anticipated French reader:

> You are the Occident. Thousands of miles separate you from them [the pogrom victims, kj], five or six frontiers protect you from their shadow. Your hectic civilization, the noise of your glories, the tumult of your progress prevent you from hearing.... While it is blood that flows over there, with you its ink. You have your problems, your affairs, your egotisms.... you're not wicked, you're busy. It is for this reason that we, we have to wait with our victims and our dead.... one from among us, Schwartzbard, did not wait. This

[454] Emma Goldman, *Nowhere at Home,* 72.

[455] A small, but spirited paper called *La Jeunesse Juive* was published from December 1926 until February 1928 mostly as editorial support for Schwarzbard's cause. Beside the regular editorial staff, Bernard LeCache, Joseph Kessel and other prominent Schwarzbardards contributed articles. In April 1927, the first Congress of Jewish students in France met at Nancy. They passed a resolution protesting antisemitism in Rumania, and a second demanding Schwarzbard's acquittal. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 29, 1927. The Revisionist Joseph Schechtman recalled: "Early in 1927, *Betar* organized demonstrations of sympathy and solidarity with Sholom Schwarzbard, who was then awaiting trial in Paris for the assassination of Simon Petliura. In the wake of these demonstrations, more than a hundred new members joined the *Betar* in Tel Aviv. Joseph B. Schechtman and Yehuda Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement, vol. 1 1925-30* (Tel Aviv: Hadar Publishing House, 1970), 348.

> Occidental of recent date did not understand the rules of the game. One day he left his watches, his clockmaker's glass, his small boutique on Ménilmontant. He met Simon Petlura. He killed him. His shots disturb you: "Why this murder? Because of money? Because of hatred?" So that the killing stops. [456]

LeCache told how Schwarzbard's shots echoed through the "silence of the Steppes" as well, but the reaction of the victims was not necessarily positive. LeCache felt these Jews had "long since had their lives taken from them." For this reason they ask their avenger: "Why kill?" Hearing of the retribution exacted in their name they blankly turn "towards the graves, towards the distance, towards the horizon, as if they saw a precious shadow that forgives..."[457] LeCache leaves it an open question whether the "shadow that forgives" is Schwarzbard, the Divine, or a projection of the victims' helplessness under the weight of their memories.

While LeCache focused on Jewish tellers of pogrom tales that pull on long beards as they spoke, Henri Barbusse uses the descriptive genius for which he won global acclaim during the World War to portray a pogrom scene witnessed by Schwarzbard himself. Barbusse imagines Schwarzbard as a French tourist who happened to visit Proskurov at the time of the terrible pogrom of February 1919. Schwarzbard was actually in French occupied Odessa at the time, but Barbusse was after a realism that transcended biographical facts:

> Surprising silence reigns. Samuel [Schwartzbard] draws nearer. How is this? The door wide open! In the hall, a broken table, overturned chairs. The living room: a big bed, and lying in it, someone with head exposed on the pillow. Strange, this dark head with its red beard and twisted smile! One

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[456] Bernard LeCache, *Au Pays des Pogroms, Quand Israël Meurt* (Paris: Éditions du "Progrés civique," 1927), 4-5. The book was released in April 1927. Selections had already been published in serial form between February 5 and March 5 1927 in *Le Quotidien*. LeCache's title is an adaptation of Jérôme Tharaud's popular antisemitic novel from 1921, "*Quand Israël est roi.*"

[457] Ibid. 7.

> nearer look: it is battered in, slashed, black with blood—a beast of some kind, one would say, wet glistening with bright drips in the light of the electric lamp, and the bright splashes of blood are also conspicuous on the sheets. This is the father of the family. In one corner, a big round lump, oozing blood, covered in crimson rags—the mother, Mrs. Schenkmann, hacked and pierced with sword thrusts. There, on the ground, the headless bodies of two children, little Moïch and his sister; their heads have rolled under the bed.[458]

By making Schwarzbard an innocent bystander from the Occident, Barbusse further amplifies the horror. He mentions his soldiering for France, but says nothing of his revolutionary activity, making him more of a student type, or reporter like LeCache himself on whose book Barbusse likely relied for his story: "Samuel had come from far. He had been through the great war as a volunteer, fighting in the French army, and had in turn been wounded in the lungs, congratulated, decorated, and naturalized as a Frenchman. But he had felt the wish to return, to see the people and all, and to enjoy that suppressed charm which broods in white silence over the Ukrainian landscape." When a Ukrainian Yiddish writer like a Dovid Hofshteyn, Peretz Markish, Moyshe Leyb Halpern or Dovid Bergelson wrote of the pogroms no one outside the Yiddish world listened, but writers like LeCache and Barbusse, both of whose works were widely translated, were bound to draw the attention of the world to the Jewish tragedy—and to Ukrainian shame.

Perhaps partly in response to such sympathetic images, the Ukrainians took the offensive against Petliura's assassin. In late March Schwarzbard had to endure new investigative hearings as the court responded to renewed attempts to implicate him in conspiracy. The search for faults in Schwarzbard's past was complemented

[458] Barbusse, *"And We were Celebrating Peace,"* 149-159. The French original of Barbusse's story was written in April 1927, at the same time as the release of Bernard LeCache's book.

in May by a push to create a "pro-Ukrainian" atmosphere for the trial. This included the lionization of Symon Petliura, and the establishment of a Peltiura Museum and Library in Paris that included sentimental touches like the preservation of the Hetman's furniture. While this surely irritated Schwarzbard and others on the Jewish side, of more immediate relevance to the case was a conference held by Ukrainian emigrants in Paris that issued a formal declaration against the assassination. The declaration defined the deed as an attempt by the Soviets to further damage relations between Ukrainians and Jews.[459] With Ukrainian efforts crystallizing in mid-May 1927, it was no accident that within days of this conference, Schwarzbard found himself involved in the only important public skirmish of his long imprisonment.

## 7.11 *Le Figaro's* François Coty and the Final Months before the Trial.

In his memoirs, Schwarzbard recalled how Henry Torrès visited him in a particularly boisterous mood with a copy of *Figaro* under his arm: "Torrès came to me and showed me an article from *Figaro* in which the king of perfumes, François Coty, took quite an interest in me, spraying me with fragrances that would make your head swim."[460] The article was Coty's attempt to link Schwarzbard to Moscow, but according to French law anyone accused in the press has the right to demand equivalent coverage for a response (*le droit de réponse*). Hoping to consolidate

[459] "On the Eve of the Schwarzbard Case: Ukrainians Decide to Establish a Petlura Library and Museum in Paris," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency,* May 25, 1927.

[460] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 319-20.

support for his anti-Communist projects, Coty had insured the pogroms would again be in the public eye:

> The matter actually pleased me. Let the greater worldwide press speak on the subject of pogroms; let it be brought before the wider public. We'll make sure that the truth finally be uncovered. So what if Coty got everything upside down and backwards? Who cares! This is an excellent opportunity to answer back... "We have to reply!" Both of us, Torrès and myself, exclaimed together. "And with teeth," I added. And the two of us, Torrès, and myself immediately worked out the strategy for the answer. And the *Figaro* had to print my answer, giving me, for the first time, a chance to explain publicly the reasons for what I had done. Coty didn't miss a beat and answered back, but his answer was so feeble.[461]

In a paranoid tone not unlike that of American McCarthyism years later, Coty's original article—Torrès claimed it was by a ghostwriter—mentions specific names and places where Schwarzbard had supposedly attended nefarious meetings.[462] The prisoner's flippant response did indeed make *Figaro's* front page on May 19, 1927.[463] Perhaps resenting the sarcasm in Schwarzbard's point-by-point rebuttal of the accusations, Coty responded with a personal attack on the prisoner: "The fact that Mr. Schwarzbard finds himself behind bars only has the appearance of drama. He reads the papers, he makes liberal use of the right of response, he's legally well advised, he's marvelously defended, he is surrounded and backed by all the powers capable of saving him." Coty's description of these "powers"—a

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[461] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 320.

[462] It is interesting to note that the prosecution at Schwarzbard's trial did not use Coty's accusations against Schwarzbard, connecting him to an international terror campaign being waged by the Third International through the Secour Rouge. The Ukrainians instead came up with their own conspiratorial scheme. Whatever "proof" Coty claimed to possess evidently could not have stood up to the rigors of a trial, or the prosecutors would have certainly used it.

[463] Coty printed the Schwarzbard-Torrès response only reluctantly, claiming it's "outrageous" content freed him of the legal obligation to print it. He then sarcastically remarks that he will do so not wanting to be stingy with the *Figaro's* publicity. *Le Figaro, "Un Front Unique contre le Communisme,"* May 19, 1927.

nebulous mix of Bolshevik and Jewish potentates threatening France—reveals a good deal of antisemitism behind his argument for conspiracy:

> He [Schwarzbard] has killed, and he has disturbed the public peace in France.... We are familiar with this story; the same since the time of beautiful Esther and the honorable Mordechai conducted a preventative massacre of all the Amalekites, impaled the son of Haman and hung the patriotic minister. The victims.... the thirty million Russians, who the new masters of Russia—who are not Russian—have exterminated by Civil War, by famine, and under horrible torture. They [the real victims] were the millions of European soldiers who the new masters of Russia—who are not Russian—condemned to death in defeating our ally the Tsar and signing the peace of Brest-Litovsk with Germany. None of this has been paid back. Europe is full, and France is full of, not just hundreds of thousands, but millions of widows and orphans that Apfelbaum, Braunstein, Sobelsohn and the like dispensed with their fathers, their husbands, their children.[464]

Coty probably received the allegation that Schwarzbard was only feigning Jewish vengeance from the Ukrainians, but his exegesis of the Book of Esther was rooted in the French antisemitism of *La Libre Parole* and the Dreyfus Affair, and as might be expected the Jewish world soon responded. The *Jeunesse juive* reported a boycott on Coty's perfumes, and the influential president of the *Ligue des droits de l'hommes*, Victor Basch, reminded the world of the brutal facts: "They killed with saber strokes and bayonets. All the women were first raped and then horribly massacred."[465] Faced with such accusations, the Ukrainians themselves dared not spout antisemitic rhetoric like Coty, but they never protested when he, or their other allies on the Right did so. In any case, the Coty exchange was the last major stir before the trial itself, which contrary to expectations did not begin for another

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[464] Coty, *Figaro*, May 19, 1927. The "Apfelbaum" Coty refers to Grigory Zinoniev; the "Bronstein," Leon Trotsky; and the "Sobelsohn," Karl Radek—the three most prominent "Jewish" Bolsheviks who, to use Coty's formula, are not Jewish.

[465] *Jeunesse Juive,* July 15, 1927. Victor Basch, *La Volonté,* May 22, 1927. Both Sholem Schwarzbard and Henry Torrès were members of the *Ligue des droits de l'hommes* even before the affair.

six months.[466] In anticipation of a June trial date the sides had waged their main publicity campaigns prematurely, and interest in the affair waned again in the summer and fall of 1927.

Similar to the fall and winter of 1926-7, Schwarzbard found the lull extremely unsettling. It also troubled supporters like Simon Dubnov, who worried that the affair might be a dead letter. The wait for a trial date had left ample time for research, but also threatened hopes for an effective show trial that would spread awareness of the Jewish pogrom tragedy. In the weeks leading up to the trial Dubnov tried to reawaken interest in the affair, sending a reminder to his readers:

> In the beginning there was great interest in the Paris tragedy in Europe and America... Now all the preparations for the grand trial are complete. The Jewish public has of late—perhaps because of the long delayed beginning of the trial—nearly forgotten that in a small, dark cell of a Paris prison a man is sitting, who sacrificed himself for the honor of the Jewish people that the entire people must take an interest in it if it's true that open before the world the motive behind his tragic deed will be judged, and that it will show all he wanted was to remind the human conscience with his act.[467]

A commentator on Dubnov's article for Berlin's *Das jüdische Rundschau* complained that contrary to the view of the antisemites the reputed "*jüdische Einheitsfront*" [Jewish united front] formed only when Jews "excused" themselves as they had done during the blood libel against Beilis in Russia in 1913, finding it difficult to rally for a case in which Jews took the initiative as accusers. When the trial finally began, any fears Schwarzbard, Dubnov or others may have had about the affair being forgotten soon vanished.

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[466] The date in mid-October was finally set in late July. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, July 26, 1927.
[467] "*Der Schwarzbard Prozess*," *Das jüdische Rundschau*, September 27, 1927.

# 8. The Trial (October 18-October 26, 1927)

## 8.1 Commotion at the *Palais de Justice*

Interest in the affair woke with a vengeance early Tuesday morning October 18, 1927. Journalists and other spectators from around the world converged on the famed Palace of Justice, all of them hungry for news and, for the lucky few, a glimpse of the Jewish avenger. Impressed by the international company, journalists looked first to themselves for copy, describing the crowd gathered outside the Palace. One of these, the cynical old anti-Dreyfusard Abel Manouvriez covering the trial for the Royalist *Action française*, took special note of the many Jewish newsmen:

> Seldom has a trial drawn such an influx of foreign journalists, Jews above all. The Jewish journals, Jewish news agencies from the whole world have sent representatives who cable daily the vicissitudes of the Schwarzbard trial in their fashion to Berlin, to Vienna, to New York, to Buenos Aires, to Tokyo, to Singapore. Indeed, Israel attaches an extraordinary importance to this affair. Making due allowances, almost as much as on the Dreyfus affair.[468]

The rest of the French press corps also anticipated the return of some Dreyfus-like excitement, and wanted to benefit politically and financially from the affair's

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[468] Abel Manouvriez, *"L'assassinat de l'ataman Petlura: Le héros des Juifs,"* *L'Action française*, October 19, 1927. The *Action française* had an interest in the case beyond their usual antisemitism and anti-Communism. At the time of affair, the Royalist faction had fallen on hard times. Among other things, they had just been condemned by the Vatican, and their leader Léon Daudet was in exile in Belgium. Against this background, they likely hoped the affair would consolidate support for them like Dreyfus had done a generation earlier. With elections due in the spring of 1928, the allegation that Schwarzbard acted as a Communist agent was potentially useful in winning over moderate voters that tended to fear the Bolshevik menace. The German correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Friedrich Sieburg, saw politics as the main reason behind the prosecution's push to implicate Schwarzbard as a Soviet agent. Friedrich Sieburg (under abbreviation "Sbg"), *"Ein Jude hat geschossen"* [A Jew has Fired], *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 27, 1927. Also financially, the *Action française* had become increasingly dependent on subsidies from François Coty. Although I have not been able to document direct pressure, Coty's influence on the rightist press in France may well have been used to get this magnate of perfume and press some vengeance for the embarrassment Schwarzbard caused him in *Figaro* the previous spring. For more on the tenuous position of the *Action française* in these years, and on Coty's financial influence over the French right see Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in twentieth-century France* (Stanford: Stanford CA. 1962).

overdue finale.[469] As happened with Dreyfus, opinion split between Left and Right long before the trial began. On account of the "international" nature of the case, however, the Schwarzbard affair did not cause anything close to the domestic strife touched off by Dreyfus.[470]

Nevertheless Right, Left and Center each had something to gain from the sensation of a Jewish avenger, and the fourth estate set to work bolstering their positions.[471] The rightists defended the memory of the nationalist (anti-Bolshevik) Petliura, and followed the example of François Coty with allegations that Schwarzbard was a Communist agent. Blatantly antisemitic groups like the *Action française* also stressed the shadowy power of "world Jewry" pulling strings to insure acquittal. For their part, the French Left rallied behind the defense, seeing a chance to take the moral high ground from their political rivals on the issue of pogroms, while at the same time supporting controversial Soviet policies in Ukraine. Having no interest in revisiting Dreyfus, centrist papers like *le Temps* provided a modicum

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[469] Of course, not only their affairs, but also the two defendants could hardly have been more different. Captain Dreyfus was a colorless man whose family, profession, language, manner and values were fully French and bourgeois. The excitable Schwarzbard, in contrast, was an immigrant non-conformist who remained proud of his roots in Russia. In short, Dreyfus was painfully reminded of his Jewishness by his ordeal, while Schwarzbard willfully reminded the world of Jewish pain with his.

