

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF TWO MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH  
ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR RESPONSE TO THE  
RISE OF THE THIRD REICH

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## PREFACE

The idea for this thesis suggested itself to me as I sat in Jerusalem's Beit An listening to the proceedings of the Eichmann trial wherein were delineated the outrages perpetrated by the Nazi Government upon the Jewish people. During my travels through Europe where the ashes of the holocaust are still scattered for everyone caring enough to see, the idea was crystalized into a single question which I felt I should attempt to answer in my thesis: What were the efforts undertaken by American Jewry to prevent the Third Reich from fulfilling its program of annihilating the Jews of Europe.

I wish herewith to acknowledge my indebtedness to a number of people for their kind assistance. First and foremost, I should like to express my gratitude to my adviser, Dr. Martin Cohen, in whose classroom Jewish History came to life for me. This thesis could not have been written without his helpful guidance and constant encouragement.

Dr. Bertram Korn made a number of valuable suggestions to me which I have adopted. These included the advice that I concentrate on the major American Jewish defense organizations, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress; and that 1938 should be my terminus ad quem. In addition I wish to express my gratitude to the members of

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## CHAPTER I

## HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The great wave of German-Jewish migration to American shores terminated within the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the new and greater wave of East-European immigration commenced.<sup>1</sup> America's nativized German Jews soon found themselves outnumbered but not overcome<sup>2</sup> by their Russian born brethren. German Jewish leadership had the advantage of being the earlier group and consequently formed the dominant strain of American Jewry by completing the process of acculturation first. As social stratification and class structure are often determined by arrival date<sup>3</sup> the earlier German arrivals formed an aristocracy<sup>4</sup> and considered themselves "superior and distinct from"<sup>5</sup> the "greenhorns". They had already integrated themselves into American life, had internalized the values of society at large<sup>6</sup> and had achieved no small measure of economic success.<sup>7</sup> An elite group comprised of the wealthy and privileged quite naturally emerged from the earlier arrivals to form an upper crust group able and anxious to assume the mantle of power and leadership in the American Jewish Community.<sup>8</sup> Leadership is a fact long before it is affirmed as such; and the German-Jewish upper class upon which the new immigrants depended - for financial aid and for lessening the "cultural shock" by explaining society to them and them to society<sup>9</sup> - captured the staff of authority years before they

asserted their hegemony organizationally.

The German-Jewish merchant princes - such as Oscar and Nathan Straus, Jacob Schiff, Julius Rosenwald, Felix M. Warburg - could not but assume the responsibility of leadership.<sup>10</sup> Abdication from this responsibility was impossible as only these were in a position to counteract the prejudice - by - association which they feared would be directed toward them and their business interests.<sup>11</sup> As they would have suffered first and most, their sense of community with the bedraggled and exotic newcomers became aroused and they offered aid and comfort<sup>12</sup> and transportation to other parts of the United States<sup>13</sup> to their newly arriving brethren. Fearing anti-Semitism and the creation of a "problem,"<sup>14</sup> the established upper echelon Jewry discouraged immigration<sup>15</sup> and attempted to divert the stream of emigration away from the United States to Palestine<sup>16</sup> and elsewhere<sup>17</sup> but failing in that they attempted to acculturate the new arrivals as quickly as possible so that they might more rapidly blend into society at large<sup>18</sup> and not adversely affect the interests of the economic elite. Anti-Semitism and discrimination were rising steadily<sup>19</sup> and the German-Jewish leadership was convinced that their own high status would be jeopardized by being identified with the Yiddish speaking, bearded, aliens from Eastern Europe.<sup>20</sup> As the leadership role could not in any case be avoided these established German-Jewish elite resolved to justify and strengthen it. An organization of their own was created not ex nihilo but out of the already emerging, already powerful leadership group. Their

ascendancy was the natural outgrowth of the energies which they had been exerting in the American Jewish community for nearly half a century.

The ideology by which the German-Jewish upper socio-economic class assumed power arose from the life situation experienced by both immigrant groups in the first decade of the twentieth century and corresponded to the prevailing ideology current in American society. The American people knew well the responsibility it had to embrace the "huddled masses... wretched refuse, homeless and tempest-tost" and succor the world's unfortunate. A rapidly expanding industrial society in short supply of unskilled labor brought forth the exalted precepts of patronage and ministration which American Jewry willingly assimilated. Furthermore, the shtadlan in Jewish history is an institution embodying a similar paternalistic concept.

The German Jewish hegemony seized upon these aspects of the prevailing ideology to reassure the downtrodden East European masses that they were being championed by their affluent and politically powerful brethren. The German Jewish elite had access to and were desirous of interceding with the powers that be, privately and behind the scenes, on behalf of their unfortunate fellow Jews. The helpless masses could not but look with gratitude upon the German Jews for their willingness to be their spokesmen in those critical days. The masses of East European Jews were in no position to resist the

German-Jewish elite from asserting its leadership; nor did they wish to do so as their own leadership potential could not as yet be tapped. The ascendancy of the German Jewish oligarchy was an accomplished fact; and the ideology an indefinite instrument; all that remained was its assertion organizationally.

#### THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

In 1906 a small committee of economically powerful German Jews assembled to institutionalize their hegemony; the American Jewish Committee was founded "to speak authoritatively in the name of the Jews of America". Ostensibly the committee was formed, and its immediate purpose was, to combat "the horrors attending the recent Russian massacres, and ...extending to our brethren, a helping hand in a manner most conducive to the accomplishment of a permanent improvement of their unfortunate condition..."<sup>22</sup> Subsequent to the completion of this order of business, the Committee decided that it should manage, on a permanent basis, the entire range of affairs of the Jews of America and advised American Jewry of its decision. The general Jewish public was almost entirely ignored;<sup>23</sup> the committee - including Louis Marshall, Samuel Greenbaum, Nathan Bijur, Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Joseph Jacobs, etc.<sup>24</sup> - "concluded to invite a number of representative Jews"<sup>25</sup> to participate in the committee. But, in point of fact, the Committee made no "pretense of being representative of American Jewry at large".<sup>26</sup> Rather, the Committee was composed of

"a small group of prominent men, animated by an unselfish devotion to the cause of their fellow Jews everywhere and tireless in the expenditure of their energies and private wealth to the furtherance of that cause".<sup>27</sup> The American Jewish Committee, then, took upon itself the role of collective <sup>28</sup> shtadlanim claiming to be alert to the needs of the Jewish public, speaking for and working in behalf of, these needs. Leadership signifies an accurate articulation of the demands of the group being led, but power and leadership are not identical nor does the one necessarily imply the other. The American Jewish Committee did not provide leadership because it did not correctly voice the will of American Jewry. This small group of upper echelon German Jews, however, held the reins of power in the American Jewish Community partly because it claimed to be, and was recognized by American society to be, representative of American Jewry. Insofar as society preferred Jewry to have the aims and needs the American Jewish Committee claimed it had, the Committee had no difficulty assuring American society that its own will was the will of the Jews of America. From its inception, the Committee had very few points of contact with the newly arrived immigrants from the east nor did it endeavor, in time, to establish such avenues of liason with them. Rather, as the American Jewish Committee increased in power and prestige<sup>29</sup> it increasingly lost touch with its raison d'être, the masses of American Jewry.

Not only was there little contact between the Jewish masses and the German-Jewish upper socio-economic class, there were appreciable differences in their understanding of themselves as Jews. For the German-Jewish hegemony, it was vital to be Americans first and Jews last. It was essential to be different from society at large only where it was impossible not to be, in their religion. They were loyal Americans of the Jewish persuasion with no extra-national ties and no homeland other than America.<sup>30</sup> Nor would they jeopardize their high status in American society by professing such ties. The Committee, therefore, advised that it was considering "ways and means" of relieving the distress of Jews who were "subjected to disabilities and persecution, owing to their religious belief".<sup>31</sup> The East European newcomers, on the other hand, perceived in addition to religious belief a folk or national element in being a Jew.<sup>32</sup> They had but recently emigrated from the land wherein modern Zionism was born; where Jewishness was unthinkable without Eretz Yisroel, the homeland. These differences which further served to alienate the two groups were reinforced by religious differences. "Most of the upper-class German Jews belonged to Reform synagogues, while the Russian and Polish Jews were Orthodox".<sup>33</sup>

As the Committee grew further away from the Jewry it was created to lead and as the processes of acculturation Americanized the earliest arrivals of East European Jewry,

certain accomplished and capable East European Jews emerged prepared to contend for the occupancy of the void left by the Committee and to assert its own leadership potential.

#### THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Within a decade after the American Jewish Committee came into existence, a class of influential East European American Jews came into existence with considerable vitality.<sup>34</sup> As it increasingly gained the strength of economic position<sup>35</sup> and as it grew in "status and self-consciousness"<sup>36</sup> it sought to wrest power from the German Jewish elite and place itself in the capacity of leadership. The world was at war and just as the Kishinev Massacre crises served as an excellent justification for the Committee to establish itself organizationally, World War I was an equally suitable crisis for the new group to justify its formation. Ostensibly it organized for the purpose of considering the condition of European Jewry and conceiving proposals for the insistence upon "full rights for the Jews in all lands, and the abrogation of all laws discriminating against them"<sup>37</sup> at the forthcoming peace conference after the cessation of the State of War.

In the familiar pattern this emerging East European elite sought to employ an ideology suitable for its own ends. American society and its Jewish community were stirred by "The Wilsonian Principles of Democracy and Self-determination".<sup>38</sup> The new elite therefore disparaged the shtadlan principle and

held in disrepute the "undemocratic way in which a few men unduly arrogated to themselves"<sup>39</sup> authority to speak in the name of all American Jewry.

There are Jewish organizations undertaking to speak for the Jewish people in America which do so in the tradition of the Shtadlan, a privileged "Court Jew" of the Middle Ages. Such are the volunteer committees of prominent and wealthy Jews who undertook to serve the people in line with Jewish interest as they understood them. They were not elected to leadership and except on rare occasions, they did not ask the Jews on whose behalf they were acting to support the work, with money and ideas. Nor are they obliged to give any account of their stewardships.<sup>40</sup>

The new body asserted that it is not within the Jewish heritage nor the American character for a small number of private individuals to exercise their personal influence for the accomplishment of communal purposes. While it may have been necessary at certain times before the emancipation for a few wealthy families to administer Jewish communal affairs, in twentieth century America, such a body must derive its authority from the people by means of democratic selection. They emphasized instead the periods in Jewish history when synods, councils and sanhedrins were convened which derived their<sup>41</sup> authority from the people.

Therefore, a committee should not govern the affairs of modern American Jewry; democracy demands that a representative Jewish congress duly elected by all segments of the American Jewish public be chosen to administer Jewish communal affairs. The newly conceived body asserted that "for a



long number of years, the idea of a Jewish Congress in America was fostered in obscure corners of Jewish society. It represented a mass feeling for the introduction of democratic methods in Jewish life [whereas] the American Jewish Committee...has fought consistently ever since its inception against the idea of democracy as the way of Jewish life and the use of democratic methods in solving Jewish problems".<sup>42</sup>

Louis D. Brandeis who was an officer in the newly formed Jewish Congress Organization Committee said in an address in Baltimore on September 27th, 1915 that

the making of a decision implies the existence of a body which has authority to decide. Among a free people the body which makes a decision must necessarily be democratic.../it must be/...an incident of the organization of the Jewish people - an instrument through which their will may be carried out.<sup>43</sup>

The American Jewish Congress professed to be more Jewish and more American than the American Jewish Committee. And as the former arose from the all but leaderless East European majority, it appeared that it could more accurately articulate their needs and perhaps fill the leadership role which the latter evacuated.

Furthermore, the new elite endeavored to expose the Committee as "conservative" and dilatory. The 1906 constitution of the American Jewish Committee states plainly that

...When conditions calling for relief from calamities affecting Jews exist anywhere, correspondence may be entered into with

those familiar with the situation, and if the persons on the spot feel themselves able to cope with the situation no action need be taken; if, on the other hand, they request aid, steps should be taken to furnish it.<sup>44</sup>

The American Jewish Congress made it clear that it felt that this policy by which the American Jewish Committee is guided is one of inactivity and quiescence and constitutes an abdication of the responsibilities of leadership; Stephen S. Wise avowed:

We reject no leadership for we have known no leadership. Policies of inaction and aimlessness and timidity have presumed to erect themselves into leadership...We have had caution in the place of wisdom. We have had inaction erected into a program. This leadership of inaction has persisted so long because of the long-suffering patience of our people, which pardons much ineffectiveness in men.<sup>45</sup>

The affairs of the Jewish Community should not be administered by such a body. A bold, active, and imaginative congress should speak for the American Jewish Community.

Moreover, the American Jewish Congress hastened to announce that in a free and open country there is no place for the secret "backstairs diplomacy" of the American Jewish Committee. To remove or mitigate the indignities of persecution and discrimination in American society, a Jewish organization must act openly, in full view of all, willing to expose itself to any criticism which may be forthcoming from its constituency. Brandeis declared that

secrecy will lead necessarily to suspicion and misrepresentation of Jewish purposes... We seek action in the open so that there shall be no misunderstanding either among our own people or among our fellow citizens, as to our aims and methods.<sup>46</sup>

And Stephen S. Wise in an address on March 26, 1916, asserted that

secrecy, always futile as a curative method, has proven disastrous in prolonging and intensifying Jewish woes... We now fully discuss our will where aforetime we furtively listened to the edict of others. A Congress means deliberation not agitation, discussion not diversion, enlightenment, not secrecy. Out of this war is to come an end of private, professional, secret diplomacy.<sup>47</sup>

The American Jewish Congress promised to stand guard against the Committee's "un-democratic, un-American, un-Jewish method of dictation from above".<sup>48</sup>

"Democracy, Publicity and the Jewish Heritage" was the standard borne by the American Jewish Congress for all American Jewry to see. This ideology was the apparatus employed in an effort to affect the displacement in the American Jewish Community's power structure of one elite body by another.

After ten years of "undisputed sway"<sup>49</sup> in the American Jewish Community, the Committee found itself seriously challenged by the East European Jewish Community as both organizations made preparations to speak for Jewry at the Postwar Peace Conference.<sup>50</sup> The Committee, however, felt itself, obliged at the same time to respond to the investives

hurled at it by the newly formed agency.

As the Congress "constantly reiterate(d) the charge that the methods of the American Jewish Committee are undemocratic", the Committee's Cyrus Adler wrote to the Congress' Louis Brandeis in August of 1915,

I feel constrained to insist that your strictures are not justified...I cannot but feel therefore that you and your associates and those committees that are now engaged in making propaganda against the American Jewish Committee have not given due weight either to the large general purposes of the American Jewish Committee or to its general representative and democratic character...

You speak of the American Jewish Committee 'assuming' to do certain things, and 'arrogating' to itself certain powers. Let me assure you and your associates that such expressions are very wide of the mark. The American Jewish Committee, neither collectively nor through any individual member, is 'assuming' or 'arrogating'. It is with great reluctance and a deep sense of responsibility that the American Jewish Committee took up a burden which no one had been found willing to bear.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, the Committee insisted that a "Congress" is inconsistent with the American way of life as it "would invite comparison with the Congress of the United States, and set off the Jews of America in the eyes of their fellow Americans as a body politic".<sup>52</sup> The Committee pointed out that the convening of an elected congress would mean that the Jews are a state within a state, a nation within a nation, and the holding of such a Congress "means nothing less than...that we are Jews first, and Americans, second".<sup>53</sup> Besides such

an unlimited elected gathering would not be "free from hectic speech and dangerous language", <sup>54</sup> and would do a disservice to American Jewry.

