

## PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me begin by thanking the Historical Society of Israel for inviting me to present the Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures in spring 2016. In particular, I am grateful to Maayan Avineri-Rebhun for her hospitality and for her patience in awaiting the final version of the talks. Miriam Eliav-Feldon has followed in her footsteps, with equal efficiency and warmth. While working on the revisions, I was fortunate to have access to the Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, which has a magnificent collection of primary material and up-to-date sources, on the shelf and online (thanks to the Hathi Trust). The staff at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library and in the Yale IT office (Richard Walser, in particular) supplied instant and essential backup. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the presence of YIVO in this book — as a subject of history, a source of documentary material, and the manuscript repository of the memoir by Morris Greenfield that marks my personal connection to the subject.

When it came to revising the manuscript of the expanded lectures, my dear friend and long-time colleague, Barbara Engel, provided, heroically and meticulously, what every writer dreams of — a thoroughgoing interrogation of the draft for language, logic, organization, and ideas. If there are any weeds left in this garden, I'm the one who left them there. Irina Paperno, another old friend and colleague, applied her literary skills to the structure of the argument and demonstrated an interest in the "*pol'skii vopros*." In Jerusalem, Eli Lederhendler reviewed the almost final draft, noted some soft spots, and made useful suggestions. Sylvia Fuks Fried was of enormous support during the process of production.

The image of the tiger on our dust jacket deserves special mention. It belongs to a children's book published in Kiev and Petrograd in 1919, in the midst of the Russian Civil War, called *Di hon vos gevolt hobn a kam* (The Hen Who Wanted a Comb), illustrated by El Litsitzky (1890–1941), a prominent member of the Russian-Soviet artistic avant-garde. The image appears over a caption that reads: "*kumt aroys fun vald a tigr*" (out of the woods comes a tiger). The book and its illustrations belong to a time in which East European Jews not

only suffered, but engaged as active participants in the political and aesthetic transformation in which they were caught up. Lissitzky himself evolved from an interpreter of Yiddish themes to an iconographer of the Russian Revolution. His famous Civil War poster, “Beat the Whites” (*Bei belykh*), can be read as a direct response to the White slogan: “Beat the Jews” (*Bei zhidov*). Here, the tiger is meant to symbolize the ferocity of Jewish resistance in the face of danger; the charms of traditional East European Yiddish culture; and the burst of creativity that affected Jewish artists and intellectuals as part of the modernist moment. Thanks to Jessica Seet, in Special Collections at Regenstein Library, who located a copy of the book, which was found, fittingly enough, at Princeton University. Andrea Immel, curator of Princeton’s Cotsen Children’s Library, graciously provided a scan.<sup>1</sup>

The book owes the most, however, to the influence and encouragement of my husband, Michael Geyer. He joined me in *Mishkenot Sha’ananim* when I gave the original lectures and continued to press me on my ideas. He remains my essential intellectual companion — and my essential companion in everything else. Michael is, in addition, the source of the book’s title, courtesy of Bertolt Brecht, whose 1941 play, *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*),<sup>2</sup> satirizes the rise of Adolf Hitler, deemed by many at the time and in retrospect “unstoppable.” This book presents cases of resistance to supposedly “unstoppable” forces. The efforts to counteract antisemitism as a political tool, as described here, were surprisingly effective in the short term, and even the relatively longer term, though incapable of preventing the ultimate consequences of its twentieth-century rise. “Resistible” raises the question of what could have been, should have been, and was actually done.

For Jews living in the era of antisemitic mobilization a century ago, there was no “Jewish Question,” merely the challenge of being Jewish, as the story of the young Morris Greenfield shows. The lectures indeed connect me to what my grandparents on both sides, my parents along with them, lived through and what they were spared.

#### Notes

1. Bentsiyon Raskin, *Di hon vos gevolt hobn a kam* (Kiev-Petersburg: Yidisher folks-farlag, 1919). Cotsen Children’s Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

2. Bertolt Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).