[470] In this regard it is revealing to compare Schwarzbard's affair to that of a fellow Jewish Ukrainian immigrant Serge Alexandre Stavitsky, an embezzler that caused a colossal scandal in France in the mid-thirties. The writer Colette called Stavitsky "a man with no face," but this did not diminish his importance because his scams involved some of the biggest names in French politics and society. Schwarzbard's affair, in contrast, involved Ukrainian and Jewish issues, and though involving a far more interesting personality than Stavitsky, was soon forgotten. For more on the Stavitsky affair see Paul Jankowski, *Stavitsky: A Confidence Man in the Republic of Virtue* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[471] Eugen Weber would say of French justice in the context of the Dreyfus affair: "At least in France, judicial proceedings had been as much affected by political pressures as politics had been by judicial transactions." Weber continues: "How little then as now, the administration of justice had to do with justice, how readily the law swayed to the breath of political majorities." See Weber's introduction to *The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth and Justice*, ed. Norman Kleeblatt (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), xxvi.

of information about the trial without editorial comment, remaining mildly hostile to Schwarzbard as an immigrant, disturber of the peace and probable Bolshevik.[472]

Whatever their politics, all the journalists in the French press "Club" were happy to take the seats reserved for them in the smallish Assize courtroom. For the members of the large international contingent, many of whom had traveled great distances, seats were hard to come by. The special correspondent for Warsaw's Yiddish daily *Moment*, reported that more than five hundred foreign correspondents competed for the twenty-one passes remaining after the "Club" had taken theirs. In the end, most reporters were forced to rely on other papers and word of mouth—a necessity in any case for Russian and German journalists who were legally prohibited from entering a French courtroom.[473] With the weather cloudy but

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[472] The well-known political essayist Réne Pinon in his column "*Chronique de la Quinzaine—Histoire Politique*" for the moderate *Revue des Deux Mondes*, provides a good example of how the centrists kept their focus on France: "To oblige twelve 'average Frenchmen' to pass judgment on what happened in a country absolutely different from our own during one of the most troubled epochs... defies common sense. It is further a danger, because the attitude toward France of a whole people on their way to renaissance and emancipation hangs on the leniency or severity of a jury. It is also a chance to call public attention to the unjustifiable speed of certain naturalizations. A longer waiting stage should have been imposed on the Ukrainian Jew Schwarzbard before he was made a French citizen. If the jury acquits him... the police should at least have the power to expel him." *Revue des Deux Mondes*. XCVIIe année-septième période Tome 42, 1927, 235. A short introduction to French press coverage of the affair can be found in Meir Kotik, *Mishpot shvartsbard: retsakh-nakam al rekah ha pogromim be-ukrainah* [The Schwarzbard Trial: a Crime of Revenge against the Backdrop of the Ukrainian Pogroms], (Tel Aviv: Mifale neyar Haderah, 1972), 199-205.

[473] This law did not prevent the Soviet Yiddish paper *Emes* from trumpeting their special correspondent flown to Paris non-stop from Moscow, in what was perhaps a bit of Soviet Jewish competition with Charles Lindbergh who had made his trans-Atlantic flight in May, 1927. Under the New Economic Policy *Emes* was pressured to double its subscriptions or lose state subsidies, likely contributing to what was, by Soviet standards, rather sensational coverage of the trial. See David Shneer, "The History of the Truth: Soviet Jewish Activists and the Moscow Yiddish Daily Newspaper," in *Yiddish and the Left*, eds. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2000). The editorial staff of the *Emes*, like other papers denied access to the courtroom for one reason or another, did not let their reader know their reports were second hand. One of the more interesting reporters unable to secure a seat was David Ben Gurion of Tel Aviv's Hebrew *Davar*. Having fallen chronically ill under the stress of his activism for the Zionist cause, he happened to be in Paris convalescing at the time of the trial. Even though he had to compose his reports from what he read in other papers, he did so with enthusiasm and was delighted with the verdict. Ben Gurion placed Schwarzbard's among the most important trials in Jewish history, saying,

unseasonably warm, those excluded could be thankful they worked from Parisian cafés as opposed to a stifling courtroom. The heavy air inside came to symbolize the necessity to recall a dismal history over the coming week. It was a particularly painful task for a gallery more primed for sensation than sadness.

In any event, it was already clear that Schwarzbard's supporters could be satisfied if the primary goal was to "revive the memory" of the martyrs. This victory came with a number of concerns, however. Because the world would be following the trial closely, a favorable verdict became more imperative than ever. It was less that Schwarzbard "would not be judged, but the pogroms," as one reporter put it, than that he could not be found guilty, if the memory of a hundred thousand tragedies was not to be slighted, and Jewish peril in an indifferent world exposed.[474]

## 8.2 First Impressions of the Jewish Avenger

Of course Sholem Schwarzbard would have to be judged, and it was the press that gave the initial verdict, taking a close look at him before turning their attention to Petliura and the pogroms. This early flush of coverage on Schwarzbard fell in line with the practice of the Assize Court to question and hear out the defendant before other witnesses were called. The process begins with the defendant being read the

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"Whether won or lost, trials are as important to the Jewish people as wars are to other peoples..." See Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 379.

[474] M. Korn, "*Der historisher protses"* [The Historical Trial], *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, November 18, 1927. Many others expressed this same thought, including the important witness Leo Motzkin: "On the seat of the accused sits a Jewish defendant, but the real plaintiff are the three million Jews that suffered so terribly." Leo Motzkin, *"Unzer shtelung tsum Shvartsbard-protses,"* [Our Stance on the Schwarzbard Trial], *Moment* (Warsaw), October 23, 1927. Leo Motzkin was the leader of Schwarzbard's defense in Paris. He was also the head of *La Comité des Délégations Juives*, a Zionist organization founded in 1919 to represent Jewish interests at Versailles, and later the general interests of the Jewish diaspora. Schwarzbard testified to being a member of the latter at his trial. The prosecutor Alfred Willm tried to use this connection to implicate Schwarzbard in a Jewish world conspiracy tied closely to the Bolsheviks. *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39522.

indictment against him by *l'Avocat Général* [assistant public prosecutor]. He then answers a series of direct questions from the *Président* [presiding judge] over details of his life and deed.[475] This is called the "*interrogatoire d'identité de l'accusé,*" and ends with the main prosecuting attorney's first questions for the witness.[476]

As might be expected, Schwarzbard's detractors used his initial testimony against him, none providing a more distorted, or more spirited image than Manouvriez:

> The hero of our story, the righter of wrongs, the avenger of the Jewish people… is a 38 year-old man, blonde and pale. He has a brush cut moustache…. His face is violent and creased. His jaw is heavy and troubled by a nervous tick. His eyes, sunken in their sockets, are those of a cat—cruel. There is nothing that evokes the type of the Jew. His appearance is, at first glance, that of a proper craftsman from a western country. But listen to him more closely, and observe him when he stands up to respond to the questions of the presiding judge Flory, and when he starts talking, leaning on the witness dock, in a painful gibberish, frenetic and passionate. If he were in the dress of his homeland, you can easily imagine what he might have been and what his ancestors surely were, one of the savage Jews of the Ukraine and Poland in caftan and phylacteries... obstinately trying, on moonlit nights, to spy telltale signs of the coming of the Messiah.[477]

The artist T. Sennep of the right-wing *Echo de Paris*, infused his caricature of the defendant with cruel features as well, but he lacked Manouvriez's kabbalistic imagination. Sennep instead saw Schwarzbard through a political filter that made the defendant standing in the dock look like Lenin giving a speech on Red Square,

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[475] A synopsis of the indictment was released by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency under the title "Death Penalty Asked for Schwartzbard in French Indictment Act." It summarized the state's case as follows: "The official act of indictment...denies Petlura's guilt and responsibility for the pogroms," and "charges that Schwartzbard committed the act with premeditation motivated by malice and asserts that Schwarzbard who was at one time convicted for burglary cannot be viewed in the role of a judge of Petlura." Available on-line as published in *The Jewish Daily Bulletin* of Long Island, NY, October 20, 1927: http://cdn.jta.org/archive_pdfs/1927/1927-10-20_898.pdf.

[476] For short history and overview of the Assize court system see Franck Arpin-Gonnet, *La Cour d'Assises* (Lyon: l'Hermes, 1996). Alister Kershaw gives a readable and well-informed critique of the French criminal court in his introduction to *Murder in France* (London: Constable, 1955), 15-17. Kershaw includes a short list of his French sources.

[477] *L'Action française*, October 19, 1927.

his fist lifted above his head, and pupil-less eyes coldly directed on a single goal. Although slightly less paranoid, the French Right in general came close to the descriptions of the Nazi Julius Streicher in *Der Stürmer*.[478]

Setting themselves against the assault from the Right, the French Left called for Schwarzbard's acquittal, but paid little attention to the assassin himself whose violence was too individual and too national for them. The Left instead continued to focus on the pogrom tragedy, more for the way it exposed the Whites than as vindication for the Jews. Caricatures from papers of the Left also portrayed Schwarzbard in Lenin-type poses, but with more human detail, and in a way that brought the assassin nearer their cause.[479]

Compared to their response in the days following the assassination, the Yiddish press was more honest and insightful now that they had finally seen the Jewish avenger in the flesh. Indeed, Schwarzbard looked pale and drawn in photographs taken the first day of the trial, and was hardly the stuff of a hero, Jewish or otherwise. When he entered the courtroom escorted by his *gendarmes*, most

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[478] *Der Stürmer's* front-page article on the affair emphasized what the prosecutor Alfred Willm called the "mobilization of Israel." The *Stürmer* criticizes the "Jewish rescue apparatus" [*jüdischer Rettungsapparat*] that had called "Newspaper Jews" [*Zeitungs-juden*] like Roman Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Victor Margueritte, Albert Einstein, Leon Blum, Count Karolyi and Maxim Gorki as witnesses. They conclude: "When it's about a Jew, the Jewish people is all in. It has ample ways and means to make an angel out of a Sholem Schwarzbard." *"Schalom Schwarzbart: Ermordung des Petljura-Verteidigungsaktion der Juden,"* [Sholem Schwarzbard: The Murder of Petliura-Defensive Action of the Jews], *Der Stürmer*, October 1927.

[479] The interpretations of Schwarzbard's life and character in the French press were particularly important because, unlike Britain and the United States, the jurors were allowed full access to the press throughout a trial. For this reason the prosecutor César Campinchi mentioned the issue of the press explicitly when addressing the jury in his final argument: "You have read, gentlemen, like me.... you've read *l'Humanité, le Quotidien, l'Oeuvre* [left-wing papers, kj] and you have made one opinion; then you took *l'Echo de Paris*, *l'Action française, l'Avenir* [right-wing papers, kj], and you read there a different thesis." Campinchi attributes to both sides in the press war an "absolute intellectual integrity" [*probité intellectuelle absolue*], such overly generous rhetoric only accentuating his underlying sarcasm. *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 40647.

commentators were underwhelmed.[480] Journalist Nokhem Frank, one of Schwarzbard's strongest supporters, published his initial reaction to Schwarzbard in a sympathetic, yet diminutive description:

> Almost nobody noticed when Sholem Schwarzbard entered the defendant's dock. He is pale, gentle, stressed, his clothes tailored, almost elegant. It was his wife who brought him the suit in prison. Out of the whole sea of people he looks in the dock like a lost little dot. You just can't believe that all these people are here because of him, through him.... who does he see? Which way does his glance turn? Who does he want see? What's going on in his heart? No! No one would guess that the whole machinery of justice works for the blond, youthful little man sitting there in the dock behind Torrès.[481]

Frank was one of the few observers to speculate on Schwarzbard's thoughts, but does so only in passing, losing the defendant, like Captain Dreyfus before him, in the brilliance of the judicial luminary defending him and under the weight of issues surrounding the affair.[482] A second correspondent for the *Haynt* saved his praise for Torrès the defender, not Schwarzbard the avenger of the Jews:

> For me Torrès was my representative, as he stood before of the jury—the representative of every Jew, the messenger of our community, who we set before the entire world. He was wrapped in the prayer shawl of our suffering. And when he stood like that in front of the jury, opposite the case with clothes of the dead man, opposite the state attorney—and he spoke of our dead, I saw him enveloped in a cloud, in a cloud of shadows from the many martyrs, in the cloud of our dead who came to steady his hand...[483]

Even though Herman knew Schwarzbard personally, he chose the Frenchman Torrès as his hero, placing him in the role the defendant wanted so desperately to

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[480] According to Sholem Asch, Schwarzbard had, following the example of the Hasmoneans, fasted over the four days leading up the trial. If true, this would help explain his pallor. Sholem Asch, "*An ovent mit Sholem Shvartsbart"* [An Evening with Sholem Schwarzbard], *Haynt* (Warsaw), November 4, 1927.

[481] Nokhem Frank, "*Bilder fun gerikhts-zal"* [Images from the Courtroom], *Haynt* (Warsaw), October 19, 1926.

[482] In Dreyfus case it was the attorney Fernand-Gustave-Gaston Labori who outshone his client.

[483] Nokhem Herman, *Haynt* (Warsaw), October 19, 1927.

play.[484] Herman emerges from his quasi-mystical vision, wanting lamentation and not vengeance, and for this reason sees Torrès's hand, not that of the assassin, "steadied" by ghosts of the Jewish dead.

For reasons of his own, Abel Manouvriez shared the small view of the defendant:

> Yet Schwarzbard's own personality, in its small frame, disappears completely behind that of his defense attorney, for this is surely no ordinary lawyer he has chosen. The flag he shelters behind is kind of special. The Jew from Ukraine completely vanishes behind the toga of Mr. Torrès.... And, of course, it is this that makes us wonder. The specter of communism prowls around him, enveloped in the pleats of his barrister's robe.[485]

Although opposed in every other respect, the views of both supporters and detractors on the small stature of the Jewish assassin were surprisingly similar that first day in court. These observers all had their own motives for minimizing Schwarzbard's importance to the case, but there were conflicts going on inside the defendant that helped sideline him as well.

## 8.3 Schwarzbard Caught between Remembrance and Response

Sholem Schwarzbard entered the trial wanting both to expose a tragic past, and pave the way for a heroic Jewish future. Corresponding to this, in his memoirs he often presented himself as a Suffering Messiah (Jesus) to the Christian world, and an Exalted Messiah (Samson, Judith and the Maccabees) to the Jews, and the contradictory impulses of victimhood and vengeance helped contribute to the weak impression he made in court that day. The contradiction hindered his ability to

[484] Herman, escorted by Henry Torrès, visited Schwarzbard in prison in late June 1926. He was working for New York's *Morgn zhurnal*. Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 275.

[485] *Figaro*, October 20, 1927.

respond to the accusations of hubris, criminality and cruelty made against him, and increased the malleability of his image. Schwarzbard remembered his entrance into the Assize court as a walk into an "operating room." His character was the patient, and the prosecutors malevolent surgeons.[486] He should have known what was coming, but having bought into his own myth before the trial began, he seemed to have been genuinely hurt, embarrassed and surprised by the prosecutors' personal attacks on him.

The most obvious thing for the prosecution to use against him was the bloody fact of murder itself, and the expert witness Dr. Paul armed them with one of the graphic forensic reports for which he was known.[487] Schwarzbard openly admitted the deed was premeditated, and that he had no regrets. He could not, however, bring himself to proclaim the passion with which he had killed Symon Petliura, for fear the image of his individual "crime" might diminish the gravity of the historical crimes he had avenged. No matter how much he may have wanted to follow her example, Schwarzbard could not boast of killing with impunity as had Germaine Berton. Unlike his heroine, he stood trial not just as a disgruntled Anarchist, but also as a Jew before a suspicious world, and as such did not feel free to purport violence as he did in his writings. The memory of the victims forced him to play the gentleman, and when Judge Flory asked Schwarzbard about the "manifestation of his satisfaction" on hearing that Petliura was dead, he said nothing

[486] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 333.

[487] Victor Serge would say of Dr. Paul: "Dr. Paul, an expert in forensic medicine, pomaded, elegant and somewhat fleshy, lectured on the corpses with visible relish. He had been conducting post-mortems on all the murder victims of Paris for the last forty years—after which he would go off to a good lunch, select a tie to wear for tea and, leaning against the mantel piece of some drawing-room, recount his 10,000 anecdotes of crime." Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 38.

of the leonine power he claimed to have felt at the time.[488] Instead, standing before the court and the world, and faced with a concerted effort at defamation, he chose to define his "satisfaction" as nothing more than relief that he had gotten the right man. In the end, Schwarzbard had to conceal the fullness of his indignation for the sake of his, and more importantly, the pogrom victims' reputations.

## 8.4 Schwarzbard and Four French Lawyers.

Opposing sides of French culture, society and politics were caricatured in the figures of Henry Torrès and César Campinchi, and each lawyer in his own way left a lasting impression on the biographical legacies of both Schwarzbard and Petliura.[489] Torrès was a large man, his bulk not contained in the black robes of a French barrister. His "volcanic" rhetorical power can be felt in descriptions from friends and enemies alike. Looking back on Torrès's career years later, Henri Robert of *l'Académie française* wrote:

> In Torrès there is a torrent, said an adoring poet in colorful words. His eloquence removes all obstacles, sweeps aside the contradictors and spirits away all convictions. His gushing speech, on a hurried wave, irresistible, from his lips. His voice of bronze, that at times becomes supple with caressing sonority, shakes the vaults of courtrooms. I place him with our beloved and great Labori. The same tall stature, the same imposing attitude; the same ardor and fire.[490]

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[488] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39495.