The American Jewish Committee, cognizant of the Congress' intention of seizing the staff of authority in the Jewish Community of America and conscious of its own vulnerability in this regard as well as its inability to prevent the establishment of such an organization of East European American Jews, attempted, at least, to forestall and delay its progression. <sup>55</sup> It sought to hold off its convocation at least until the cessation of hostilities. The Committee maintained that it would even be willing to unite with other organizations "in the calling of a conference for the purpose of considering the right of Jews in belligerent lands and to...call a Congress on a democratic basis after the termination of hostilities...for the securing of these rights." <sup>56</sup> The Committee, in addition, explored other avenues intent upon undermining the new body <sup>57</sup> by calling its own conference of representatives of Jewish organizations with the view to having them affiliate with it and not with the Congress. <sup>58</sup>

The Congress movement, however, was not to be denied. It ventured to protect the infant body, and responded vigorously to the Committee's efforts to retard and injure its growth.

Stephen S. Wise announced:

We have chosen the name (Congress) because it is an all-American name,...because no lesser name would measure the significance of an assembly of democratically chosen representatives of the Jewish people of the land...so much for the name which it were ludicrous to defend as against those, who for want of anything truly objectionable are happily reduced to the necessity of cavilling at a word!<sup>59</sup>

The leadership which Israel has always rejected has either been imposed by outward authority or unendowed with inward authority...The time is come for a leadership by us to be chosen - a leadership that shall democratically and wisely lead rather than autocratically and unwisely command.<sup>60</sup>

...the people are resolved to be free of their masters whether these be malevolent tyrants without or benevolent despots within the life of Israel.<sup>61</sup>

It were treasonable to be either un-Jewish or un-American and we are Jewish in our determination to be self-succoring and American in the strength of our will to achieve the best for our people everywhere that we may in all things free our people for the best.

...in the words of our fathers 'na-aseh resh' - let us choose for ourselves a leader.<sup>62</sup>

Soon after it was constituted in 1917 the Congress proceeded to establish a "movement to win the support of organizations affiliated with its competition, the American Jewish Committee".<sup>63</sup> As leadership by definition requires a following, the new body endeavored to attract popular as well as organizational backing to sustain it. To accomplish this aim by involving the masses of Jewry, the Congress fulfilled its pledge of conducting nationwide popular elections. Some

felt the election was a sham<sup>64</sup> but to a great many others -  
 "more than 300,000<sup>65</sup> Jewish men and women participated in  
 the elections"<sup>66</sup> on June 12th and 13th, 1917 -

it was a thrilling moment for these men and women as they cast their vote, for there came over them the heady feeling that their exile had ended, that they were in a land of their own, that they were now a united people in the eyes of the world.<sup>67</sup>

The propaganda value of carrying into effect the nationwide Jewish elections was considerably more tangible than the election itself for it substantiated and strengthened the Congress' alleged democratic character and its claim of spokesman for the masses.

The democratic base of the American Jewish Congress,<sup>68</sup> however, was not overly manifest and "no local 'congresses' or 'assemblies' were developed".<sup>69</sup> Moreover, advancing itself as spokesman of the people did not imply that the new body had anything to say. Nor did the methods employed in choosing representatives - however democratic - endow them with a program to represent; unless means of operation be confounded with the ends to be sought. The American Jewish Congress was itself highly self-conscious in this regard for it realized full well that a "democratic organization" is created to accomplish certain objectives and is not an end in itself.

Stephen S. Wise submitted that

We have no program. As individuals we have opinions, even convictions. But our program might be summed up in these words, - the Jewish people must create their own organ through which after earnest deliberation and discussion to express their convictions touching the needs and demands of the Jewish people. Beyond this we are not to go.

If it...be objected that democratic organization is a method of operation and not an end to be sought, we again solemnly aver that a people is not worthy of respect which does not insist upon the right to be heard touching its own affairs, but surrenders the right of judgment and decision to a company of men, however wise and benevolent, who substitute their own opinions and wishes for the convictions and determinations of the whole people.<sup>70</sup>

If the Congress "was somewhat confused for lack of a significant program...like a fire department waiting for an emergency to develop"<sup>71</sup> the Peace Conference provided excellent grounds for the justification of its existence. It, therefore, voted to send a delegation to the Paris Peace Talks and persevere there in its endeavor to overtake the American Jewish Committee's ascendancy in the American Jewish Community.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PEACE CONFERENCE

Immediately after the armistices between the contending nations had been declared, a peace conference was called for to be assembled in Paris whose purpose it was to draw up the terms of the treaty. The Allied nations having won the war, resolved to write the peace. No previous conflict in all of history had been as destructive as World War I. Millions died or suffered grave injury; hundreds of millions endured privation and hardship; cities were razed; vast properties were destroyed; enormous government debts were incurred; industry and agriculture were devastated. Consequently the Allies wished to inflict punishment upon their late adversaries by compelling them to pay for their reconstruction costs. And in keeping with the traditions of war and peace, the victorious nations were determined to satisfy their prerogative of transfiguring the territories of the map to their advantage. The territorial promises made in various secret treaties drawn up during the war to induce certain neutrals to enter it took priority over the more idealistic Fourteen Points developed by President Woodrow Wilson at the war's end.

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Redrawing the boundaries of the new Europe in accordance with the territorial ambitions of the victors was of far

greater concern to the treaty-makers than the protection of minority groups. The treaty-makers therefore were not disinclined to permit a non-territorial body such as the Jews of America to compose the minority clauses which were to be included in several of the treaties.

The American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee agreed to cooperate for the common cause in spite of the patent differences in their background and philosophies. The former organization, disorganized and inexperienced, was in need of the exudition of the accomplished president of the Committee, Mr. Louis Marshall. It sought as well to win over to its ranks this most distinguished member of the competing agency.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore public pressure from the Jews of the United States made cooperation between the two organizations unavoidable.<sup>74</sup> The Committee for its part welcomed the opportunity which such an alliance offered to restrict and impede the infant body.<sup>75</sup> At the first meeting of the "United Executive Committee...it [was] agreed to impose limitation upon the function and the duration of the American Jewish Congress. In scope and in time, the Congress was to confine itself to united action in matters connected with the Peace Conference, and to cease to exist after the accomplishment of this task.<sup>76</sup> To attain the cooperation of the American Jewish Committee, without which it could not claim to be representative of the entire Jewish collectivity, the American Jewish Congress agreed to adjourn sine die at the termination of the Peace

Conference. It was with great reluctance that the Congress acquiesced to non-permanency, a limitation which it felt to be undesirable and ought not to have been imposed and ought not to exist.<sup>77</sup>

The two American organizations brought to the Peace Conferences in Geneva and Paris irreconcilable predispositions which over and beyond their rivalry for political ascendancy accentuated their encounter and made confederation intractable. From its inception, the membership list of the American Jewish Congress read like a Zionist honor roll. Non-Zionist Cyrus Adler, who subsequently succeeded Louis Marshall as president of the Committee, remarked that the Congress is really "nothing but a Zionist Convention".<sup>78</sup>

At its first session, convened in Philadelphia on December 15th, 1918, after the armistice had been declared, a resolution was unanimously adopted to "support...the Balfour Declaration, establishing the Jewish homeland in Palestine".<sup>79</sup> And the program adopted by the Congress for submission to the Peace Conference demanded "recognition of the historic claims of the Jewish people with regard to Palestine, and establishment of such political, administrative and economic conditions in that country as would assure its development into a Jewish Commonwealth".<sup>80</sup> The American Jewish Congress delegates to the Peace Conference therefore were charged with the responsibility of inducing the representatives of the great powers to officially recognize the Jewish claims to Palestine.

The American Jewish Committee, ever fearful that the American Jew be thought of as "only a sojourner...ready ...to transfer his allegiance to a foreign land"<sup>81</sup> sought to prevent the expression at the Paris Peace Conference of the Zionist thesis of a Jewish nation in Palestine. Louis Marshall maintained that while Palestine may be an appropriate outlet for the persecuted Jews of Europe..."I am opposed to a Jewish state and shall always be. There is no likelihood that there ever will be a Jewish state in Palestine".<sup>82</sup> The Committee, therefore, called attention to the stipulation annexed to the Balfour Declaration that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country".<sup>83</sup>

Although the issue of Zionism and the Congress' determination to cooperate with the World Zionist Organization was theoretical grounds sufficient to divide the two organizations, there were even sharper differences regarding the question of "national rights". Both the Committee and the Congress sought to insure "minority rights" for the Jews of the new and enlarged states and agreed that the Jews of Eastern Europe, were considered, and regarded themselves, as minorities but they were in considerable disagreement as to the definition of his minority status. The American Jewish Congress insisted that the Jew not only constitutes a religious and linguistic minority but was as well, a "national" minority. Therefore, the

treaties and constitutions should grant the Jew political recognition and provide for "the creation in the states... of territorial units in a centralized state of the several nationalities".<sup>84</sup> The Congress' program adopted for submission to the Peace Conference, demanded that the minorities - the Jewish minority included - be accorded "autonomous management of their own communal institutions".<sup>85</sup>

Whereas the American Jewish Congress viewed the Jews as a nation and preferred that the states be created as a federation of nationalities, the American Jewish Committee was "against the use of the word 'national' in the matter of minority rights and against the granting of political curia to the several minority groups or nationalities of these countries".<sup>86</sup> The American Jewish Committee adhering to its long standing policies sought to prevent the Jew from being officially recognized as a nation and attempted to undermine the Congress' efforts to attain such recognition.<sup>87</sup> Cyrus Adler asserted that the "Jews should not be treated as a political entity but simply as a religious body".<sup>88</sup> In point of fact the Committee took strides well beyond this position by making a determined effort wherever it could to prevent the inclusion of the word "Jew" in any of the treaties, charters, and constitutions of the new state.<sup>89</sup> Louis Marshall claimed, "We were not asking for any rights for the Jews that we were not anxious to have accorded to any other minorities. We were dealing with minorities, not with our people. The only reference to the Jews in the treaties

was with regard to the subject of Sabbath observance..."<sup>90</sup>

For the most part the aims of the American Jewish Committee were realized.

In the matter of national rights, the American Jewish Committee's position paralleled the position of the United States government. In an interview with President Woodrow Wilson, the Committee learned that

he was in deepest sympathy with granting racial, religious and linguistic rights to the minorities, but he feared that the demands for separate national rights would defeat the object of those who requested it, that it would mark these minority groups off as separate corporate bodies and would thereby render them liable to jealousy and attack.

He said that if these national rights could be granted to the Jews alone, he would gladly assent, but since they would have to be granted to all minorities...the whole policy would be fraught with disturbances.<sup>91</sup>

Equipped with the knowledge, learned in interviews with President Wilson and Herbert Hoover, that "there never was a chance for the 'national' minority clause"<sup>92</sup> at the Peace Conference, the American Jewish Committee found it unnecessary to contend with other Jewish organizations over it. A splendid opportunity was thus provided for the Committee to play the role of unifier of the Jewish factions and strive for Peace in the household of Israel.<sup>93</sup> Not only did the president of the Committee, Louis Marshall, chair the Committee of Jewish Delegations to the Peace Conference, an international body created by the American Jewish Congress, but the American Jewish

Committee willingly affixed its organizational signature to the following proposals adopted for submission to the Peace Conference:

5. The State of \_\_\_\_\_ recognizes the several national minorities in its population as constituting distinct, autonomous organizations, and as such having equally the right to establish, manage and control their schools and their religious, educational, charitable and social institutions.

Within the meaning of the articles of this chapter, the Jewish population of \_\_\_\_\_ shall constitute a national minority with all the rights therein specified.

7. The State of \_\_\_\_\_ agree that each national minority shall have the right to elect such proportion of the entire number of representatives in all...elective bodies, based upon the ratio of its numbers in the respective electoral areas to the entire population therein. They are to be chosen by independent electoral colleges or by such other equivalent methods as shall ensure to such minorities like national proportional representation.<sup>94</sup>

#### THE OUTCOME

A comparison of the proposals submitted by the American Jewish Congress to the Peace Conference with the final texts of the treaties of peace demonstrates that the general outline of the Congress' resolutions were in fact adopted; however, the significant expression "national rights" was replaced with the phrase "rights of minorities differing from

the majority in race, language or religion". The Peace Conference, in addition, rejected the American Jewish Congress' contention which favored "the political recognition of the minority elements or nationalities within the state in the form of curia or otherwise".<sup>95</sup> When the delegates of the Congress were "convinced that the effort would be unsuccessful"<sup>96</sup> it was decided that "these things should be dropped in...actual negotiations".<sup>97</sup>

Withal, the American Jewish organizations heralded their success at the Peace Conference and announced that "in these charters of liberty by which minorities may appeal from injustice and discrimination at the hands of their governments to the League of Nations, lies the hope of the future regeneration of our down-trodden and persecuted brethren with the consequent unhampered development of the principles and institutions of Judaism".<sup>98</sup>

Within a short time however it was evident that grounds for optimism and "hope for the...down-trodden" was not to be founded with the League of Nations. No article concerning minorities was incorporated in the covenant itself nor did the League create a standing commission to supervise the enforcement of the treaties. In addition, the minority treaties "had no real teeth"<sup>99</sup> as they did not provide for intervention on behalf of the minorities. Louis Marshall "pointed out that the League has met with only very



limited success:"

The nature of discriminations and infractions of the rights of those belonging to minorities is such that an appeal to the League of Nations is likely to prove unavailing. The evasions of treaty obligations are usually too subtle to allow of clear-cut indictment on the part of the League against the offending nation, especially as the League, in its desire not to humiliate its member bodies and not to appear as infringing on their national sovereignty, has surrounded the reception and consideration of complaints with a cumbersome procedure which has discouraged the minorities...from submitting protests.<sup>100</sup>

In retrospect it may be asserted that the most grievous failing of the Geneva convention was that it did not bind Germany with any legal obligations to the League with respect to its minorities.

No more successful than the Congress' efforts at the Paris Peace talks was the Committee's attempt to restrict its rival's development - however considerable its efforts in that regard. The American Jewish Committee accused the Congress of mismanagement and disorganization at the peace talks and maintained that the treaties had been completed before the Congress had filed its official communication with the Secretariat,<sup>101</sup> so confused and fragmentized was the Congress! Furthermore, the Committee designated itself as an established organization with a broad program, whereas the other it denounced

as ad hoc, self-appointed; offering a constricted program.<sup>102</sup>  
 It took credit, as well, for the minority clauses; the president of the American Jewish Committee declared "I am perhaps more responsible for the minority treaty than any other man."<sup>103</sup>

The American Jewish Congress survived the assault from without and withstood, in addition, considerable contention from within that body's own membership. Several factions within the Congress striving for ascendancy made charges against the conduct of the work of the delegation to the Peace Conference. The delegation was accused of inviting the cooperation of the American Jewish Committee;<sup>104</sup> of fakery, subterfuge, delay<sup>105</sup> and above all, of failing to take part<sup>106</sup> in the presentation of the claims to Palestine. By this time however, the existence of the new body was assured and the American Jewish Community acknowledged two major bodies claiming to represent its interests.

The spirit of isolationism, which swept over the American people following World War I compelling Congress to renounce all foreign entanglements including the League of Nations, affected the American Jewish Committee to the extent that it too withdrew from international Jewish affairs. It reverted to the parochial policy laid down in the original constitution of the organization which provided that "steps

be taken" to assist Jews in other parts of the world only if "the persons on the spot...request aid" but if they "feel themselves able to cope with the situation, no action need be taken".<sup>107</sup> The Committee, in addition, advised that it had intended "to have a permanent representation at Geneva, to act on its behalf whenever occasion should arise" but<sup>108</sup> it became "convinced that such a step is unnecessary".

As the United States was not a League member and continually mindful of its standing as an American organization, the Committee felt "restrained from taking direct action"<sup>109</sup> at Geneva; it conveyed its views instead unofficially and indirectly.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, League representation or any other assembling of an international body of Jews, the Committee feared, would be "seized upon by the enemies of Jews...as convincing proof of the charge that they have made repeatedly that the Jews are an international body without local or civil patriotism".<sup>111</sup> The more international minded, American Jewish Congress, less fearful of such accusations and freer from cumbersome organizational policies - by reason of its brief history - established a bureau at Geneva with a view to represent Jewish rights.