[489] The politicized nature of French judicial proceedings was amplified in Schwarzbard's case with the 1928 elections looming. The German correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Friedrich Sieburg, saw this as the main reason the prosecution pushed so hard to try and implicate Schwarzbard as a Soviet agent, a Tcheka assassination on French soil potentially helping move middle class parties (like Campinchi's own Radicals) to the Right. See Sieburg, "A Jew has Fired."

[490] Henri Robert, "*Portrait: Henry Torrès,"* in Henry Torrès, *Souvenir, souvenir, que me veux-tu?* (Paris: Del Duca, 1964), 17.

The Frankfurt journalist Friedrich Sieburg, reported how Torrès could "do in" clients merely by claiming they had worked with the Germans. The journalist overcame conflicted feelings of contempt and admiration to break through to a brilliant portrayal of the very French attorney:

> Master Torrès defended the assassin. Torrès, whose terrible voice of thunder made the ancient walls of the Palace of Justice quake, whose leonine claw strokes tore the prosecution to pieces. Whose booming irony placed witnesses for the prosecution in a deplorable state of moral inferiority. Whose folksy emotional power swayed the jurors like a storm sways the trees.[491]

Politically Torrès was a Socialist who, like many of his comrades, had been alienated from the Communists by imperatives to submit to Stalin's authority. He remained an ally of the Soviet Union nonetheless, and was known for defending every sort of radical, making Vladimir Jabotinsky and others question Schwarzbard's judgment in choosing Torrès to represent him. For publicity sake, Schwarzbard could not have made a better choice.

This was all the more true because Torrès faced his old rival, the Corsican legal wizard, César Campinchi. It was an intriguing match, befitting the celebrated nature of the trial—Torrès, the cigar-smoking Dionysius vs. Campinchi, the fencing Apollo. Politically, Campinchi was a moderately conservative Republican (*Radical*) known for the sharp application of his intelligence in cross-examination. In many ways the antithesis of the defense attorney, the prosecutor was prim, precise, lean, with a pince-nez resting on a long, thin nose. While Torrès adored Schwarzbard,

[491] Friedrich Sieburg, "A Jew has Fired."

Campinchi disliked and distrusted him.[492] His feelings about the assassin went deeper than his professional obligations to prosecute the man, but unlike many others supporters of the prosecution, they had nothing to do with Schwarzbard's Jewishness. Through instinct, intelligence and inclination Campinchi reacted against the defendant's heroic pretensions (ego) and disregard for the rule of law (Anarchism)—especially French law.

Undoubtedly the most colorful aspect of the trial was the squabbling and fighting between Campinchi and Torrès. On the first day of the trial, they wrangled with each other most engagingly over the question of Schwarzbard's purported involvement in the Red Army during the Revolution. This fight came at the tail end of Campinchi's extended assault on Schwarzbard' character. Campinchi pointed out discrepancies in Schwarzbard's date and place of birth, the theft in Vienna and, finally, his politics: "Are you or are you not an Anarchist?" Schwarzbard boldly tells the truth: "I am an Anarchist."[493] Campinchi of course wanted to establish Schwarzbard's less than respectable political stripes, especially after the following words left the defendant's mouth: "I forgot my pension and went to the Invalides demanding to go defend the Russian Revolution. In 1917 Russia became my fatherland (*patrie*), the fatherland of the Revolution. I didn't want to defend tsarism,

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[492] Henry Torrès, *Souvenir, souvenir,* 129. See also Henry Torrès, *Accusés hors série* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 91-99.

[493] Although Schwarzbard went into the trial intending not to "emphasize" his Anarchist convictions and revolutionism, he did not deny them. A politically savvy Parisian jury would likely be aware that Schwarzbard's Anarchism in fact distanced him from the Bolsheviks. In addition, the streets of Paris had four months earlier experienced a tremendous outpouring of support for the Anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. Although it is only speculation, it is possible that some, even most of the members of the jury wanted to avoid any association with the unpopular decision in Massachusetts.

but I went to defend the Russian Revolution."[494] This surprising pronouncement, a gaff to some and an anthem to others, opened the door for Campinchi to hit the defendant with probing questions about his trip to Russia, and specifically about his claim to have served in what proved to be a non-existent French "mission" in 1917. Campinchi asks the defendant point blank, "You were not incorporated into the Red Army?" [495] To which Schwarzbard responds, "Never."

Not satisfied with the answer, Campinchi asks again, "Didn't you claim this in the investigation?" Schwarzbard sticks to his position, "No." Exasperated, and somewhat at a loss, Campinchi says the prosecution will try to find the record of Schwarzbard's testimony in the "three thousand pages of the dossier." In the meantime, the prosecutor is forced to speculate—something he did not like to do: "But you would not have been reluctant to join because, on one hand, you are an Anarchist and because, on the other, the Revolution is, as you said, your fatherland?"[496] Fortunately for Torrès, Campinchi did not give Schwarzbard a chance to reply, instead returning to his previous question: "Answer me clearly. You never enrolled in the Red Army?" Schwarzbard reaffirms, "Never."

At this point Torrès interrupts Campinchi, claiming Schwarzbard's "amnesty" was secured with his blood spilt for France, and under a law from January 2, 1926 which read: "All administrative or judicial functionaries are prohibited to recall or allow to remain in a dossier or other document, under any form, a condemnation or disciplinary measures erased by the amnesty or by the amnestitial grace."

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[494] One can only image the shock these words caused Torrès and other supporters. *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39553-4.

[495] Ibid. 39556.

[496] Ibid. 39555-6.

Campinchi, and later Raynaud, protested vehemently against Torrès's use of the law, but whatever its judicial merit, Campinchi's vexation at Torrès's apparently liberal interpretation leads the prosecutor to state his attitude toward the Jewish avenger:

> But here this is not the same thing. You know why? Because your client comes here, he pounds his chest, not out of regret, but in order to assume an attitude that puts him on a pedestal. He says: "I am a hero, I have avenged my race." He assumes the attitude of Orsini and others, of those who act against sovereigns and then come here to claim in front of a criminal tribunal the benevolence of their attitude.[497]

Campinchi then reminds the jury of Schwarzbard's false claim that he had never been previously convicted. Turning to Schwarzbard, he assumes a more authoritative posture and asks one last time:

> "Schwarzbard, when you returned to Russia, you were never incorporated into the Red Army?
> Schwarzbard: Why no [*Mais non*].
> M. Campinchi: Never?
> Response: No.[498]

Campinchi's point continues to unravel after his colleague Alfred Willm finds the document Campinchi had referred to earlier. Campinchi remembered it proving Schwarzbard had indeed entered the "Red Army," but it instead quoted Schwarzbard testifying: "In September 1917, I was incorporated into the Russian Army."[499] Far less astute than his counterpart, Willm had weakened Campinchi's point with his impromptu research, and Campinchi scrambled to pull himself together. For his part, Torrès assumed the attitude of a schoolmaster, exploiting his

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[497] Félix Orsini was one of four Italian nationalists who tossed bombs at Napoleon III on the evening of January 14, 1858. Over a hundred people were killed or wounded, but the Emperor survived. Campinchi refers to the letter Orsini wrote the Emperor from prison exhorting him to support Italian independence. After becoming something of a hero, Orsini was guillotined. See André Maurois, *A History of France* (London: University Paperbacks, 1966), 408.

[498] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39563.

[499] Ibid.

counterpart's vulnerability by offering him a short history lesson intended more to provoke than teach: "It's an historical detail: up to September 1917, there was no Red Army, it was the Russian Army."[500]

This was too much for Campinchi, and he digresses into politically-based insults, no longer directed at the defendant, but at Torrès himself: "But of course, don't give me a tutorial Torrès, Socialist, Socialist Communist, and maybe a Communist tomorrow, and in any case you defend the Soviets, and have a special authority [in these matters], but I'm not so uninformed or naive that I don't know if the Revolution took place in September or in October."[501] Campinchi tries to regain his footing by reminding the jury of another bit of false testimony, this time Schwarzbard's claim that he returned to Russia as an interpreter for a French mission. Torrès had the advantage, however, and he pressed it home, flaunting his

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[500] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39565.

[501] Ibid. Contrary to Campinchi's expectations, Torrès continued his move to the Right, becoming a Gaullist after surviving the Second World War in the United States. The extent of Torrès's change is colorfully illustrated by an anecdote from the memoirs of Raymond Aron. Aron recalls that Torrès was one of the men responsible for the end of his friendship with Jean Paul Sartre. Aron, Sartre, Torrès and others met one evening just after Sartre had compared Charles de Gaulle to Hitler on a radio program: "Of course, the comparison created a scandal. That evening I was scheduled to meet Sartre and his opponents. I found myself in the midst of excited Gaullists like Henri (sic) Torrès and General de Bénouville, who attacked Sartre violently and insultingly. I remained silent, not being able to agree with Sartre's position and even less able to join the chorus of the "attackers." A few weeks later, I learned that Sartre had not forgiven me for my "silence," when he was alone in the midst of enemies." Raymond Aron, *Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflections* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990), 218. Campinchi would later lead the Radical Party and serve alongside the Socialist deputy Torrès in the parliament. Joining the Popular Front government, Campinchi was appointed Minister of the Navy. He took a fairly hard-line stance on Nazi Germany and, ironically, joined Torrès in encouraging a revival of the Franco-Soviet pact in 1935. Once the Vichy government was established, Campinchi wanted to carry on the fight against Germany to the end. The revolutionary Victor Serge was defended by Campinchi during a 1912 anarchist trial, and came away with a very good impression of the man: "César Campinchi, a cool, brilliant debater who appealed only to reason, though with a certain irony. I was to see him again much later seriously wounded in the First World War, and Minister of the Navy in the Second. (One of those who favored resistance to the death, he died under house-arrest in Marseilles in 1941, just as I was embarking for America.) I reflected that if these desperadoes [the Anarchists on trial, kj] had been able, before their struggle, to meet men like this, understanding, cultured and liberal-minded.... they would not have entered upon their paths of darkness. Victor Serge, *Memoirs,* 39.

superiority of his research by giving the full quote from the deposition Campinchi had so much trouble finding on Schwarzbard's service in the Russian Army.

Schwarzbard also noticed that the winds had changed and he added the following details to his story:

> We were incorporated into the Russian Army; only they couldn't immediately take a wounded man with an arm like this.... they gave me a long convalescence. I left Petrograd for Odessa in Ukraine, and I stayed two months. The Bolsheviks came, the government was overturned and you couldn't return to Petrograd because Ukraine was separated from Russia. I stayed on, and *voilà,* it was like this, *parfaitement*.[502]

Schwarzbard was sufficiently prudent to make no mention of his radical activities, instead reminding the jury of the severity of the wound he received fighting for France. He had told the truth when he denied being "incorporated" into the "Red Army," but failed to mention he had been very much involved with the "Red Guard" and two Anarchist units allied with the Red Army. He evidently thought better of trying to make fine historical distinctions in the stormy atmosphere of the court. In the end, Schwarzbard tacitly supported Torrès's story that he had simply worked as a clockmaker in Odessa. The Red Army issue, an important part of Campinchi's strategy of defamation, became an embarrassment for the prosecution that overshadowed Schwarzbard's little lies. Making matters worse, Alfred Willm—hired especially by Petliura's family to protect the dead man's reputation—showed himself to be the toddling fool he in fact was.[503]

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[502] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39564.

[503] Alister Kershaw says the following of Willm's role on the team of prosecutors: "A feature of many French criminal trials, is the presence of counsel for the *partie civile*, representing a person or persons (usually related to the victim) who have been injured by the crime. The *partie civile* seeks damages (which may or may not be nominal) and may also be concerned to clear the victim's name of any slurs cast on it by the Defence or by the press—free to comment to a degree not common elsewhere. It follows that counsel for the *partie civile* may be more dangerous to the Defence than

Things did not go well for the assistant state prosecutor Raynaud that first day either. Raynaud composed the state's formal indictment against the defendant. Haughtily respectable, he agreed with Campinchi's negative evaluation of Schwarzbard's character, and asked for the maximum sentence in a case of premeditated murder: the guillotine. One important pillar of the indictment was Vladimir Jabotinsky's contention in an article published in New York's *Morgn zhurnal* that Petliura was not an antisemite, and that objective historical factors, and what Jabotinsky called an "antisemitism of circumstances," were behind the pogrom phenomena:

> Not Petliura and not Vinnitchenko and not the other important members of that Ukrainian government were ever what you call "*pogromchiks*." Although I did not personally know them, I know their type very well—the Ukrainian intellectual nationalist with a dusting of Socialism. I grew up with them, and together with them carried on the fight against assimilationists and Russifiers—Jewish and Ukrainian. You will not be able to convince me or other thinking Zionists from South Russia that you can portray men of this sort as antisemites. And this is important because it brings us to the main point: to the profound truth that is hazardous to forget—the truth that the danger does not lay in the subjective antisemitism of individuals, but in the active "antisemitism of circumstances." In Ukraine circumstances are against us. The situation formed like this historically, and this is how it is.[504]

In the months leading up to Schwarzbard's trial, Ukrainian supporters of Petliura repeatedly quoted the article, seeing it as vindication for their martyred

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either the judge (assuming him to be hostile) or the Prosecution." Kershaw, *Murder in France*, 17. The relevance of Kershaw's description to Schwarzbard's case hardly needs further comment, but it should be mentioned that Willm's crude legal imagination and antisemitism arguably turned out to be a boon for, rather than a "danger" to the defense.

[504] Jabotinsky. "*Krim.*" In this context it is necessary to recall that Jabotinsky had reasons of his own to paint Petliura in a positive light. In the autumn of 1921, Jabotinsky was severely criticized in the Jewish world for negotiating with Petliura's representative in Prague over the possibility of creating independent Jewish militia units to be attached to Petliura's army in case of another invasion of Ukraine from Poland. These Jewish brigades were to be used exclusively to combat the outbreak of pogroms. The only tangible result was a scandal that seriously damaged Jabotinsky's reputation. When Schwarzbard's assassination brought Petliura renewed attention in the Jewish world, Jabotinsky initially sought to defend the Hetman's record (and his own) in the colonization article.

leader. Following their lead, Raynaud referred to it in the "*acte d'accusation*." Unfortunately, the state prosecutor was not aware of a second article published by Jabotinsky in a Russian Jewish émigré paper shortly before the trial in which he radically amended his opinion.[505] The defense knew of the article, and when judge Flory offered the floor to Henry Torrès at the end of the first day, the lawyer asked for clarification on the court's representation of Jabotinsky's opinion. It was a critical moment. Torrès was renowned for his ability to turn the tables on prosecutors, and Raynaud's oversight offered him an opportunity to seize the initiative of accusation before a single witness had been called.

Jabotinsky's second article began ominously for the prosecution: "A party of the Ukrainian press, in discussing the Schwarzbard affair, interpret in quite an inexact manner my attitude on the question of Petliura's responsibility in the pogroms between 1917 and 1920."[506] A rhetorical Samson, Torrès savored the opportunity to pluck this gem from the crown of the prosecution's case. He read out Jabotinsky's conclusion in his thunderous voice:

> Petliura was the head of the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian army for over two years; throughout nearly all of this period the pogroms continued. The head of the government and of the army did not repress them, he did not punish the guilty, he did not hand in his resignation, and consequently he assumed the responsibility for every drop of Jewish blood spilt.[507]

When Torrès finished, the prosecutors sat dumbfounded. The first to speak was Raynaud: "I respond in a word. It is the opinion of Mr. Jabotinsky of today that

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[505] Vladimir Jabotinsky, official court translation of Russian original, "*Petliura et les pogroms," Les Dernières Nouvelles* [*Posledniya novosti*], October 11, 1927.

[506] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39538.

[507] Ibid. 39540.

Mr. Torrès gives, not that of yesterday." Campinchi, with uncharacteristic clumsiness, concurred: "Exactly this, that of yesterday." Embarrassed and on the defensive, Raynaud contends he merely included Jabotinsky's first article to support the idea of a "deeper cause" for the pogroms in events rather than persons, and that it still freed Petliura of guilt. More than ready to change the subject, he concludes: "There you have what Mr. Jabotinsky wrote some months ago. He evolved since that time like all intelligent men, but he has evolved." Campinchi added cynically, "A little too fast!" With this the discussion on Jabotinsky petered out. Jabotinsky's amended opinion made all major Jewish intellectuals unanimous in support of Schwarzbard's acquittal.[508] It also cast a very bad light on Symon Petliura at the end of a day in which the prosecution had counted on doing the same thing to Sholem Schwarzbard.