## CHAPTER III

## THE JEWISH RESPONSE TO THE RISE OF THE THIRD REICH

The Weimar Republic which came into power in Germany after the War was lost could not enlist the support of radicals, conservatives or ardent nationalists. Adolph Hitler's National Socialist Party adopted the aims of these disgruntled groups, whipped up hatred for the treaty of Versailles and preached a rabid brand of anti-Semitism as a means of attracting attention and adherents. The severe economic depression which resulted in large scale unemployment<sup>112</sup> intensified distress and unrest in Germany; Hitler rode to power<sup>113</sup> on that misery using the Jew as scapegoat for all German ills. The Nazis identified the Jew as Germany's enemy. The Jew was held responsible for Germany's defeat in the war as well as the treaty of Versailles, and its repugnant war-guilt clause. "In Anti-Semitism Hitler found a lowest common denominator upon which to appeal to all parties and classes. At the same time the Jews were a small minority so that...it was safe enough to antagonize them."<sup>114</sup> If there had existed no Jews in Germany, it would have been politic for Hitler to invent them.<sup>115</sup> The masses were aroused by Hitler; and aroused masses are heeded by their leader as much as he leads them. Anti-Semitic rioting intensified and multiplied without hin-

drance. Billboards blared: "Avoid Jewish Department Stores! German men and women don't buy from the Jew-pig! Food bought from a Jew will kill you."<sup>116</sup> Outbreaks against Jewish students and professors became a regular part of university life. Gangs of armed ruffians hailing their Fuehrer roamed the streets attacking the defenseless Jew. Jews were "poisoning" German life and culture but Hitler promised to provide an antidote.<sup>117</sup> The Kampf between the German people and Germany's "sub-Aryan enemy", the Jew, had begun.

On January 30th, 1933, Hitler was named Chancellor and the Third Reich was born.<sup>118</sup> The Enabling Act, two months later, granted him control of the treasury; approval of treaties and constitutional amendments, as well as the power to draft laws which "might deviate from the Constitution".<sup>119</sup> The legal basis for Hitler's dictatorship was founded upon this act alone;<sup>120</sup> Hitler was now the law.<sup>121</sup>

Upon assuming the office of Chancellor, Hitler was enabled to pronounce officially that which he had been declaring years before:<sup>122</sup> The Jews are not Germans! Within the next few months alone thousands of Jews were ruthlessly robbed, beaten and murdered.<sup>123</sup> There then began their systematic elimination from business, public service, the professions, the universities, the arts and sciences. Within two years the Jew had been almost entirely excluded by law from livelihood in

Then at 125

only beyond the pale of citizenship.

129 The furested swastika had begun to etch denouement  
of German Jewry.

## INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE: THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

As anti-Semitic measures in Germany grew glaringly inquisitorial, World Jewry instinctively turned its eyes in the direction of Geneva. But the League's competency to intervene legally in Germany's internal affairs was questionable in view of the fact that no Article in the Covenant referred directly to the protection of minorities and because clauses in Minority Rights were not included in the Treaty of Versailles which Germany signed.

In the American Jewish Community political and ideological differences separating the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee had become so deeply rooted that in spite of the crises, joint action in Geneva was inconceivable. The American Jewish Committee preferred action by non-Jews and maintained its reluctance to involve itself in the affairs of international politics. Its counterpart, the American Jewish Congress therefore had the international arena to itself for the representation of Jewish rights.

In its eagerness to have the League take up Germany's persecution of its Jewish minority, the American Jewish Congress came to the knowledge that as Germany was not bound by international obligations to assure full equality to her minorities other avenues must be explored within the League's framework. All relevant international documents were examined to discover

a basis upon which the League could act to deter Germany from treading fundamental Jewish liberties under foot.

In the Geneva convention concluded with Poland under League of Nation's auspices in 1922, Germany bound itself in respect to the inhabitants of the territory of German Upper Silesia "to assure full and complete protection of their life and liberty...without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion."<sup>128</sup> Moreover, Article 147 granted private residents the legal right to petition the Councils of the League of Nations, on an individual basis, regarding infractions of its provisions. The anti-Semitic laws introduced by the Third Reich in Upper Silesia provided the American Jewish Congress' international agency<sup>129</sup> with the occasion to submit a petition objecting to these laws to the Council of the League; the League was then obliged to place the petition on its agenda. The petition prepared by the Congress, was presented in the name of one, Franz Bernheim, "resident of German origin of Gleiwitz in German Upper Silesia, based on Article 147 of the German-Polish Convention regarding Upper Silesia of May 15, 1922..."<sup>130</sup> A second petition was presented in the name of the American Jewish Congress itself.<sup>131</sup> The American Jewish Congress appreciated that less than 10,000 of Germany's 600,000 Jews inhabited the territory, and that such a step would not cover the entire problem, but it hoped that the League would hold its doors ajar long enough for some means to be devised to expand the scope of the Bernheim petition for the consider-



ation and condemnation of the entire German racial policy from  
 132  
 the rostrum of the League of Nations.

That this hope was not unfounded was borne out to some extent by the minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Seventy-Third Session of the Council held on May 30th, 1933 in which the French member of the Council, M. Joseph Paul-Boncour was quoted as having

had too great a respect for League procedure to desire this problem to be dealt with outside the special limited case of Upper Silesia at present under discussion. He would not be completely frank with himself, however, nor with the Council if he did not say that, all the same, this particular case was only one aspect of a more general and more moving problem, and that the League of Nations, which had shown such legitimate anxiety for the rights of minorities belonging to nationalities living within other frontiers, could not really ignore the rights of a race scattered throughout all countries. 133

The Bernheim Petition contrasted the guarantees of the Geneva Convention regarding Upper Silesia with the laws promulgated by the government of the German Reich. Section Three of the petition concludes that:

The laws and decrees...are in contradiction with the provisions of Part III of this convention...especially;

The principle laid down in Articles LXVII and LXXV of equality of all German nationals before the law and as regards civil and political rights;

The principle laid down in Article LXXX of obligation to treat all nationals on the same footing in regard to the exercise of their callings; and

They constitute infringement of the obligations laid down in Articles LXVI, LXXXIII, and LXXXV to provide undiscriminatory, comprehensive protection of the lives and liberty of all inhabitants and nationals in Germany.

Section V of the Bernheim Petition drew attention to Article LXXII of the Convention under which Germany agreed

that the stipulations...insofar as they affect persons belonging to racial, religious and linguistic minorities, constitute obligations of international concern...shall be placed under guarantee of the League of Nations and shall not be modified without the assent of a majority of the Councils of the League of Nations.

The undersigned, Franz Bernheim...employed by the Deutsches Familien-Kaufhaus...and then discharged for the reason that all Jewish employees had to be dismissed...

Hereby submits that petition to the council of the League of Nations...requesting the council to...declare null and void for Upper Silesia the laws, decrees and administrative measures in contradiction to the aforementioned fundamental principles and insure that they shall have no validity, and further, to give instructions that the situation guaranteed by the convention shall be restored and that Jews injured by these measures shall be reinstated in their rights and shall be given compensation.<sup>134</sup>

The German member of the Council, M. Von Keller undertook to obstruct the council's intention to place the petition on the agenda by questioning M. Bernheim's qualifications to bring the matter before the Council.<sup>135</sup> At the same time, M. Keller in a formal statement declared

Should the provisions of the Geneva Convention have been violated in German Upper Silesia,

this can only be due to mistakes on the part of subordinate organs acting under a mistaken interpretation of the laws.<sup>136</sup>

The League's council of jurists found with the petitioner regarding the receivability of the petition and the majority of the members of the Council indicated their intention to have the discussion extended "to a wider field than that covered by the particular case before the council".<sup>137</sup>

Germany thereupon objected to this intention by asserting "that the discussion at the council table must be limited to the situation existing in Upper Silesia and must in no way exceed the council's competence".<sup>138</sup> And with respect to the decision by the jurists regarding the receivability of the petition, "the German representative must say quite frankly that their arguments had not convinced him".<sup>139</sup> The German delegate therefore refrained from voting on the report of M. Sean Lester who had been designated rapporteur on the petition.<sup>140</sup> This report which was endorsed by the vote of the Council, held that the racial laws introduced by Germany in Upper Silesia violated the Geneva convention.<sup>141</sup> It held further that in view of the fact that Germany "plainly and categorically affirmed that internal legislation (in Upper Silesia) can in no case affect the fulfilment of international obligations"<sup>142</sup> and since Germany added that the "errors (were) due to misconstructions of the internal laws by subordinate authorities"<sup>143</sup> there was not "the slightest doubt

that the German Government was determined to carry out its international obligation", <sup>144</sup> correct the errors and reinstate the dismissed persons "in their normal position without delay". <sup>145</sup>

Furthermore, in the course of acting upon the petition several representatives on the Council had made it clear that they would not hesitate to use its precedent as a lever for the purpose of extending the minority rights inquiry to the whole of Germany.

The American Jewish organizations looked upon the League's action along political lines; the one admitting that it demonstrated Germany's "loneliness among the nations on the basic issue of human rights" nevertheless maintained that "as...the Aryan decrees had been in force several weeks and the non-Jewish population had been greatly influenced by the intense Anti-Jewish propaganda, the practical effect of the League's action was probably slight". <sup>146</sup> The other organization avowed that it had succeeded in "rousing - albeit only momentarily - the conscience of the world". <sup>147</sup> The petition

would help to compel the Nazis to respect the rights of the Jews at least in the area in which it had assumed international obligations, it would also pillory the inhuman treatment meted out to the Jews in the Third Reich. <sup>148</sup>

The representation of Jewish interests on the part of an American Jewish institution at the League of Nations was clearly the most outstanding attempt by Jews on the international-

political scene to arrest the spreading anti-Semitic onslaught upon the Jews of Germany during the rise of the Third Reich. Within the American Jewish community, however, the implications of this representation became a splintering political bone over which the two major organizations contended. The American Jewish Congress renewed, with what it now felt to be more warranted justification than ever, its attack upon the Committee's "pusillanimous doctrine of splendid isolation"<sup>149</sup> which inhibited that organization from contemplating an appeal to the League of Nations.<sup>150</sup>

The latter body which preferred that action be taken by non-Jews in international affairs<sup>151</sup> was denounced as an inactive and submissive,<sup>152</sup> organization which "would prefer to go into hiding in order to pass through this period unobserved".<sup>153</sup> "The steps taken by the American Jewish Committee to alleviate the situation of the German...communities", the Congress insisted,

Have been feeble and halting and uncertain steps; they have been proceeding in all directions and in no direction, they have been the steps of mice in a maze, of men blindly groping their separate ways in the darkness of divided leadership and counsel and of confused and inconsistent policies and purposes - and they have had almost negligible results...They have been the lonely steps of men who believe that the Jewish problem should be obscured in silence and dealt with behind closed doors by diplomatic and secret methods...Today the Jews in the diaspora are without leadership and are divided in counsel and in action. There is no agency which is authorized to speak or act for them in re-

lation to their common interests, although many agencies purport to do so. They are without clearly defined principles, policies and purposes and they have no adequate instrumentalities for dealing with their problems. The result is confusion, futility and worse.<sup>154</sup>

The attacks by the American Jewish Congress upon its rivals' policies and activities were not permitted to go on without resistance. The American Jewish Committee defended its standing in the American Jewish Community by pointing out its many "constructive efforts"<sup>155</sup> and by impugning the intention of its rival. It especially assailed the Congress' employment of publicity which it felt "is like a double-edged sword...likely to work great injury"<sup>156</sup> to the Jew.

This excessive and ill advised publicity has itself become a problem with which our Committee should deal. The situation of our fellow Jews in these countries is precarious, they are surrounded by many enemies who are ready to take unscrupulous advantage of any words which can be distorted for their own malicious ends. This should make us all careful to weigh our words meticulously and be prepared very often even to refrain from expressing ourselves in public.<sup>157</sup>

As publicity regarding the "troubles of the Jews in Europe"<sup>158</sup> at the same time keeps public, and calls attention to the name of the organization sponsoring the cause, the Committee asserted that it was "thoughtlessly resorted to and...brutally...exploited for personal ambitions or for the prestige of certain organizations". While denouncing the Congress' ill-advised publicity, the Committee proclaimed that in its

"experience of nearly a quarter century many of its most effective efforts have frequently been those of which the public and in some cases not even the general committee has been made aware".<sup>159</sup> In addition, the Committee pointed out that it is futile to appeal to the League of Nations, for protests there will "prove unavailing"<sup>160</sup> in view of its "cumbersome procedure"<sup>161</sup> and inasmuch as the Jews of Germany are not considered - nor consider themselves - as a minority.

The Committee may have been reluctant to raise the question of Jewish rights with the League of Nations because the status of an ethnic minority might eventually assume the character of a political entity, an interpretation which was repugnant to the Committee's ideology.

Furthermore, the Committee affirmed its faith in the ability of local German Jewish organizations "to attempt with such means as it had at its disposal" to stem the swelling tide of Hitlerian propaganda.<sup>162</sup> There was no reason therefore for Jews to turn to the League.

The Committee, instead, took the position that in order to avoid making "the whole matter appear to be a purely 'Jewish' issue, with the result that Americans of other faiths would sit back and do nothing"<sup>163</sup> organized opposition to the Nazis would be undertaken for the most part by non-Jews.<sup>164</sup>

Events in Germany posed far more than a mere Jewish problem....Nazism was a world menace as well and therefore of profound interest to non-Jews on other than purely humanitarian grounds.<sup>165</sup>

The wisdom of non-Jewish agitation was further advanced by the argument that Jewish sponsorship might also lead to immediate retaliation on the German Jews by vindictive and exasperated Nazis.<sup>166</sup>

The American Jewish Congress' President Bernard S. Deutsch responded to the Committee by writing in a letter to its president, Dr. Cyrus Adler:

...nothing that non-Jewish bodies may be led to see that it is their duty to do, in the name of the decencies of civilization and humanity, exempts us as Jews from the solemn obligation of standing up as a people in the sight of the world and protesting against the horror and the shame of the Hitler war upon the Jewish people.<sup>167</sup>

The Congress countered the Committee's arguments by asserting the Jewish international position. Stephen S. Wise<sup>168</sup> declared that: "world Jewry, not German Jewry is under attack". For the Congress maintained that the "Jews are a people; they are neither a church nor a creed". Germany's real war is against "the Jewish totality, including all of us".<sup>169</sup> Because the American Jewish Committee denied this fundamental truth, the American Jewish Congress asserted, it alone is able "to supply the Jewish people with the leadership which they so desperately need, to make it possible for them to take common counsel and concerted action and to bring order and unity into Jewish life".<sup>170</sup> Members of the Hebrew Press concurred with the Congress that the Committee provided no leadership:



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וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הַיְּהוּדִים הַמִּתְבָּרֵרִים, יִשְׂרָאֵל־הַמְּלִיכִי  
 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל־הַיְּהוּדִי, וְהַיְּהוּדִים הַמִּתְבָּרֵרִים אֶת הַתְּנוּחָה הַבִּיאָה לָבֶרֶךְ  
 הַשֵּׁם הַזֶּה כִּי הִנֵּנוּ אֵין עֲרֵב לְהַרְבֵּה. מִלְּמִן  
 מִלְּמִן, מִלְּמִן, עַל צִחִין, הִלְכֵנוּ בְּקוֹלָהּ בְּקוֹסֵה נֶפֶשׁ  
 הַשְּׁלֵמִים וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַזֶּה יִהְיֶה לְעַד הַקְּדוּשָׁה עֲלֵינוּ כֵּן  
 כֵּן-כֵּן לֹא נִשְׁמַע לָהֶם וְכֵן-כֵּן לֹא נִשְׁמַע, עַל  
 הֵם עֲשֵׂנוּ מוֹכְנִים וְנִזְמוֹנִים לְהַרְבֵּה... לְוִלְוִלָהּ.  
 אֶל מִלְּמִן. כֵּן הִיא. 171

The Congress admitted that there was "adequate grounds  
 172  
 for apprehension" that the representations and petitions sub-  
 mitted to the League by Jews themselves might lead to reprisals  
 with Germany and result in the aggravation of the situation  
 of the Jews. Nevertheless, as "inaction", "submission", 173  
 and 174  
 "the alternative to any  
 act of self-defense, representations and protests must be conduc-  
 ted publicly by Jews themselves "without fear and in the full  
 light of day". 175  
 Such a course of public action, pursued by  
 the American Jewish Congress, by its very nature, was a more  
 effective program for winning popular support and mass follow-  
 ing than the American Jewish Committee's policy of moderation,  
 restraint, and avoiding publicity.