## 8.5 Long Lessons in History

The second day of the trial began with lawyers for defense and prosecution agreeing to recuse Anna as a witness—a genuinely polite gesture welcomed by all. The goodwill did not last long, however, and after witnesses to the shooting and forensic experts had testified, another heated argument broke out between Torrès and Campinchi. Once again, the point of contention was the defendant's character.

[508] After the reckoning with the past forced on him by the Schwarzbard affair was over, Jabotinsky expressed his relief in a letter written on October 20, 1927, saying that now "a little room would be cleared in my paper [the Paris Russian Jewish émigré paper *Rassviet*, kj], and there will be room for culture and spirit..." Vladimir Jabotinsky, *Igrot* [Correspondence] (Jerusalem: Mekhon Z'abotinski be-Yisrael, 1992), 263.

Campinchi claimed that Schwarzbard had shot twice into Petliura while he lay on the ground. This was evidently considered bad form even for avengers. In a truly comic moment Torrès was forced to re-enact the shooting with his own massive physique (it was reported Torrès's assistant Weill-Goudchaux refused to play the role of Petliura for his boss).

With this the trial's attention turned from the perpetrator to his victim. At first relieved to see the spotlight taken off of his past, Schwarzbard now had to hear Petliura's praises sung, while he was further calumniated. With one major exception, only prosecution witnesses were heard from the second (October 19) to the sixth (October 24) day of the trial. The experience was even more painful for him than when he heard the same testimony during the investigative hearings.[509] Fortunately for Schwarzbard there were breaks, one of the most important being the testimony of the world-renowned physicist Paul Langevin on Thursday, October 20.[510] Campinchi was at first polite, paying respect to Langevin's intellectual merit, but then challenged the professor's authority to pass judgment on Petliura: "You physician, you savant, grand savant, you are doing like the man in the street does. You play expert in a case you do not know!"[511] For Schwarzbard, Langevin's testimony provided welcome relief from the presentation of the main Ukrainian

[509] There was no session on Sunday, October 23.

[510] Although prosecution witnesses are generally heard first in the Assize court, an exception was made for Professor Langevin in deference to his intellectual standing. Winning the adoring praise of the Jewish press, Langevin made the important point that until an international court of justice was established, individuals like Schwarzbard would naturally come forward to seek justice by another path.

[511] As reported in the *Action française,* October 21, 1927.

conspiracy theory that immediately preceded it. He commented simply: "Professor Langevin came like balsam after the dark elements."[512]

It was on this day that Schwarzbard made his most unforgettable statement of the trial. It came in response to the long, virtually incomprehensible letter written to the court by the self-professed reformed Socialist Revolutionary Dubkowsky, which claimed that Schwarzbard was part of an international network of "terrorist organizations" that planned to assassinate notables like "Millerand, Petlura and Poincaré...."[513] Dubkowsky had been personally acquainted with Schwarzbard, claiming to have been introduced to him by Emma Goldman, and when judge Flory asked the defendant if he wanted to respond to the letter, he said:

> Only a few words. Formerly the Jews had Christ and they had Judas. The man who signed that letter stayed with me for some time. I helped him like I help everyone. This is a new Judas who plays his role just how the other played his nineteen hundred years ago. There are two categories of Jews—the Christ's and the Judases—this one is a Judas.[514]

Conspiracies, reputations, revenge, professional rivalries, politics, everything paled next to the pogrom stories that were heard in that stuffy courtroom during the final days of the trial. It was in anticipation of these dark memories that one of the jurors started the fifth day of testimony (Saturday, October 22) asking Schwarzbard if he had himself lost family members to the pogroms. Although his father and

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[512] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 348-9.

[513] *Notes sténographiques*, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 39756 and 39766.

[514] Ibid. 39775. In a book from 1962 in defense of Petliura, Alain Desroches defends Dubkowsky, claiming that his letter unjustly "yellowed" in the archives of the Palace of Justice, simply because Henry Torrès and Sholem Schwarzbard convinced the investigating magistrate, the court and others that he was "demented," a "double agent," and a "Judas." Alain Desroches, *Le problèm ukrainien et Simon Petlura (Le feu et la cendre)*, (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions latines, 1962), 195. I believe the paranoid content and broken form of the letter would convince most readers that Torrès was correct in his assessment of the man, and that the document can be neglected with impunity. Again, no prosecuting attorney, including the conspiracy hungry Willm, was willing to mention Dubkowsky or the letter in their final arguments.

mother were not killed as was often claimed, he could answer in the affirmative having lost many direct relations. This perhaps helped the juror confirm in his mind that the assassination had not been "cold-blooded," but a *"crime passionnel,"* a crime of passion towards which French juries were notoriously tolerant.[515]

On what became known as "Jewish Monday" (October 24), a former Red Cross nurse in Proskurov, Rachel Greenberg, brought her memories of terror to the stand. That terror had left its mark on her outside as well. In photographs from the trial Miss Greenberg's pallor makes a ghostly contrast to her curly black hair which, like the past, threatens to break loose at any moment. Her features are disturbed, contorted, and her head unnaturally cocked to one side. It is quite obvious that nurture, not nature has given her these qualities that made her stories of cartloads of dead bodies, severed breasts and headless toddlers so believable. After her testimony it made no difference that she brought no proof that Petliura ordered this nightmare unleashed by his army, and it only made things worse for the prosecution when Campinchi pressed her to present it.

In light of Rachel Greenberg's effectiveness as a witness for the defense, Schwarzbard was perhaps correct to criticize Torrès for coming to the trial with a "list made up of hundreds of 'moralizers,' witnesses, Frenchmen who want to philosophize over pogroms..." instead of "hundreds of pogrom victims, orphans and

[515] The French rightist and centrist press made an issue of judicial leniency during the affair—as did Campinchi himself. In 1929, a French legal review of important trials reduced Schwarzbard's case to a crime of passion: "There is a particular category of crime that create a special atmosphere in France. These are the crimes called "impassioned." Whatever the passion that excuses them in the eyes of many of our contemporaries... love, jealously, vengeance, politics... these crimes are almost certain to go unpunished..." *"L'assassinat,"* 289.

cripples..."[516] She was a very special witness, however, and in an uncanny way everything about her spoke for the victims. Schwarzbard confessed in his memoir that when he heard Rachel Greenberg's testimony, no matter "how hard I tried not to cry so as not to show my weakness, I couldn't withstand the journey...."[517]

The trial continued, with Campinchi and Torrès reportedly coming close to blows, but for all practical purposes it was over, the prosecution's own missteps and the weight of pogrom memory insured a verdict of not guilty. At the end of the trial's sixth day (Tuesday, October 25), in a move protested by many Jewish observers interested in a more extensive show trial, Torrès offered to forego his remaining witnesses (around 60 in total) if the prosecution would do the same. Long since weary of the whole affair, Campinchi happily agreed, and Manouvriez could report Torrès's *"petit coup de théâtre qui recueille l'approbations générale.*"

## 8.6 Final Arguments: Schwarzbard's Martydom a *fait accompli*

Schwarzbard was not guillotined for killing Symon Petliura, but he arguably suffered martyrdom nonetheless—a martyrdom of silence. On the final day of his trial (Wednesday, October 26) he said nothing. According to the practice of the Assize court earlier in the trial Schwarzbard had been allowed to speak whenever he mustered the will, but during final arguments, he had to sit for hours and hear himself defined by four different men from cultural and political backgrounds radically different than his own. Although there was much overlap between the

[516] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times*, 355-6.
[517] Ibid. 357.

three prosecuting attorneys, each of the French barristers presented unique biographical views of the defendant.

The lawyer for the *partie civile*, Alfred Willm, was the first to present his final argument. It was to be the trial's longest and ugliest. Unlike his fellow prosecutors Campinchi and Raynaud, who would trace the roots of the "crime" back to Schwarzbard's bad character, Willm deduced Schwarzbard's motive for the assassination from his abstract ideas about international Communism and Jewishness. This approach allowed him to be incredibly eclectic, and wash away distinctions between Bolsheviks and Jews. It also left room to include every available scrap of circumstantial evidence for Moscow's involvement in the assassination, while at the same time defining Schwarzbard's's roots in Jerusalem:

> I well know that the people of Israel, who no less than me recognize the spirit of tenacity and solidarity, have the qualities of work and of intelligence, of incontestable family virtues. These virtues do not prevent me from finding in them that atavism which manifests itself in two ways: there does not exist a history more cruel than the history of the Jewish people, there does not exist a people who have been as much marked by acts of repression and of extermination; there does not exist another people who have been pushed further than that of Israel to that which I call the virtuosity of lamentation. The overriding symbol of the people of Israel is in Jerusalem, at the foot of the Wailing Wall. It is there that Israel is truly in its place.[518]

For Willm, Schwarzbard and other heretics proved that Jews—at least in Russia—were not keeping to their proper place, and because of this were to blame for the pogroms: “Often enough it was the singular attitude of the Jews that provoked the pogroms.”[519] These heretics with their "singular attitude" were, of course, the Jewish Bolsheviks: “The Bolsheviks invading the Ukraine had the

[518] “*L’assassinat*,” 297.
[519] Ibid.

supreme political skill to send functionaries of Jewish origin as executioners, People's Commissars, and Tcheka agents. And among the directors of the Tcheka there were Jewish women, very often more cruel than the men."[520] Again, unlike his fellow prosecutors Campinchi and Raynaud, Willm insisted that Schwarzbard was involved with "Jews" like these, the shadow of Judith haunting his overactive imagination: "Ah! Yes, there is no doubt that the Russian Revolution was in large part a Jewish work" [*un oeuvre juive*].[521] Having established his first premise, Willm runs through his "proofs" for deducing Schwarzbard's true motive from it.[522]

Willm ends his *plaidoirie* trying to alienate the assassin from his French jurors with something other than antisemitism or conspiratorial deductions, however. He points out that if Schwarzbard was not sure about his victim's identity until police confirmed it, might he not well have killed an innocent Frenchman by accident? Finally, he reminds the jury of the bloody act itself, saying that Schwarzbard continued to shoot into his victim "with a ferocity and in a cowardly fashion that shows that naturalization perhaps gave him the appearance of a

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[520] "*L'assassinat*," 295.

[521] Ibid. The notoriety of Jewish Bolshevik leaders like Trotsky, Zinoniev, Radek and others led Willm, like many others, to an exaggerated view of the Jewish role in the Revolution. Salo Baron reports an actual decline in the percentage of Jews in the Communist Party from 5.2 percent in 1922 to 4.3 percent by the time of the trial in 1927. This number continued to decline. Although these numbers are significantly higher than the percentage of Jews in the general population (1.8 percent), Baron points out that this was "characteristic of many non-Russian nationalities," including Poles and Latvians. He also points out that in areas where they were a minority even Ukrainians joined the Communist Party in disproportionately high numbers. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*, 204.

[522] Alfred Willm's deductive logic as applied to Schwarzbard's biography, and not the personal attacks of Campinchi and Raynaud drawn from that biography, remains the foundation for Ukrainian scholarship on the affair to the present day. A comparison Patricia Grimsted's Kennedy's recent evidence for conspiracy with that of Alfred Willm's shows them to be remarkably similar, although Grimsted for some reason neglects to mention the *pneumatique*—to my mind the only truly incriminating bit of evidence against Schwarzbard. See Grimsted, "*The Petliura Library.*" Taras Hunczak's argument also follows the major themes covered by Willm and not those of the other prosecutors. Hunczak, *"A Reappraisal.*"

Frenchman, but that he has none of the qualities that make up the beauty and charm of our race."[523] He then bids the defendant farewell, giving him a shove toward a nefarious "Jewish nation": "Assassins, we leave them to those who claim them, and who want to transform them into national heroes."[524]

César Campinchi gave only a short *plaidoirie*. His approach to the affair was inductive not deductive like Willm's, and as a lawyer who demanded "proof" from himself as well as the defense, he must have privately cringed at his colleague's liberal indulgence in theory and speculation. His first words are shot through with bitter irony: "You have already heard a decisive *plaidoirie*. In his wounded, yet very moving voice, Willm has set before us the deduction (*démonstration)* that we must make.[525] I am certain that the few brief words I have to contribute are unnecessary because your minds are already made up." Having been handed defeat by Parisian juries before, the mention of minds "already made up" suggest Campinchi recognized the cause as lost before the verdict was announced.

On a biographical level, however, the prosecutor was genuinely bothered by a number of things in Schwarzbard's life that he sensed but, again, could not prove. For Campinchi these were personal, not conspiratorial in nature. With no reliable proof for a Moscow connection, he left this along with the lion's share of the time allotted to the prosecution for final arguments to Willm, perhaps in deference to the wishes and "historical" priorities of his Ukrainian clients. Unlike the other prosecutors, Campinchi could both feel the tragedy of the Jewish people deeply and

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[523] "*L'assassinat,"* 313.

[524] Ibid. 314.

[525] In French, a deductive "*démonstration"* is considered the opposite of an inductive "*preuve,*" and Campinchi and Willm stood at opposite ends of this logical dichotomy.

sincerely and, with equal sincerity, believe the case against Symon Petliura had not been made. Like his colleague Alfred Willm, Schwarzbard was also too "abstract" for Campinchi who accused him of killing an "idea" more than a man.[526] The prosecutor asked the jurors: "Can one claim that his [Petliura's, kj] prestige was such that he only had to give a signal, say a word to stop the massacres? “Well and good! This is an idea, this! But it must be proved!”

Campinchi was never demonized in the Yiddish press, and even became something of a darling, Warsaw's *Moment* reporting the day before final arguments that he was convinced Schwarzbard should be acquitted.[527] The report reflected wishful thinking, not reality, however, Campinchi's final arguments making it clear that he wanted a guilty verdict, even if the sentence were not the maximum.[528] A sincere man, who defined justice in terms of moderation and order, Campinchi disdained Schwarzbard's Anarchism and heroic pretensions possibly more than the other prosecutors: "You, you will go triumphant, Schwarzbard, how I've often see them [defendants from other cases, kj] departing the Palace, there could be 300, 400, 500 people to carry you in triumph, like a hero, and sadly the widow of

[526] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 40640.

[527] "*Advokat Kempintchi shoyn maskim, az Shvartsbard zol bafrayt vern*" [Advocate Campinchi agrees that Schwarzbard should go free], *Moment* (Warsaw), October 26, 1927. Alter Kacyzne gave a wink to this favorable view of Campinchi, ending his play *Shvartsbard: a sintetisher reportazh* with the following exchange between Anna and the prosecutor: "Anna: Come, give me your hand Messieur Campinchi. Campinchi: No! I want a kiss. Anna: And you deserve one. (Anna and Campinchi kiss each other to the resounding applause of the jury...)" Indeed, Anna Schwarzbard and César Campinchi in important ways shared a very similar view of the assassin. Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard*, 56.

[528] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 40655.

Petliura, alone, silent and heavy-hearted must leave through a secret door under her mourning veils that have suddenly become more heavy?"[529]

Campinchi claimed Petliura's "soul was pure," and tried to make a Frenchman of him, comparing him to General Ney who also could not "stop the sea with two hands." When he turned his attention back to the defendant his tone was ominous: "The hour has come, Schwarzbard, not that of vengeance, rather that of justice, justice for men as for ideas."[530] Fully accepting Schwarzbard's Jewish motive, Campinchi mocks him for thinking he had somehow served his race by playing a "new Maccabee." He then attacks what he most disliked in the defendant:

> But you, Schwarzbard, who are you after all, and are your hands so clean that you pose today as a national hero, and yesterday as an avenger? Torrès tells you, gentlemen, "He is an anarchist, and idealist anarchist." Yes, but one for whom idealism begins with theft and ends in assassination! An idealist with a very incriminating past, and who.... profited from the stay of Petliura in our country to commit his crime because French justice has a reputation around the world for weakness and excessive generosity.[531]

Lacking Campinchi's subtlety and Willm's conspiratorial antisemitism, the assistant state prosecutor Raynaud was a match for them both in upbraiding of the Jewish avenger: "*Voilà,* gentlemen, this I answer the accused, and say to him: there are many other things... that show that you continuously mislead justice, and which show that from one piece of evidence to the next you have not stopped lying."[532] Having himself a hefty ego, Raynaud was put off by Schwarzbard's messianic pretense, claiming he lacked the "moral and intellectual force" to dictate history. He also ridiculed his penchant for historical allegory with one of his own:

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[529] *Notes sténographiques,* Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 40655-40656.
[530] Ibid. 40637.
[531] Ibid. 40654.
[532] "*L'assassinat,"* 324.