The policy of restraint and moderation to which the  
 American Jewish Committee adhered applied only with respect  
 to the Christian World 176  
 "וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע הַיְּהוּדִים הַמִּתְבָּרֵרִים, יִשְׂרָאֵל־הַמְּלִיכִי  
 Within the Jewish Community, however, in response to the Congress'  
 rapid strides in the direction of overtaking the Committee's

political ascendancy, and because

177 the "ה'תש"ג" gave  
 way to less "gentlemenly" tactics. The Committee's leader-

ship sought to discourage Jewish notables from supporting

the Congress by

179

The Hebrew Press reprimanded the Committee for

this and suggested that the Committee oppose the Congress with  
 180  
 principle and not violate common decency.

The non-international minded American Jewish Committee concentrated its activities upon the domestic scene with efforts to prevent Nazi inspired Anti-Semitism from gaining momentum in the United States. Consequently the Committee endeavored to expose the American Nazi rabble rousers who flourished during the 1930's and denounced the newspaper articles translated from the Hitlerite press appearing in United States newspapers which "clearly aimed at creating the impression that Jews have a dual loyalty and cannot whole-heartedly be citizens of the countries in which they live". Within the American Jewish community itself, during the 1930's, intellectual leftists had become increasingly vocal much to the discomfort of the American Jewish Committee. The Committee, therefore, sought to discount the diatribe current in American society, that "the Jew is a Communist" by leading the assault upon these Jewish thinkers and writers. The intellectual left, however,

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which was vigorously anti-Nazi interpreted the attacks upon them as evidence of the Committee's failures with regard to Nazism. Furthermore, a number of them journeyed to Geneva to enlist in support of the Congress' movement;

וְהָיוּ אֵלֶּיךָ כְּמִיּוֹת וְכִיּוֹת  
183 וְהָיוּ אֵלֶּיךָ כְּמִיּוֹת וְכִיּוֹת

The American Jewish Committee's program of dignified prevention and quiet defense in America could not enthuse American Jewry to the extent to which the American Jewish Congress excited their feelings by representation at Geneva.

At Geneva, the American Jewish Congress persisted in its efforts to have the League of Nations consider the oppressions of Jews in Germany. <sup>184</sup> The League of Nations' action on the Bernheim Petition compelled Germany to reverse itself only to the extent of "pledging" to restore to the Jews of Upper Silesia their fundamental rights. <sup>185</sup> Germany, however, never fulfilled its pledge in Upper Silesia or elsewhere, insisting up until the moment it withdrew from the League that

The Jewish question is a peculiar problem of race, and must not be connected with the general question of minorities. First and foremost, the Jews in Germany are neither a linguistic nor a national minority. They do not look upon themselves as such, and have never expressed any desire to be treated as a minority. The practice of Judaism is completely free, and the religious question plays no part whatever in the settlement of the Jewish problem in Germany. In Germany, it is primarily a demographical, social and moral problem

which has been peculiarly aggravated by a mass migration of Jews from Eastern Europe westwards. It is a problem sui generis, for which, accordingly, a special settlement will have to be found.<sup>186</sup>

Indeed, a special settlement was found.

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## THE DOMESTIC SCENE: THE ECONOMIC BLOCKADE OF NAZI GERMANY

Shall we bend low and in a bondsman's key  
With bated breath and whispering humbleness

Say this:

'Fair sirs, you slaughtered eighty Jews on

Wednesday last,

Three thousand more you drove in concentration  
camps,

Destroyed their livelihoods, profaned their  
graves,

Where sleeps their noble and heroic dead.

Another time you slammed the gate of hatred

In the teeth of Jewish children innocent of

wrong.

And constantly you foul the press and air

With lying Nazi libels in Hell

And for these courtesies we'll buy your goods,

Sail in your ships, and help your coffers grow

To speed the cruel extinction of our race.'

The foregoing lines, addressed by a rabbi to his congregation on Rosh Hashonah 1933, suggest the inflamed indignation of the Jews of America at the outrages committed by the Third Reich upon German Jewry. Within a short time these vocal protests were to be translated into a mass movement of American Jewry on American soil surpassing all other reactions to Germany's barbarity. The American economic sphere was the scene of this response which was approximated in distinction only by the response of Jewry at Geneva in the international political sphere.

At first diffuse, the movement was soldered by a catalyst ignited by Germany itself. In power, less than two months time, the Nazi government proclaimed that an official country-wide boycott against all Jewish shops, services and professional callings was to commence on Saturday, April 1st, 1933.<sup>188</sup> This promulgation was in effect the economic death sentence passed upon the Jews of Germany. It advised the German people that the anti-Jewish boycott was instituted as a reprisal for the "atrocities campaign" carried on by Jews in foreign lands. Included was a provision ordering uniformed Nazis to picket Jewish shops, pillage at will, and deter prospective customers by force from entering. Meetings were arranged demanding restrictions in the admission of Jews to universities and the professions. And everywhere, in Germany, local anti-Jewish boycott organizations were es-

tablished. Politically, the anti-Jewish boycott in Germany proved to be an incalculable aid in whipping up anti-Semitic fervor and channelling it into a controllable course. Economically the boycott had even more utility for it drove Jewish competition out of business, replaced Jewish employees with Nazis and built up the professional practices of Germans at the expense of the Jew.

The Nazi government announced that the anti-Jewish boycott was necessary, for only by organization could the anti-Jewish movement be prevented from assuming "undesirable forms."<sup>189</sup> Moreover, it would be restricted for a duration of twenty-four hours. The boycotting, however, continued after April 1st, and with increased intensity throughout the country. It had begun before that day and it resumed "with-<sup>190</sup> out any blare of trumpets but with deadly effectiveness" after that day.

In America, the existing indignation intensified as the details of the anti-Jewish Boycott were disclosed to the Jewish public. For several months, however, the major American Jewish defense organizations were disinclined to take an official position, preferring to wait, watchful of the developments within Germany and of the Jewish reaction in America. Germany Jewry, itself uncertain of future devel-<sup>191</sup> opments, likewise counselled restraint. Moreover, the organizations cherished hopes that the anti-Jewish campaign would

subside with the attainment of stability by the new government. This hope was reinforced by a telegram dispatched to the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee by Secretary of State Cordell Hull in which he wrote:

...Whereas there was for a short time considerable physical mistreatment of Jews, this phase may be considered virtually terminated. There was also some picketing of Jewish merchandizing stores and instances of personal discrimination. These manifestations were viewed with serious concern by the German government. Hitler in his capacity of leader of the Nazi party, issued an order calling upon his followers to maintain law and order, to avoid molesting foreigners, disrupting trade, and to avoid the creation of possibly embarrassing international incidents...

The feeling has been widespread in Germany that following so far-reaching a political readjustment as has recently taken place, some time must elapse before a state of equilibrium could be re-established. In the opinion of the embassy, such a stabilization appears to have been reached...