> You spoke the other day of Titus. But you neglected to say the one thing about Titus that needed to be said: that is, if Titus committed crimes against the Jews, it was perhaps because a certain number of fanatics, that were called the Zealots, were locked in the Temple and committed abuses. It is that which needed to be said the other day, not what you have said.[533]

The implications were clear enough—Schwarzbard was a "fanatic," along with the other Jewish Bolsheviks, and Petliura, like Titus, merely fulfilled his duty to his nation. This of course meant that the Jews, not the Romans (Ukrainians) were ultimately to blame for their own destruction. Convinced of Schwarzbard's messianic pretensions, he told him that as "avenger and savior" he should accept his "crown of thorns" and insist on his own conviction: "You will be condemned, it is me who demands you to be. I demand it in your stead, and your crown of thorns, it is I who braids it."[534] Raynaud was eager to play the role of Roman Guard in what he saw as Schwarzbard's little passion play, but he underestimated just how ready the defendant was to accept the crown he offered. Schwarzbard, however, could say nothing.

Raynaud defines Schwarzbard by his joy on hearing of Petliura's death, saying: "*Violà,* the personality of the assassin."[535] The prosecutor goes on about the assassin's abuse of the privileges France so generously afforded its immigrants before beginning his final onslaught on his character:

> You have a female ancestor, Schwarzbard, who provides for you, you who likes Biblical history, a lesson in elegance and in courage; it is Judith, who, wanting to kill Holophernes, infiltrated his camp and killed him in the midst of his guards, in the midst of his camp, in the midst of his soldiers. This would

[533] "*L'assassinat,"* 326.
[534] Ibid. 326.
[535] Ibid. 329.

> have perhaps been more deserving of indulgence than that which you did here, in France with respect to the unfortunate, unarmed Petliura.[536]

Raynaud then brings things back closer to home denying Schwarzbard any comparison with the honorable regicides Brutus and Cassius, and concludes: "You, you are a shameful burglar, who hides under the name Walsberger [sic], who makes mistakes left and right, hunted by every kind of police, not for your political opinions (I don't hold these against you), but for breaking society's laws. It is for this that I reproach you, and it is for this reason that I am not much moved and am not seduced by your story of vengeance." Of course, whatever issues Schwarzbard had with Raynaud, and there were certainly many, remained unspoken.

By mid-afternoon the time had at last arrived for Henry Torrès to give his final arguments, and no matter what their opinion on the affair, there was not single person present who did not look forward the spectacle of seeing his rhetorical genius unleashed in the unique context offered him by the Jewish avenger. Where his client was concerned, however, Torrès minimized Jewish content, being at pains to wrap Schwarzbard in the flag of Marianne, not Miriam:

> I believe that when one becomes a citizen of France like Schwarzbard, when one has been side by side with the vibrant liberty of Parisian crowd, when in his hands of a French soldier he gripped a hot rifle in the trenches, I believe a new soul, quaking and ardent, arises, and one strikes out for justice.[537]

Torrès makes Schwarzbard a French hero, touting his war record, and grounding the assassination in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Contradicting Willm's argument, Torrès implies that the act of assassination can actually be seen as proof that Schwarzbard was changed into a Frenchman from the

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[536] *"L'assassinat,"* 30.
[537] Ibid. 37.

inside. The "quaking and ardent" soul Schwarzbard felt beating in him originated more in the streets of Paris than Proskurov.

Like the prosecutors, Torrès in his own way was out to martyr the Jewish avenger *a la française*, leaving him lay in a pool of red, white and blue blood. In his memoir Schwarzbard reacts negatively to the approach, "I can't stand it how Torrès bangs too much on my French patriotism... Do you have to clean the matter in order to understand my act?"[538] Torrès was likely relieved that Schwarzbard was no longer allowed to speak, and could can only hope the jurors would look past the way his client had proclaimed revolutionary Russia his "*patrie"* on the first day of the trial. Now the job was to circumvent the Jewish passions and heroic posturing used against the assassin by Campinchi and Raynaud, and to replace them with that "new" French soul:

> I must now underscore the fact that this is not about transforming Schwarzbard into a "national hero..." [There can be, kj] no deification for one who was legitimately led to strike down the murderer of all the Jews of Ukraine by an implacable obsession, and also no "national" hero [can be made of him, kj]. Because there does not exist for Schwarzbard, nor for me, nor for others, a Jewish "nationality," because Schwarzbard knows but one nation: France—that he served, for which he fought, and because he dreamt of nothing but the unfortunate Jews, his brothers by race, of Jews that are exposed in this world to the pogrom horrors—perhaps tomorrow like in the past.[539]

For Torrès's Schwarzbard "only knows one nation" (France). Accordingly, for the lawyer, there was no Jewish self-defense, no Jewish militancy, no Samsons, no Maccabees, and, in the end, very little of Schwarzbard.[540] It was only through

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[538] Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 356.

[539] *"L'assassinat,"* 333.

[540] Ironically, Torrès's "French Schwarzbard" suppressed his client's idiosyncrasies nearly as completely as did the Ukrainians' "Bolshevik Schwarzbard." In this context, it is interesting to note

suffering that Torrès was willing to grant Schwarzbard's Jewishness. He saw on Schwarzbard's brow "the terrible seal, the entire tragedy of a people," but Torrès might just as well set the seal on Schwarzbard's lips, for he alone, not his eastern European client, was the chosen mouthpiece of the sufferers: "its not only Schwarzbard's lawyer who speaks, but also those with him, at the same time like him, the thousand upon thousands of tortured people…"

In an unexpected way, Schwarzbard actually suffered the martyrdom he so desired, his own lawyer, for the sake of the French hero, reducing the assassin's Russian and Jewish aspects to those of another mute sufferer from the barbarous East. After twenty-four minutes of deliberation, the twelve jurors returned and acquitted Samuel Schwarzbard of all charges against him relating to the murder of Symon Petliura. Shouts of "Vive la France!" rang out in the courtroom. France had indeed played a vital role in the trial of the pogroms, but it had also in its own way martyred the Jewish assassin.

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the response in the *Action française* to the affair by a Jewish "ally" of the right-wing organization. In a letter to the editor, an unnamed contributor claims he is a "Jew by race, but exclusively French at heart." Obviously unable to accept Torrès's interpretation of the defendant, he criticizes Schwarzbard as one of the many immigrants who, "while accepting all the benefits of the nationality, do not abandon their earlier ideas and attitudes. The Easterners and, especially, the Russian or Polish Jews...." This concerned citizen then proposes a reform in naturalisation laws (which had just recently been liberalized) as the appropriate response to Schwarzbard's deed. The editor of the *Action français* agrees: "We have to chase from the hearts and minds of every naturalised foreigner [*métèque*] the idea that they can combine their old nationality with the new..." *Action française*, October 28, 1927.

## 9. Life and Death after Acquittal (October 26, 1928-March 3, 1938)

### 9.1 Schwarzbard in Hiding?

During his final argument, César Campinchi expressed his dismay over the prospect of the defendant carried victoriously out of the *Palais de Justice* on the shoulders of hundreds of supporters. In fact, Schwarzbard left quietly, under cover of a starless Parisian night. In the remaining ten years of his life, the martyrdom he experienced during the affair continued. Unlike other journalists who wired off their last headlines and began looking for the next sensation, Friedrich Sieburg, still fascinated by one of his first assignments in Paris, stayed near the *Pont Neuf* to watch Schwarzbard exit the Concierge:

> At 7 o'clock he left the Palace of Justice, through a little door on the quay—the same through which Marat's angel of death, Charlotte Corday, had been led more than 130 years earlier to her last hearing—to go back to his little clockmaker's shop on the Boulevard Ménilmontant. A woman in black clothes waited for him quietly, Mrs. Schwarzbard. The avenger of his tribe did not depart on a cloud of thunder and lightning, but in a taxi, that hurriedly rumbled away over the Pont Neuf. The crowd had already dispersed—48 minutes is such a long time in Paris—the first extra issues were already set, in the cinemas the negatives were written, for the jurors' verdict to enchant on the silver screen between "Charlie Chaplain's "Shoulder Arms" and "The Golden Apples" with Bebe Daniels. The thunderer Torrès put on a fresh shirt at home because after the acquittal he didn't have a single dry thread left on his body.[541]

[541] Sieburg, "A Jew has Fired." Friedrich Sieburg was an interesting character, and deserves a closer look. A Berlin expressionist poet after the war, he turned to journalism for a living. He was sent to Paris shortly before the Schwarzbard affair. Continuing to live there, he later became a Nazi, but of a peculiar sort, and in 1944 his friend Carl Zuckmayer claimed he lived on "a very dangerous and ambiguous border—between nationalism, critique of "liberal thought," and political progressiveness." After the war he became the Federal Republic of Germany's premier literary critic, writing for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. He was an acute observer of French society; the country making Sieburg painfully aware of what Germany lacked: "A sovereign national self-consciousness, based on heroic historical figures like Jean of Arc... Great happenings like the French Revolution... a carefully tended tradition from their own history." Sieburg perhaps recognized how Schwarzbard played such a role for the Jewish people. See Cecilia von Buddenbrook, *Die Lust am Untergang* (Frankfurt a.M.: Die andere Bibliothek, 2010), 18.

No one was sure where Henry Torrès took Sholem and Anna that night, but they did not return home to their routine as Sieburg imagined. That life, which had lasted barely five years, was gone forever. Schwarzbard never worked his trade again, his eyes ruined by the dim light of La Santé prison. In any event, he now wanted to pursue goals deferred and repressed during the affair. Of course, there were also security issues to consider as rumors of retribution abounded. On account of these, Campinchi had issued a warning to Schwarzbard in his *plaidoirie*. It sounded more like a threat as it was quoted in *Le Gaulois*: "Be careful, gentlemen of the jury, lest this man leave here triumphant. You've perhaps seen a silent young man here with his arms crossed. It's the brother of Petliura. What will you say tomorrow, Schwarzbard acquitted, if he takes his turn to strike?"[542] Casting a shadow over the Jewish "triumph," such rumors were seen as fit to report in the *New York Times,*[543]

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[542] Félix Belle, "*Schwartzbard est acquitté," Le Gauloise*, October 27, 1927.

[543] "Schwartzbard in Hiding Fearing Reprisal by Petlura's Relatives," *New York Times*, October 28, 1927. Warsaw's *Moment* kept an eye on such threats, announcing in a headline from October 24, 1927, "Ukrainians Threaten to Take Revenge on Schwarzbard if he is Freed by the Court." Despite frequent reports of "agitation," as far as I know no act of revenge ever occurred from the Ukrainian side for the assassination, unless one includes "Petliura Days" in July, 1941. This was a three-day blood bath perpetrated by Ukrainian thugs and militia that left 2,000 Jewish dead in Lvov. Encouraged by the Nazis, it was excused as retribution for Petliura's assassination. In June 1926, Vladimir Vynnychenko wrote in the Lvov Ukrainian paper *Dilo* an article rejecting the need for revenge: "I am certain that among the cultivated classes of Ukrainians, no matter of what shade of opinion, there will be not a single voice raised in the demand for a national revenge for the crime which has been committed by an individual Jew.... In the particular case with which we are dealing, there are the following points to consider: Against whom is our revenge to be directed and in whose interests? If we speak of a national revenge, the object of this revenge must be a whole nation. We cannot under any circumstances, however, prove or even suspect that the whole of Jewry took part in this crime... In the present case, opinion regarding the importance of Petlura is divided and the feeling as to his loss too therefore, is divided... Schwartzbard took upon himself criminally the right to judge and inflict vengeance upon a personage in Ukrainian life. What is there in all this to lead us to the wild conclusion that every Ukrainian 'patriot' may now take upon himself the right of a judge and take revenge upon the whole Jewish people? Have we not had in the past enough of this criminal

The Ukrainian nationalist paper *Svoboda* in Jersey City reported that Schwarzbard was in hiding. They also protested how "sacred Jewry" had used every available resource to make Schwarzbard a "national hero." They ignored the fact that Henry Torrès had done everything in his power to prevent that very thing. They also accused Jews of trying to vilify not only Petliura, but also the entire Ukrainian people, ominously warning that "Nothing good could come of it."[544] On the Jewish side, *Forverts* claimed that the conviction of Petliura had actually exculpated the Ukrainian people: "Not only the Jews but also the Ukrainians can be satisfied with the verdict. Many of the Ukrainians probably did not realize that the defenders of Petlura endeavored to take the guilt for the anti-Jewish pogroms from him and place it entirely on the good name of the Ukrainian people."[545]

Relieved at the verdict as vindication for the pogrom victims, assimilated French Jews wanted the "Jewish hero" out of the East to disappear as quickly as possible. In words that were as much prescriptive as descriptive, Alfred Berl of the influential *Alliance israélite universelle* emphasized Schwarzbard's personal insignificance: “The sentence is incarnated in an obscure man, his name, unknown before will fall back into forgetfulness tomorrow; a man who, without leaving a

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right of judging and of taking vengeance and inflicting violence? Did it not contribute to the present unfortunate act?" Reported on July 1, 1926 by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

[544] *"Shvartsbard zvil'neniy,"* [Schwarzbard is Set Free], *Svoboda* (Jersey City), October 29, 1927; and "*Shvarsbard ukrivaet'sya,"* [Schwarzbard is Hiding], *Svoboda*, (Jersey City), October 31, 1927.

[545] As quoted by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 31, 1927. It is interesting to compare the attitude of the *Forverts* with Vladimir Vynnychenko's letter to the Assize Court: "To save the honor of a single member of their political group, to save the honor of Petliura and his allies.... these collaborators and allies of Petliura do not hesitate to sacrifice the honor and the interests of all the Ukrainian people." Vladimir Vynnychenko, Letter to the Assize Court, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 37246.

trace—arms himself, strikes and disappears."[546] The fear Schwarzbard's affair evoked in some native born French Jews was related to their concerns about Zionism's potential for giving rise to accusations of "dual loyalties."[547] This was just one of many problems and interests that Schwarzbard found he now shared with the Zionists, bringing them together in an uncomfortable alliance in the years ahead.

## 9.2 Taming of the Avenger: Schwarzbard's Victory Party

In the meantime, Sholem Schwarzbard did not disappear, but re-surfaced in Sholem Asch's beautiful country villa outside Paris on the first Sunday after his acquittal. A number of important figures gathered there to celebrate a victory for the Jewish people and, to a lesser degree, to toast the assassin. The Galician Ukrainian paper *Dilo*, heard of the gathering and commented: "Jewish solidarity is indeed great when such a well known writer honors Schwarzbard, a criminal with a dubious past."[548] In fact there was still no consensus among Jews on how to receive the assassin, although the effort made to "tame" him during the affair continued. The famous Russian lawyer Henry Sliosberg (a witness at the trial) and Sholem Asch himself attempted to do so that evening with elegance and imagination.[549] In his toast to the assassin, Asch denied that Schwarzbard's had been an act of "revenge,"

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[546] Alfred Berl, *Paix et Droit*, October, 1927.

[547] Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 139-40. For an overview of coverage of the affair in the French Jewish press see Boris Czerny, "*Paroles et silences : L'affaire Schwartzbard et la presse juive parisienne (1926-1927),"* in *Archives Juives*, 34, 2 (2001), 57-71.

[548] As reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, November 9, 1927.

[549] "*An ovnt mit Sholem Shvartsbard,* [An Evening with Sholem Schwarzbard] *Haynt* (Warsaw), November 4, 1927. Sliosberg was an old Social Revolutionary lawyer and Jewish communal activist who turned vehemently anti-Bolshevik, leaving Russia for Paris in 1920, where he continued his leadership role. Even Manouvriez of the *Action française* showed begrudging respect for Sliosberg's intelligence in an otherwise antisemitic description from the trial: "an old Jewish lawyer, bald, bearded, whose agile look was blurred behind his pince-nez." *Action française*. October 25, 1926.

for if Jews were to take revenge on their enemies they would "drown in the blood." Asch again tried to spiritualize the assassin, mentioning how Schwarzbard had emulated the Hasmoneans with a four-day fast before, and a second after the trial "because he had killed a man." Asch's toast reportedly brought tears to the eyes of his listeners.[550]

A little earlier in the evening, the assassin had interpreted his importance in a more mundane fashion, insisting that he wanted nothing more than "to teach Jewish children not to go like sheep to the slaughter." His lesson for antisemites lay in the fact that he, a Jew, dared shoot back: "They are used to seeing the Jew bent, welcoming their blows, standing and begging for mercy—they know Jewish arms are made from prayer and tears— they cannot accept such impertinence, or the way a little Jew dared take their weapon, the revolver, in hand and, in their fashion, deal with his bloody enemies."[551] The trial had spread awareness of the pogroms around the globe, but Schwarzbard now wanted to reset the focus on himself as a militant example for Jews, and ominous warning to antisemites.

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[550] Mosheh Oved recalled the response to Asch's toast that evening: "...the cultural elite of Paris Jewry gathered in 1927 to celebrate the acquittal of Sholem Schwartzbard, the killer of the Ukrainian pogromist Semyon Petlyura. (Asch had been active in the international campaign to fund Schwarzbard's defense, together with many other writers and communal figures.) That evening, wrote another guest: 'oratorical speeches were made, and witty little speeches, but it was Asch who set fire to the company. The fire of joy was in his eyes and his voice trembled. When he spoke of the days that were coming, a shudder passed through our bones. We felt as if the bridge of peace were collapsing under our feet, leaving us to drown in a sea of blood." Mosheh Oved, *Visions and Jewels* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 287.

[551] "An Evening." *Haynt*. Georges Suarez came closer to what Schwarzbard hoped would prove to be the significance of the affair than did Asch and others at the celebration. Hannah Arendt quoted Suarez's opinion that the affair "signified that their race had finally decided to defend itself, to leave behind its moral abdication, to overcome its resignation in the face of insults." Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 244. The comments that evening actually showed that the "race" had not yet caught up to Schwarzbard, and that despite appearances to the contrary, Jewish assassination still remained a profoundly isolating act. Arendt takes the quote from Henry Torrès's book on the affair *Le Procés des Pogromes.* (Paris: Les Éditions de France, 1928).

Henry Sliosberg's toast should have served as a reminder that such a plan would not go unresisted. Despite his light tone, Sliosberg redefines Schwarzbard's past and tries to influence his future. The old lawyer first questions Schwarzbard's reputation for excellent marksmanship, noting that the assassin "had to fire five times to kill a man, something a Gentile can do with one shot." Some of those listening made a light-hearted protest, reminding Sliosberg that Schwarzbard's nickname in the Foreign Legion was "Wilhelm Tell." Sliosberg, however, ignored the protests and moved on to attack Schwarzbard's politics. He claimed he didn't believe Schwarzbard was really an Anarchist: "I don't believe in his Anarchism, and not in his shooting. I believe in his Jewishness. He is a Jew with a burning heart that had to find relief."[552] Like most Jews, and for that matter most Ukrainians in a different way, Sliosberg wanted a dream and not the complex reality of the assassin. He wanted Schwarzbard's burning heart, not his pistol.

## 9.3 The Remains of Schwarzbard's Anarchism

The same evening Schwarzbard claimed he "had fulfilled his duty to the Revolution," and publicly admitted he felt betrayed by his Anarchist comrades.[553] He nevertheless wired his comrades at the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* a few days later: "Greetings my dear comrades. I am with you like always.[554] He signed the wire with his old *nom de plume* "Sholem." In their earlier response to the verdict, the paper had actually showered Schwarzbard with praise, saying history remembered people

[552] "An Evening," *Haynt*.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Telegram to the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* published in the paper on November 11, 1927.

like him as "heroes and saints." They also tipped their hat to him for the courageous way he openly professed his Anarchism during the trial, and expressed their hope that he would soon be "back in the ranks to carry on the fight for freedom, for justice, for human decency, for a time when there will be no more pogroms, no more murders, no more courts."[555]

Perhaps learning of Schwarzbard's new priorities, the tone changed in the following week's issue when they published his belated greeting: "Our greeting to him was, as is known, published last week. Even before we had heard from him, we were sure that Comrade Schwarzbard was with us and will again take his usual place in our movement.... we also hope in time to be able to bring some descriptions from the accused himself written specially for our paper." The words are cool and cautious, as if to say, "Before we knew you were with us, but now we are not sure." In fact, Schwarzbard's comrades seem to demand proof of his continued loyalty in the form of articles on his experience. As it turned out, Schwarzbard never wrote for the *Fraye arbeter-shtime* again, instead selling his story to the politically moderate papers that had uncritically supported him during the affair such as *Morgn zhurnal, Moment, Haynt* and *Di Tsayt*.[556] When he began nurturing his Anarchist contacts again in 1933, it would be in Chicago, with a different group—one more tolerant of "nationalist" tendencies—centered on the founder of the Anarchist Red Cross, Boris Yelensky and his wife.

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[555] *Genose Shvartsbard bafrayt!* [Comrade Schwarzbard Freed!], *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, November 4, 1927.

[556] Even ten years later, at the time of Schwarzbard's death, Comrade A. Frumkin recalled what he clearly considered a sell-out on the assassin's part: "The name Schwarzbard is fine, marketable merchandise for newspapers... and money would be no obstacle. And money was was badly needed—for the trial. Sholem wrote his life story and continued to exalt himself..." A. Frumkin, *Sholem Shvartsbard*, *Fraye arbeter-shtime*, March 11, 1938.

One important Anarchist was more seriously haunted by the Schwarzbard affair, however. In the spring and early summer of 1928, less than a year after the acquittal, Schwarzbard's old supporter Alexander Berkman complains in a letter to Emma Goldman that he sits at his desk, day after day, holed up in his Paris apartment unable to overcome writer's block. In working on an "ABC's of Anarcho-communism," Berkman got stuck on the question when the revolution might make legitimate use of organized force, if ever? Although he doesn't mention it explicitly, Berkman asks three pointed questions related to issues addressed by the Schwarzbard Affair:

> (1) Has the revolution a right to defend itself? Then what is to be done to active enemies and counter-revolutionists? It leads logically to prison or [concentration] camp.
>
> (2) If there is some trouble somewhere—a murderer or raper, etc., has been caught by the crowd—will you let the mob spirit prevail? Or is it not better to create opportunity for a hearing for the accused? That means tribunes and courts and police. And what should the courts do? It is no use having them if they cannot restrain the further activities of the guilty man. It means again prison.
>
> (3) Given an example—what is likely to happen: People starting to make a pogrom in Russia; or whites trying to lynch a Negro in America... shall we let it go at that? Is not active interference necessary? By whom? By "the people"? But suppose those present are afraid to interfere. It means again that armed force is necessary in such cases, even against the mob. And the leaders of the mob who persist in exciting race or other hatred—should they be permitted to go on?
>
> I fear there is no answer to these questions, except the organization of house and street guards etc... —in fact, of police...[557]

It is possible that Berkman's first-hand experience of the pogroms, in combination with the recently concluded Schwarzbard trial amplified the importance of these issues in his mind as he tried to write. During the affair,

[557] Letter from Alexander Berkman to Emma Goldman from June 25, 1928, reprinted in Marian J. Morton, *Emma Goldman and the American Left: "Nowhere at Home"* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 83-4.

Schwarzbard had accepted the role of the French state in assisting his cause without seriously questioning its legitimacy, but Berkman was a rigorous enough theoretician to demand more consistency from his Anarchism. In the end, Berkman inclined towards militias as the answer. This would be the same answer championed by Schwarzbard in the coming years, but in a Jewish form with which Berkman would certainly have taken issue.

## 9.4 Schwarzbard's Old-New Priority: Palestine

Considering himself free from revolutionary duties for the first time in his adult life, Schwarzbard pursued two goals: to settle in Palestine as an agricultural worker [*khaluts*], and to use his celebrity to help bolster the Jewish self-defense movement in diaspora. Probably influenced by Dr. Zalkind, Schwarzbard had hoped to settle in Mandate Palestine since the early 1920s. Still, the old Universalist within resisted his intention, and he spoke of his desire in language more than usually vague, and uncharacteristically apologetic:

> Soon after I left the tight, little prison cell and entered the large, noisy free prison of life, peopled asked insistently from every direction: "What are you thinking of doing? How are you planning to set yourself up? What are your perspectives for the future? Where do you hope to settle? Naturally, I wasn't able to give any clear and set answers to all these questions. Only something swam around unclearly in my head: fragments of cloudy thoughts from long, very, very longtime, brewed fantasies, fatamorganas of past, worn out hopes and dreams: The Land of Israel.[558]

[558] Sholem Schwarzbard, *"Rayze-fiber"* [Travel Bug], *Di yidishe tsaytung* (Buenes Aires), January 25, 1929.

Schwarzbard, at least in a formal political sense, never became a Zionist, his Anarchist values too firmly entrenched to begin toeing a party line.[559] In this regard, it is interesting to compare him to Zalkind. In 1930 Dr. Zalkind managed to immigrate to Mandate Palestine, continuing his studies there, and living a life of seclusion. He occasionally emerged from his hermitage to give fiery speeches against the Zionists, arguing for the foundation of a "stateless society built on an anarchist foundation" in Palestine.[560] With a similar ideological eclecticism, Schwarzbard worked closely with Zionists (he had contacts with both Labor Zionists and Revisionists) in trying to achieve what turned out to be a frustrated dream of settling in Palestine.

Unfortunately, Schwarzbard's fame as a Jewish assassin worked against him in the eyes of British Mandate officials and when, in early 1928, he tried to sail to Palestine without a visa, French authorities in Beirut turned him back with a "wink" to the British. The paper *Israël* in Cairo reported that the reason behind the refusal was the fear of the colonial authorities that "the arrival of Schwarzbard might provoke disturbances in the country." They preferred to wait "until the Jewish sentiment excited by the Schwarzbard trial calmed down a bit."[561] After this setback, he came to work more closely with a group of Left Labor Zionists in Tel Aviv. These created a "*Comité d'amis*" from his many admirers in the Yishuv. His

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[559] In his play on the affair Alter Kacyzne includes the following imagined discussion of the assassin's political loyalties between the Soviet Yiddish poet Osher Shvartsman and Schwarzbard himself: "Schwarzbard: A leader of bandits must not be allowed to live. Jewish blood isn't water!. Shvartsman: You handle it in a too individualist and too nationalist manner; you must be either a Zionist or an Anarchist. Schwarzbard: With one of the two you certainly hit the mark." Alter Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard,* 42.

[560] *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur,* s.v. "Yankev-Meyer Zalkind."

[561] "*On refuse à Schwartzbard l'entré en Syrie et en Palestine," Israël* (Cairo), April 3, 1928.

most ardent devotee was Dr. Jacob Blaustein-Sela, a man who longed to see the "repairer of our national dignity" at work in Palestine: "We sense you already, in our spirit, among the chalutzim, on the working fields, a creator of the Hebrew state."[562]

Although Blaustein-Sela veritably worships Schwarzbard in his letters, comparing him to the Israeli national hero Joseph Trumpeldor, he also pressures him on Zionist priorities. Any state, Hebrew or otherwise, was unlikely to inspire the assassin, and Blaustein-Sela's next letter seems to indicate that Schwarzbard pushed back in his response:[563]

> Your brotherly words touched me in a way I will never be able explain in a foreign language [the correspondence was in French, kj]. You are right after all, my venerated friend, with regard to Yiddish. It is undoubtedly the language of our fathers, of all the victims that your historic act elevated to the rank of fighting nation [*nation combattante*]... I feel the intimacy of Yiddish while not in the practice of speaking it. We are, you and me, isn't it true?—Hebraists in the sense that we recognize a single national language in the fatherland, but words in the language of our masses are no less touching and penetrate to the very depth of the heart."[564]

Schwarzbard disappointed his Labor Zionists friends in another way as well. The Blaustein-Sela letters indicate he worked with the Revisionists to try and secure a visa. He evidently did this without informing Blaustein-Sela, who was working towards the same goal. The latter expressed his confusion and hurt over who Schwarzbard wanted to be his legal representative in Palestine: "I forgot, in my letter from the day before yesterday, to tell you that I never received legal power of attorney for you in matters relating to your installment in the fatherland (*patrie*). M.

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[562] Letter from Dr. Blaustein-Sela to Sholem Schwarzbard, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, March 3 1929, 69702.

[563] On August 29, 1926, Schwarzbard wrote to adoring Jewish French youth: "I am not a fervent patriot in the vulgar sense of the word, not a French one, and not even a Jewish one. Schwarzbard, *In the Tide of Times,* 291.

[564] Letter from Jacob Blaustein-Sela to Sholem Schwarzbard from March 3, 1929. Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69702.

Rosoff... who is connected to the "Zionist-Revisionist" party told me a few months ago that you entrusted your legal representation to them."[565]

The issue took a year to resolve, ending in bitter words for the Revisionists from Blaustein-Sela. He asks Schwarzbard to sign over all legal responsibility for the visa to him by writing in Hebrew: "I declare that Dr. Jacob Sela in Tel Aviv is my moral representative for all steps he finds good to allow me to settle in Palestine." Blaustein-Sela then criticizes the Revisionists: "That's all. No right of attorney with the Consulate like the Revisionist committee earlier tried to dig out of you so that you would have to pay more."[566] Despite pressure from around the world on the British Mandate authorities, both the Labor Zionists and the Revisionists failed to secure a visa for him. It was just one of a number of frustrations Schwarzbard faced after acquittal, though this one perhaps cut deepest.

Helping him bypass at least one major frustration, the Tel Aviv Labor Zionists mustered the will to translate, edit and publish Schwarzbard's memoirs in a little Hebrew book called *Sefer-khayai: zikhronot* [Book of my Life: memories], released early in 1930.[567] The editor, A. Aschman, did an admirable job creating a clear, if

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[565] Blaustein-Sela letter to Sholem Schwarzbard from February 3, 1929, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69703. It is interesting to note that both Schwarzbard and Vladimir Jabotinsky had troubles securing visas at this time, and their dramas played out side by side in the Jewish press. Jabotinsky had organized the Jewish Legion that fought with the British during the World War and was eventually allowed into Mandate Palestine despite his militancy. A Frenchman, an Anarchist and an assassin, Schwarzbard was never allowed in. Blaustein-Sela called the British refusal an outrage to Jewish national dignity and violation of international law. He saw in it British "fear" of Schwarzbard, "worker on the fields of Palestine." Letter from Dr. Blaustein-Sela to Sholem Schwarzbard from March 7, 1929, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69703

[566] Letter from Dr. Jacob Blaustein-Sela to Sholem Schwarzbard from February 21, 1930, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69742.

[567] *Sefer khayai: zikhronot* [Book of my Life: Memories], (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Mitspeh, 1931). No one was yet willing to publish his memoir as a book in Yiddish, although a number of papers published parts of it in serial form. The serialized versions sometimes differ in important ways from the final edit in 1933 for *In the Tide of Times,* they are mostly the same, however. In mid-November

highly abbreviated biographical text from Schwarzbard's confusing array of memoiristic material. The Labor Zionists wanted more than just readability, however, as attested to by the edits themselves. In the following passage from Schwarzbard's January 1929 interview "*Rayze fiber"* [Travel Bug], I have underlined and put in bold the bits Aschman chose not to include in the book:

> Explanations were given for my Palestine trip, **no less than were made for Nietzsche's Zarathustra in his time**. Some concluded that I've become a Jew, and a pious one at that, who wants nothing more than to wrap himself in a prayer shawl and to die there where you will not experience the tortures of the grave before Judgment. **Others want to have it that I have become a fervent Zionist, a devotee of the Jewish National Fund and Reb Meyer Baal-nes donation box**. Again, others thought I was afraid for my own hide, so I want to flee to Palestine.[568]

Aschman's editorial choices reflect his effort to keep Schwarzbard's image that of a good Zionist—something the original interview does not do. The book as whole similarly flattens out the source material, and in so doing flattens Schwarzbard's unpredictable character. Zionists had no particular problem with Nietzsche, quite the opposite, but Schwarzbard's comparison of his fate to that of Zarathustra potentially exposed him to accusations of gross messianic egotism. The next line removed rings with Schwarzbard's sarcasm, and although ostensibly a quote of

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1927, Schwarzbard granted publishing rights to Warsaw's *Haynt,* New York's *Morgn zhurnal*, and London's *Di Tsayt*. These were the same politically moderate papers that had most supported to his cause during the affair. Concerned that his fame not be exploited, he stipulated that *Di Tsayt* [The London Jewish Times] be "morally pledged not to permit any sensational advertising around the personality of the author." He was paid $300 for 100 columns of memoir. Agreement between Sholem Schwarzbard and the Jewish Times Ltd. in London (*Di Tsayt*) from November 13 1927, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69869.

[568] Sholem Schwarzbard, "Travel Bug," compared with the edited translation found in Schwarzbard, *Sefer-khayai*, 154. It is interesting to note that Schwarzbard actually received an honorary diploma from *Keren Kayemet* in 1930. See Letter from Dr. Blaustein-Sela to Sholem Schwarzbard from February 7, 1930, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69739.

what others were saying about him, the line was difficult to read as anything other than a mockery of the Zionist movement and had to go.

Aschman manipulates the raw material in a number of different ways, all in an effort to whittle Schwarzbard's baffling thought process down to a simple desire for Palestine. While the editor tried to emphasize a positive motive to immigrate, later in the same interview it becomes clear that the negative impetus of persecution was closer to Schwarzbard's heart: "When you're drowning, you will grab at straws. It would be beyond laughable from anyone who might criticize this or that colonization plan just because it doesn't fit with his principles. Let it be the Crimea! Let it be Siberia! Let it even be beyond the Mountains of Darkness! As long as we're not persecuted!"[569]

## 9.5 Diaspora Self-defense

Whatever his ultimate motivation for wanting to settle in Palestine, Schwarzbard asserted his quasi-prophetic clarity on the dangers facing Jews in Europe: "And nobody sees the thing as it is, and people haven't learned from the bitter time! The recent experiences—like bloody massacres, persecutions, evil decrees before and after the war, and that which is happening now in Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Lithuania—still does not at all teach the hardened, beaten down, roaming Jews to think: What will be the end?" After returning disappointed from Beirut sometime in March or April 1928, he helped found the *Ligue internationale contre l'antisemitisme* (*LICA*) along with Henry Torrès, Bernard LeCache and other

[569] Schwarzbard, "Travel Bug."

prominent French Jews who had been mobilized for his affair.[570] The Revisionist Joseph Schechtman, an ally of Schwarzbard's among the Revisionists, criticized the organization in June 1928, claiming that under Torrès's influence it was more French than Jewish.[571] Schechtman felt that Torrès and LeCache were Jews only "by the grace of Schwarzbard," and because of this, "they concentrated the entire enthusiasm of their newly-acquired Jewish sentiments upon one slogan: "Fight the pogrom."[572] Schechtman continues:

> There are two ways for combating pogroms. The first through Jewish organizations which officially declare themselves to be Jewish, and which act as such. The second method is through non-Jewish organizations whose acts are motivated by their humanitarian sentiments. Both methods have their good and their bad qualities, and one does not exclude the other. Yet Torres, Lekach [sic] and other organizers of the Anti-Pogrom League have chosen a third method which has no commendable qualities, and which excludes every possibility of sympathy and respect on the part of Jewish national public opinion. They have created an organization which consists almost exclusively of Jews, which is conducted by Jews, but which wants to create the impression that it is essentially not Jewish, but French. This is an old, long discredited trick which has never deceived anyone and which can only result in distrust and lack of respect on the part of the Jewish, and especially the non-Jewish world.[573]

Though they worked together founding *LICA*, Schwarzbard's differences with Torrès, so evident during the trial, persisted, and Schechtman's criticism of the project touched on the essence of their divergent worldviews. In an independent effort, Schwarzbard, with the help of his friend Elyohu Elperin, began a push to

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[570] The *LICA* still exists as *LICRA, Ligue internationale contre le racisme et antisemitisme.* The organization continues to honor Sholem Schwarzbard as a founder. Just before Schwarzbard tried unsuccessfully to enter Palestine, he had gathered a number of "museum pieces" for the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, even visiting the great sculptor Naum Aronson. Torrès donated a piece of sculpted Lebanon cedar that he had received from his great grandfather for the museum, but Schwarzbard was unable to deliver this and the other pieces in person. Sholem Schwarzbard, *"Ikh for keyn Erets Yisroel...."* [I leave for the Land of Israel], Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72450.

[571] Joseph Schechtman, "From a Mountain comes out a Mouse," *Criterion*, June 29, 1928.

[572] Ibid.

[573] Ibid.

organize what was called in various languages, the Jewish International Self-defense Corps. Far more militant that *LICA*, and decidedly more "international," Schwarzbard wanted to unite the latent power of what he estimated were 600,000 Jewish war veterans already trained in fighting by the various sides in the World War, and mobilize it to combat antisemitism. It was a poetic vision, as out of touch with reality as had been his earlier hopes to be a great writer, if more serious in content. Of course, Schwarzbard was never one to have his thought confined within borders, and to him it was common sense to assume that a people faced with a common threat would unite to resist it.

He was convinced the time for extraordinary measures had come, and he issued a call to arms in mid-August 1928, which was published in various journals throughout Europe. He attached the following letter to a copy of the appeal sent to the Paris *Haynt*:

> Dear Editors of the Paris *Haynt*! Allow me a little space in your honored paper to address the burning question of antisemitism, and to call a congress of former Jewish soldiers in order to find a remedy for this chronic illness that Jews have carried with them since Jews have existed. I hope you will grant my wish. I remain respectfully yours, Sholem Schwarzbard.[574]

The appeal carried a very French epigraph from Racine's play *Andromaque*: "For whom are the snakes that hiss above your heads?"[575] He also didn't hesitate to use Shylock's example: "Jews are a suffering and patient people, well trained in sorrow, but everything has its limits. It has to stop somewhere!... We have to come to the world with the same complaints as Shakespeare's Jews [sic]: that we have eyes,

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[574] Sholem Schwarzbard, *"A kongres fun gevezene yidishe soldaten"* [A Congress for Former Jewish Soldiers], *Haynt* (Paris), August 12, 1928.

[575] Schwarzbard, "Congress."

ears, and other senses, just like the Christians, and if you harm us it causes us pain."[576]

Of course, the barriers facing international Jewish cooperation on the use of violence were all too real, especially the one dividing Germany and France—Jews of these two countries unwilling to call into question their loyalty to "*Vaterland*" and *"patrie."* In America too, Schwarzbard faced resistance on the "delicate" issue of self-defense. Even Jacob Fishman, the editor of the *Morgn zhurnal* and past champion of the Jewish assassin, refused to publish two articles by Schwarzbard on the subject: "I am convinced that your views on the very delicate question of self-defense will not find success with the American Jewish reader." Evidently embarrassed, Fishman threw in money as an added reason behind the rejection, saying his paper was "unusually tight."[577]

After acquittal, Schwarzbard faced the same tradition of Jewish passivism that had silenced much of his message during the affair. The spirit of the times stood against him in other ways as well. The Kellogg-Briand Pact, outlawing war forever, was signed just two weeks after publication of the appeal. Torrès himself, in a gathering of French war veterans on May 11 proclaimed his hope that, "looking past some disturbances, we can hope that the eternal peace will reign." In the same speech he added matter-of-factly "The Jewish people is not a war-like people."[578] The famous barrister was as distant from his ex-client as ever.

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[576] Schwarzbard, "Congress."

[577] Letter from Jacob Fishman to Sholem Schwarzbard dated November 26, 1928. Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 70038.

[578] "*Ayndruksfuler yizkhor-ovent far di gefalene yidishe volunteren*" [Moving Memorial Evening for the Fallen Jewish Volunteers], *Haynt* (Paris), May 11, 1928.

In an article published in the Paris *Haynt*, one respondent used Schwarzbard's well-known volatility, and other elements of his biography to undermine the appeal for international cooperation on self-defense:

> It is the soul cry of a man for whom the constant historical wrong perpetrated against a great and eternal people never stops beating him on the nerves. And all of us, who were amazed by Schwarzbard's deed two years ago, will even now hear his current cry of pain with pounding hearts. Yes, certainly. But Schwarzbard possesses a healthy portion of naïveté if he thinks that a Congress of Jewish soldiers will really help.... only words — for deeds it will be incapable.[579]

Schwarzbard pressed on over the next few years, trying both to immigrate to Palestine and set up his veteran's self-defense organization, but remained frustrated in both endeavors.

## 9.6 One Year After the Acquittal: Schwarzbard a Frustrated Agriculturist

After returning to France from Beirut, Schwarzbard set himself up on a small farm in the village Berchères-la-Maingot near Chartres. Shortly before the one-year anniversary of the trial, his closest collaborator on the Jewish veteran's self-defense initiative, Elyohu Elperin, visited Sholem and Anna in their quiet country home.[580] Meeting at the station, they rode a few kilometers down a country road with the local storekeeper. The Schwarzbards had their own little house with the required bed for guests. Sholem had a small study full of books, including his own writing, which he called "his old weakness." Feeling somewhat guilty about his rural plenty, he joked with his friend, calling this small plot his "estate."

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[579] *Haynt* (Paris), August 26, 1928.

[580] Elyohu Elperin. *"Sholem Shvartsbard's urteyl iber zikh aleyn: tsum ershtn yortog fun zayn bafrayen"* [Sholem Schwarzbard's Verdict on Himself: to the first anniversary of his release], *Haynt* (Warsaw), October 26, 1928.

Elperin complimented Schwarzbard on his success as an agriculturalist, but was answered with a familiar refrain:

> Seems pretty good, yes? I would still agree to have only half this much in the Land of Israel. It's too cold for me here, my dear friend. When they didn't want to let me into the Land of Israel, I had no other choice and I bought this piece of land. But it's cold in my soul. A Jew finds no remedy here. Often my conscience tortures me. I feel as if I am committing a terrible sin. Why did I put myself away in this hick town? My whole life I've been active, I've worked in organizations, in societies and now I sit here with idle hands.[581]

It was classic Schwarzbard, focused on abstract world-historical responsibilities, while resenting and distrusting his immediate surroundings. He was by nature incapable of contentment, and the ominous historical situation gave him little reason to change. He instead used his ideology, in both its revolutionary and Jewish aspect, to fan the flames of his discontent. In retrospect, it is possible to see that he had a very acute sense for the ominous trajectory of his times. Although his life had been plagued by mishap and disappointment, Schwarzbard was no Candide, and Voltaire's garden was no place for a European in 1928, and especially not for a Jew.

Anna interrupted Sholem's confession with a lunch made from the products of their labor.[582] While eating the three discussed recent riots at the Wailing Wall. Schwarzbard lamented how Jewish children no longer learned the ancient lessons of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. Then Elperin baited him into discussing his plans for Jewish veterans. Schwarzbard spoke feverishly on the project for over two hours. He was convinced that if the Jews formed a united front they could stave off an

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[581] Elyohu Elperin, "Schwarzbard's Verdict on Himself."

[582] Anna was a good cook. The American psychologist and Jewish activist Max Raisin claimed he "enjoyed one of the best Jewish meals I have ever eaten" at the Schwarzbard's new Paris apartment in 1936. Max Raisin, *Groyse yidn vos ikh hob gekent* [Great Jews I have Known], (New York: CYCO, 1950), 217.

immanent tragedy: "The persecutions are getting stronger. Everywhere the Jews are faced with a question: Resist and move the existence of the people forward, or refuse to resist and be in danger of downfall?"[583]

When night fell on the French countryside, Schwarzbard read from a speech written for the Jewish Federation of War Invalids (a group strongly in favor of his international self-defense initiative) that was to meet in Poland. Elperin politely commented that the speech was "very thorough. " It was in fact unreadable, but Schwarzbard's passion nevertheless impressed his guest: "As Schwarzbard read his voice became more and more excited, anxious, as if he needed to convince, I don't know what kind of audience. The little room in that little, remote region, in the empty village, distant from a Jewish soul—resonated in the night with a thunderous voice over massacres, outrages, crusades, martyrdom.... if you want to free yourself for a moment from all these difficult memories and thoughts and look around in the lonely little room—everything seems so strange. Is this not a prison for a man who yearns for deeds?"[584]

## 9.7 Schwarzbard's Forgotten Years

Over the next four years, Sholem Schwarzbard would remain in that prison, the French countryside becoming increasingly oppressive, as his visa for Palestine continued to be denied. It had done Schwarzbard's cause no good when the issue of his visa was brought before the British House of Commons by the Labour M.P. Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood, the colonial authorities unwilling to allow a

[583] Elyohu Elperin,"Schwarzbard's Verdict on Himself."
[584] Ibid.

controversial and openly militant character like Schwarzbard into the country.[585] Their position likely became more entrenched as tensions increased in Palestine, and especially after the Arab riots in August 1929.[586]

Despite this frustration Schwarzbard developed more extensive ties to the Yishuv. Besides Dr. Blaustein-Sela, he came in contact with professor Boris Schatz, head of the newly founded Bezalel Art Institute in Jerusalem. He never had the opportunity to deliver a number of items he had collected for the museum, or sit for the portrait Dr. Schatz promised to hang in the "Great Men of Israel" exhibit, but the professor proudly informed him that an entire room of the museum had been dedicated to the pogroms: "The room is a bloody page from our history, and it serves as our answer to the non-Jews and their 'good deeds...' looking at the room, more than one has felt a need to apologize."[587] Schwarzbard also followed the beginnings of the Maccabiada [Jewish Olympics] in the thirties—a step in developing his ideal of strength for the Jewish future. He tried to secure a tourist visa for the games, but was denied.

Meanwhile, Dr. Blaustein-Sela refused to give up hope: "They adore you here. The years roll by with diabolical speed, they haven't diminished the memory of your work. And it's a miracle to tell you the truth. Because people forget everything.... and the success of your book [*Sefer khayai*, kj] proves that your work is

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[585] Wedgwood was staunch supporter of Jewish immigration to Palestine, and is still widely honored in Israel today. For more on him see, Joshua B. Stein, *Our Great Solicitor: Josiah c. Wedgwood and the Jews* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1992); and Josiah C. Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1940).

[586] Reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 15, 1928.

[587] Letter from Prof. Boris Schatz to Sholem Schwarzbard, Feb. 29, 1929, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69823.

saved from the universal law of forgetfulness."[588] Israel was in fact one of the few places where that "universal law" did not in fact overcome the Jewish avenger, pointing to the greatest irony of these years—a man who had staked his life for Jewish remembrance was for the most part forgotten by fellow Jews.

Now working for an insurance company based in London, Schwarzbard occasionally visited his friend Dr. Zalkind. At the beginning of 1929, he paid tribute to this remarkable old Anarchist in a biographical portrait published in Warsaw's *Moment.* He pictured Zalkind steeped in Kabbalah, and slaving over his monumental Yiddish translation of the Talmud. Typically, Schwarzbard privileged incidents from the life of his subject that reminded him of himself, relating how the old scholar on a recent visit to Berlin attacked a group of Nazi brown shirts with his walking stick: "Just a short while ago, he was riding in a car in Berlin. A pair of swastika toting young men [*hakenkroytser*] walked by ridiculing Jews. My Zalkind wasn't lazy—and shattered his cane on them."[589]

In 1933, the Nazi take-over of the German state revived waning interest in Schwarzbard, albeit more in his story than his projects. In August of that year he sailed for America on the *S.S. Ile de France*, on a precious tourist visa issued to him as part of a delegation of French War veterans visiting America. A member of the "Jewish War Veterans" was at the docks that day, and recalled meeting Schwarzbard after he heard two of the French war veterans speaking Yiddish: "The man whose name had been on every tongue only seven years previous, was making his first visit

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[588] Letter from Dr. Jacob Blaustein-Sela to Sholem Schwarzbard from January 1, 1932, Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 69809.

[589] Sholem Schwarzbard, *"Dr. Yankev Meyer Zalkind un zayn gemora af yidish,"* [Dr. Yankev-Meyer Zalkind and his Gemara in Yiddish] *Moment* (Warsaw), January 20, 1929.

to America without being welcomed by cheering throngs. He had become Jewry's forgotten man, but in keeping with his character, he preferred to remain so."[590] It was true that Schwarzbard had been "forgotten," but he had no desire to remain so, and even Jonas noticed how "immediately his attitude changed" when he heard of fellow passengers returning from an anti-Nazi conference in Europe.

In fact, Schwarzbard wanted to use the trip to strengthen North American support for the Self-defense Corps, and he immediately left his French comrades for the group of Anarchists around Boris Yelensky in Chicago.[591] Calling himself an *edinyi anarkhist* [united Anarchist], Yelensky was open to every sort of Anarchist, including those associated with nationalism like Schwarzbard. Yelensky and others, helped piece together dates for a coast-to-coast speaking tour of North America and Canada for the fall and winter. He also helped Schwarzbard realize his dream of nearly fifteen years, publishing his two Yiddish memoirs in two attractive, leather-bound volumes a few months before he returned to France in May 1934. Schwarzbard reached Chicago in the first week of September 1933, and was greeted with a welcome dinner and long paean composed by a local bard named "Sasha." To end the poem Sasha asked the telling question:

*Veln yidn haynt zayn loyal*
*tsu dem voylen (hadam) "goyel"*

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[590] Bertram Jonas, "He Fought for the Jews: Sholom Schwartzbard, Defender of His People," *The Jewish War Veteran* (Hoboken, NJ), April 1938, 6.

[591] Yelensky knew Schwarzbard and Anna from Odessa during he Civil War. He didn't remember their name properly in a memoir from 1923: "Also present [at a get-together in Odessa] were Semke Friedman, Sasha Feldman, "Clara, the Black One," Ploshe Gomberg, Shalom Schwartzberg and his wife, Slovke, and a number of other comrades whose names escape me.... all of these constituted quite a substantial group at Passover time in 1919." If Yelensky's memory is correct, Schwarzbard would have been just returned from his ill-fated tour with the International Division. Boris Yelensky, *In the Social Storm: Memoirs of the Russian Revolution*, English translation of original Yiddish version online at http://www.radicalpress.com/?p=1118.

*tsum banket in kafe Royal*
*kumen im bagrisn?*[592]

[Today will Jews be loyal
To the good "redeemer" of our blood
To the banquet in Café Royal
Will they come to meet him?]

They did come, in Chicago and other cities, but more to voice frustration with the rise of National Socialism than commit to the militant response to it Schwarzbard proposed. As it had been during his trial, Schwarzbard lacked the stature to fulfill his ambition, and reports of the meetings say very little about the content of his speeches. A meeting held in Philadelphia was typical: "The guest for the evening stood like someone lost or confused, as if he wanted patiently to wait out the storm. However, not much time was left for him to speak. It was late and the audience was very tired. Therefore Sholem Schwarzbard's comments were short...."[593]

Schwarzbard's name had indeed become "fine, marketable merchandise..." but if he was able to sell himself, he found few serious customers for international Jewish cooperation on self-defense.[594] The American tour made of Schwarzbard an ineloquent Cassandra, remarkably prescient, but blocked by unwilling listeners and a stature inadequate to convey an impossibly difficult message:

> To some, the personal contact with Sholem Schwartzbard was a matter of disappointment...His person was so without outward glamour, his demeanour so void of every attempt to impress, his speech, his very handshake so lacking in the accepted formalism of the refined... In fact, in the

[592] Sasha, "*Sholem, Sholem Shvartsbard"* [Peace, Sholem Schwarzbard], *Ekspres* (Chicago), Sept. 8, 1933.

[593] "*Sholem Shvartsbard krigt do hartsikn kaboles-ponem*" [Sholem Schwarzbard Receives a Warm Welcome Here], report for a Philadelphia Yiddish paper. Exact date, source and author not available in archival copy. Schwarzbard Papers, YIVO, 72488.

[594] A. Frumkin. "*Sholem Shvartsbard*."

> United States, some people, when introduced to Schwartzbard, bluntly blurted out: "You are not the real Schwartzbard." The people had created their image of this heroic figure, and since reality did not conform to this vision of theirs, reality was surely wrong.[595]

Of course, no one could have realized such a project, and in it dream and reality again collided in Schwarzbard's life. Particularly disappointed in Sholem Schwarzbard's tour were his old anarchist friends at the *Fraye arbeter-shtime.* Some of these helped arrange a talk in Los Angeles, but left disillusioned after hearing the "sermons" of the Rabbis who usurped the stage from their wayward comrade.[596] One particularly perceptive observer of the charade, A. Frumkin, recalled the impression left on him by a meeting in Manhattan's Town Hall just before Schwarzbard sailed home in April 1934: "We, his old comrades, went—after all this was our Sholem. We ground our teeth, hearing the grating, hypocritical speeches about the "Jewish avenger." We were ashamed of the bombastic, with the childish, almost meaningless phrases of the "national hero" himself, and we left the hall with a pain in our hearts."[597]

Frumkin attributed the fiasco to Schwarzbard's personal weakness, his inability to turn down people and groups who did not "share his heart." He refused to acknowledge the degree to which this failure came out of the conflicts of an overly eclectic heart, these different groups speaking to Schwarzbard's competing internal priorities. Still, the sincerity of Schwarzbard's Jewish "conversion" did not escape his friend completely:

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[595] R. Feldman, "Schwartzbard: The Man," From *In Memory of Sholem Schwartzbard,* (Johannnesburg, South Africa: Sholem Schwartzbard Memorial Committee, March 1938), 2.

[596] A. Frumkin, *"Sholem Shvartsbard,"* March 11, 1938.

[597] Ibid.

> Actually this fundamental spiritual change in him began... in the eighteen months he sat in prison.... he exalted himself, celebrated and elevated himself with his deed... but he didn't know what to do with it. Sholem Schwarzbard was a passionate man, a pure heart, and this made him sympathetic and beloved, but his feelings often lacked control, and when he suddenly became an ardent Jew, he was carried away with them, with his feelings, further away than he actually wanted... It was not the exaggerated Jewishness that began to manifest itself, but mainly the illusion, the feeling that had received, so to say, a "mission": to speak up... about every Jewish trouble.[598]

These were some of the more insightful words ever written about Schwarzbard. The "mission" of which Frumkin speaks brought Schwarzbard to the first World Jewish Congress held in Geneva in August 1936 to try and drum up support for his progeny in Jewish assassination, David Frankfurter. Although he claimed no influence from Schwarzbard's deed, Frankfurter had shot and killed the Nazi Party representative in Switzerland, Wilhelm Gustloff, in Davos in February 1936.[599] The politics of the Congress stymied him again in this new mission.[600] Delegates saw open support for Frankfurter as a danger to German Jews and an

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[598] Frumkin, *Shvartsbard*.

[599] Frankfurter's assassination of Gustloff in February 1936 touched off a number of retrospectives on Schwarzbard's deed ten years earlier. These included a short, impressionistic account by the famous biographer Emil Ludwig. See Emil Ludwig, *The Davos Murder*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Viking, 1936), 67-71. Frankfurter was the sensitive son of a Croatian Rabbi, who had suffered persecution as a medical student in Leipzig, forcing him to transfer his studies to Switzerland. Chronically ill from youth, Frankfurter was different from Schwarzbard in nearly every way except the assassination. He survived the war in a Swiss prison, moving to Mandate Palestine after the war and publishing his memoirs. See David Frankfurter. *Nakam* [Vengeance], (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1948). The complete transcript of his trial in Chur is available at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City. A more consequential Jewish assassination took place on November 7, 1938 when the seventeen year-old Herschel Grynszpan killed the Nazi diplomat Ernst vom Rath in Paris. Grynszpan, like Frankfurter, denied influence from Schwarzbard's act. Although Grynszpan's motive is still disputed, the assassin claimed he was avenging the fate of his parents who, as Polish Jews living in Nazi Germany, had lost their status in both countries. They were forced to live in a state-less no-man's land along with 17.000 other unfortunate souls on the border between the two unfriendly nations. The Grynszpan shooting was the Nazi excuse for *Kristallnacht* that seemed to fulfill the worst fears of the Jewish notables over the potential consequences of Jewish retributive violence. The Nazis, of course, were primed for such anti-Jewish excesses without the assassination. The French courts never brought Grynszpan to trial, although Henry Torrès served as his defense lawyer before the case was taken over by the Vichy government. Grynszpan eventually perished in Gestapo prisons. Torrès said of "*le pauvre petit Herschel,"* that "he undoubtedly died without weakening." Henry Torrès. *Accusés hors série*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 299.

[600] Max Raisin, *Great Jews,* 215.

affront to the Swiss hosts of the Congress. The American Jewish activist, Dr. Max Raisin got to know Schwarzbard in Geneva, and from his description it is clear that Schwarzbard's many frustrations had done little to change his character: "That man who was so thin and short, was actually nothing more than a big child.... with their naughtiness, wildness and sensitivity."[601]

Childishness was also part of Alter Kacyzne's portrayal of the assassin in his 1935 play *Shvartsbard: a sintetisher reportazh*. The author gave a much more complex view of Schwarzbard's character, however, in the most complete biographical portrait of the assassin ever written.[602] Kacyzne built his text around allusions to Schwarzbard's experience and character found in newspaper reports from the time of the affair. For example, an ignorant Russian stage hand—an incidental character who ultimately has no direct dealings with Schwarzbard in the play—quips while imbibing a drink of spirits offered by his co-worker: "Well, take me for a Bolshevik."[603] Similar biographical allusions are strewn throughout the work. Some are humorous like this one, some tragic, and many are a combination of both.

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[601] Max Raisin, *Great Jews,* 215.

[602] The play was a direct response to the rise of National Socialism. After his success with a production of Friedrich Wolf's *Professor Mamlok*, the famous actor Alexander Granach was in exile in Warsaw where he wanted to produce a new play on a Jewish theme. He approached the Yiddish critic Nakhman Mayzel with the idea of a Schwarzbard play in late 1934. Mayzel suggested they ask Alter Kacyzne to write the screenplay. It proved to be an interesting choice, for Kacyzne became an extremely controversial character when he began publishing a "radical communist" newspaper in Warsaw called *Der Fraynt* in 1935. This possibly worsened the censorship producers of the play repeatedly had to deal with in Poland. The play, *"Shvartsbard: a sintetisher reportazh*," was finally produced in full in Los Angeles in 1940. Alexander Granach himself played the lead as Schwarzbard. For more on the controversy surrounding Alter Kacyzne see Nakhman Mayzel, *Forgeyer un mittsaytler* [Forrunners and Contemporaries] (New York: Ikuf, 1946), 368-70. For a description of how the play came to be written, and of the problems it later had with the Polish censor see Noakh Gris's introduction to Kacyzne, "*Shvartsbard,"* 19-21.

[603] Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard,* 29.

A gifted photographer, Kacyzne uses his stage directions for the beginning of the play to create effects that reach deep into the layers of Petliura's, but more profoundly, Schwarzbard's personality: "Red flags, the portraits of Marx and Engels, transparencies with slogans. From behind the transparencies a background appears of yellow-blue stripes with the Ukrainian Trident as an ornament... far behind the stage, a Ukrainian choir practices."[604] The effect unforgettably illustrates Petliura's move from Social Democracy to Ukrainian nationalism, but it also anticipates the layers of Schwarzbard's "national" struggles, both Jewish and French, touched on later in the play. Thus, toward the end of the play, after the verdict of not guilty, the French Tricolor emerges from behind the transparencies accompanied by the Marseillaise.

Sensitive to Schwarzbard's frustrations during the trial as no one before him had been, Kacyzne grants his character the opportunity to present what the real Schwarzbard had called, "The Speech I Never Gave." The author first hints at the uncertainty that inhibited Schwarzbard at his trial:

> Flory: Schwarzbard! Do you have anything more to say?
> Schwarzbard: Yes... maybe, yes.... certainly yes. Gentlemen of the jury! Even though after such examples of the oratorical art I am afraid... that my pale speech might bring me more harm than good. Forgive me, M. Torrès, if I hurt my case with my last few words.[605]

After this halting beginning, Kacyzne grants Schwarzbard's character—a Yiddish Hamlet, tortured and unsure throughout the play—a breakthrough to the eloquence and moral clarity the real Schwarzbard desired so passionately throughout his life:

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[604] Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard,* 27.
[605] Ibid. 152.

> They hit us—because we submit. Running ahead of history—is our misfortune! I cry: Jews! Back! Back into history! Back with the fist! With the spear! With the bullet! This is my example!.... In the name of human dignity![606]

For a brief, transcendent moment, Alter Kacyzne had found in the figure of Sholem Schwarzbard the means to express a latent martial power in the Jewish people, precisely how the assassin had wanted. Schwarzbard had sensed that strength, and came to feel an irresistibly urgent need to wake it before disaster struck again. Historical circumstances and ideological inhibitors denied him success, however, and the real Sholem Schwarzbard ever remained a Cassandra. Even Alter Kacyzne's fictional Schwarzbard, after this moving Jewish tirade, washed out into arguments based on "human" not "Jewish" dignity, but it was undeniably the latter that had lent these lines their firepower. The "synthesis" sought by Kacyzne remained as elusive in literature as it was in Schwarzbard's real life where. In both arenas, despite the fact that universal and Jewish impulses sometimes fed each other, they largely remained at odds, obscuring both the understanding of self and character in the end.[607]

Even such a worthy project as Dubnov's *Universal Encyclopedia* in Yiddish could not possibly satisfy the Jewish avenger, and peddling insurance was perhaps the best metaphor for the misery he felt inside. Indeed, Sholem Schwarzbard's reality at the end of his life fell frustratingly short of his dreams, and his heart

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[606] Kacyzne, *Shvartsbard,* 154.

[607] Among the many things about the play that attest to the failed "synthesis" was the trouble Alter Kacyzne had naming the play. He originally called the play "*Veltgevisn"* [Conscience of the World], but later changed the focus to the assassin himself with the title, "*Shvartsbard: a sintetisher reportazh.*" The two titles for the play reflect the central dilemma Schwarzbard faced when he took the stand in Paris in 1927—should he primarily challenge the world with the pogrom horror, or should he challenge the Jews to react to it following his example.

shattered along with them in a beach cabin near Cape Town, South Africa.[608] He was buried in Maitland, South Africa, but in 1967 his remains were exhumed and moved with great honor to the soldiers' cemetery at Moshav Avihayil near Netanya in Israel. Anna, who had survived the war hiding in the French countryside, published a poem called *Di Naytorn* [The Seamstress] in 1948 in the *Fraye arbeter-shtime.* In a tone of mild complaint, she speaks of eyes grown too weak to ply her trade as seamstress, but the last stanzas turn relate a heartfelt vision of her late husband:

*Fun lang shoyn fargesn, fun keynem derkent,*
*un dokh hot zi fil tsu dertseyln,*
*zitst zi in shtibl un redt tsu di vent,*
*di vundn fun harts tsu farheyln:*

*"Amol iz geven a yidisher held,*
*barimt in ale yidishe shtiber.*
*nor s'hot dikh, vi mikh, oykh fargesn di velt,*
*du—mayn eyntsik getrayer un liber!"*

*In shibl iz fintser, dos likhtl farloshn,*
*ot zet zi, es shteyt do ir Sholem,*
*er kusht zi un treyst zi... zi khapt zikh bald oyf—*
*s'iz layder geven nor a kholem...*[609]

[Long since forgotten, recognized by no one,
Yet still she has so much to tell,
She sits in her little room and talks to the walls,
In order to heal the wounds of her heart:

"Once there was a Jewish hero,
Renowned in all Jewish homes.
But the world forgot you, like me,
You—my only true one and beloved!"

In the little room its dark, the light extinguished,
Then she sees, standing there is her Sholem,
He kisses her and comforts her... she's soon wakes up—

[608] The Schwarzbard Archive found at the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies in Cape Town, South Africa is a rich source for material on the last years of Schwarzbard's life.

[609] Anna Schwarzbard, "*Di naytorn*" [The Seamstress], *Fraye arbeter-shtime,* October 15, 1948.

It was sadly only a dream....]

All the tender charm and self-pity Sholem attributed to his devoted wife is still present, as is the warm, but politely formal way they addressed each other while both were still alive. In a poem whose beauty resides in its naiveté, it is hard to know how much significance to read in the otherwise common Yiddish rhyme of "*Sholem*" (peace) with "*kholem*" (dream), but with it Anna Schwarzbard reached something fundamental to the biography of her husband—his turbulent, sometimes violent, and ultimately vain pursuit of a dream of peace.

# 10. Conclusion

With the thesis I have tried to provide a reasonably complete portrait of Sholem Schwarzbard unavailable in previous writing on him and his affair. I hope it has turned out to be, as the prosecutor César Campinchi said in his final argument, a portrait of the "man, as well the ideas." Schwarzbard's memory has too long been subjugated to blinkered ideas unable to give a true picture of this complex and buoyant personality. Of course, a biographer has no choice but to depend on "ideas" about his subject, and I have tried to use them in a dynamic and interactive way, to glean a clearer picture of both the granite and rainbows of Schwarzbard's life. Applying Samuel Clemens' approach to autobiography for the purpose of biography, I share his conviction that "facts and his fictions will work loyally together for the protection of the reader, each fact and each fiction will be a dab of paint, each will fall in its right place, and his real portrait, the inside of him, the soul of him, his character."

Finally, Sholem Schwarzbard's "Jewishness" has too long been exaggerated on one hand, and diminished on the other, and the thesis has sought to describe the dynamic relationship between Jewish and other priorities in Schwarzbard's life. Depending on his mood, Schwarzbard's sense of himself as a Jew could pour itself into universal exaltation, or leave him huddled in a ball on a prison floor. I hope the reader comes away from the thesis with a sense for the degree to which Schwarzbard tried to determine what it meant to be Jewish through his overriding individualism and revolutionary convictions, rather than be determined by it in a

traditional sense. The reader may also recognize Schwarzbard as a man "ahead of his time," who both typified his world and stood apart from it to a remarkable degree. This central biographical paradox has helped obscure his legacy, and I hope that in some small the way this thesis has helped clear the way to a deeper understanding of Sholem Schwarzbard in pointing it out. Beyond that, I only hope to have made a worthy attempt to answer the call issued by Shmuel Niger in 1934, for someone to come and tell Schwarzbard's intriguing story "shorter, clearer, cooler and calmer than its hero himself has done."

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