I feel hopeful, in view of the reported attitude of high German officials and the evidences of amelioration already indicated, that the situation, which has caused such widespread concern throughout this country, will soon revert to normal.<sup>192</sup>

American Jewry, however, remained unconvinced of  
193  
State Department reassurances and outlets were sought to express the dissatisfaction. Mass sentiment advocating a counter-boycott of Nazi goods and services had been growing increasingly audible in the United States. While the major



organizations remained indecisive, individual merchants simultaneously began to cancel goods on order from Germany.<sup>194</sup> Rabbis in sermons denouncing Nazi Germany urged their congregations to refrain from purchasing German-made merchandise. Minor Jewish organizations with limited influence throughout the country similarly called for an intensive boycott.<sup>195</sup> The stream of sentiment favoring a boycott sprang up from all sources of the Jewish collectivity - albeit diffusely. Before the mass sentiment was given cohesive structure, various groups were simultaneously swept along with it, each claiming to have been responsible for it. The Jewish War Veterans of the United States, for example, in its single sheet newsletter notified its readers that

A group of men without a leader is a mob. The boycott without a leader would be a sham. If it is true that every crisis brings a leader, then the Jewish War Veterans were indeed fortunate in having as its leader, the peerless leader, J. George Fredman, then Commander-in-Chief. If our comrades have any loyalty, if the world at large has any unselfishness, they will place the crown of sponsorship and responsibility for the success of the boycott, where it properly belongs, on comrade, J. George Fredman...we aroused the world to the necessity of effectiveness of a boycott.<sup>196</sup>

Dr. A. S. Lipschitz, a labor leader, in a similar manner declared that his union "aroused by persecutions without parallel in modern history and realizing that it faces the challenge of a deadly foe, was the first to raise the question of a world-wide boycott against Nazi goods and services".<sup>197</sup>

The boycott idea was publicly raised for the first time at a meeting in which representatives of the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee participated. It met with instant approval on the part of the large audience but the leaders of the two organizations were inimical to it. The Committee from its inception followed a policy opposing public manifestations which would increase the social visibility of the American Jew. The Congress also discouraged the boycott because its principle spokesman, Stephen S. Wise, who was abroad and hence not fully appreciative of its overwhelming appeal, advised against it, convinced that something could be achieved by way of private negotiations. <sup>198</sup> Finally, the State Department's disapproval of public demonstrations against a nation with which it was at peace further influenced the two established institutions to come out against the boycott.

At this juncton, with the Committee unshakeably opposed and the Congress wavering indecisively, a new body was created to provide organization for the mobile sentiment. A distinguished lawyer, Mr. Samuel Untermyer, with no previous organizational ties, was approached by boycott sympathizers <sup>199</sup> and asked to establish such an agency. He proceeded to organize the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights (originally named the American League for the Defense of Human Rights), which quickly absorbed local Jewish organi-

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 zations, small groups and numerous non-Jewish liberals. In the same manner as the American Jewish Committee was born to cope with the effect of the Kishinev massacres, and just as the American Jewish Congress was created to meet the needs of the Jew after World War I; the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League was established to coordinate the economic blockade of Germany. The first two, however, survived beyond the fulfillment of their original intent, the last could not, although it expanded its activities, published a newspaper and conducted a much publicised boycott campaign. Following the footsteps of the various other boycott sympathizing groups, the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League claimed to have

called into being this world-wide boycott movement and has piloted it through its stormy career. Few instances in history have shown such complete identification of a man with a movement but this is the case with Mr. Samuel Untermyer and the boycott, which was first given tangible form through his address delivered in Boston in April of 1933. It was subsequent to that, that the movement took organized form as a world movement with Mr. Untermyer's assumption of leadership as the president of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights.<sup>201</sup>

Until the beginning of the Second World War, the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League remained the most vigorous independent boycott organization.

As the momentum increased pressures were brought to bear from various sources upon the Congress to reassess its position with regard to the boycott. The Hebrew Press which

identified more with the Congress than any other agency

spoke out insistently for a reversal of its policy.

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The American Jewish Congress, not insensitive to the dominant mood and the demands of its constituents, finally<sup>203</sup> proclaimed that it is "our duty to join in the boycott". In a public address, Stephen S. Wise, who had been among the<sup>204</sup> last to agree to it announced:

The time for caution and prudence is past, we must speak up like men. How can we ask our Christian friends to lift their voices in protest against the wrongs suffered by Jews if we keep silent.<sup>205</sup>

The Congress, after a delay sufficient to gauge the intensity and direction of the protest movement, undertook to enter it as its principle advocate. The public and demonstrative character of the movement was most conducive for the promotion of the Congress' principle objective relative to the achievement of political ascendancy in the American Jewish Community. The march was well advanced before the American Jewish Congress offered itself as the foremost float of the parade.

On these grounds the motives of the American Jewish Congress were impugned by the bodies which had enlisted earlier in the boycott movement. The Jewish War Veterans

declared that

It was not until August 1933 that the American Jewish Congress officially declared itself in favor of the boycott - almost five months after we had started - and what valuable time was wasted in the interim - what a tremendous foothold Nazism had been able to gain in the meantime, and what suffering our unfortunate German brethren had to endure during these five months while /the American Jewish Congress/ was deliberating, pussy-footing and making up its mind. The worst part of it was, that envious of the continuing spotlight the boycott had brought to J. W. V., this organization was actually condemning the boycott, and criticising J. W. V. Today, they 'claim credit' for the boycott.<sup>206</sup>

Indeed, immediately upon entering the movement, the American Jewish Congress did lay claim to have been responsible for it, insisting that

the counter-boycott movement in the United States may properly be regarded as having been launched by the American Jewish Congress as the initiator of the movement of protest and defense against German oppression...From the first it approved of the spontaneous boycott movement although for diplomatic reasons it did not publicly proclaim its program...but during all the months which intervened...the American Jewish Congress consolidated mass sentiment and mass action which resulted in the counter-boycott movement.<sup>207</sup>

The "diplomatic reasons" which restrained the American Jewish Congress from endorsing the boycott were explained as having been the "hope that representations on the part of the United States government might bring the present rulers of Germany to their senses". But as these representations had

not been forthcoming, the Congress further explained it was<sup>208</sup> "compelled to take decisive action against Germany" and join the boycott movement. The Congress, however, was not content merely to join the movement by supporting the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League which was established for the express purpose of conducting the business of the boycott. It therefore justified its own independent boycott action by expressing dissatisfaction with a "non-sectarian" movement. Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum, who was to be chosen chairman of the American Jewish Congress Boycott Committee, remarked in an address at the Extraordinary Session of the American Jewish Congress on March 17th, 1935

As a Jew, I am jealous of the opportunity to fight for the cause of all humanity in the forefront of this movement, instead of through the back door of 'non-sectarianism'.<sup>209</sup>

A boycott movement openly conducted by Jews and fearlessly sponsored by them was the ideology by which the American Jewish Congress elected itself to take up the "Jewish" boycott movement. From that time on two competing boycott agencies existed, the one "non-sectarian" the other "Jewish"; and "all attempts to unite them failed".<sup>210</sup>

Now fully committed to the boycott cause, the American Jewish Congress undertook with great vigor to make of it a successful enterprise. By publishing a newspaper and sponsoring mass demonstrations it alerted the public to its activities and publicized effective boycott techniques. Picket

lines were organized, lists of uncooperative merchants circulated, and substitute goods recommended. Furthermore, the Congress enlisted the assistance of Congressmen and Senators to introduce legislation designed to hinder German exports to the United States. Congressman Emanuel Celler, introduced a bill to prevent Germany from unloading its government subsidized products on American markets.<sup>211</sup> And on May 8th, 1954, Governor Herbert H. Lehman signed the Wald Bill making illegal the destruction, removal or concealment of the mark of origin of foreign goods.

Boycotting Nazi goods and services, and the rallies, demonstrations and marches, attending it emerged as the major domestic activity pursued by the American Jewish Congress in its effort to deter the Anti-Semitism of the Third Reich. Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum declared:

The time has come not only to woe on Hitler but to war on Hitler. The boycott can do it without bloodshed. Six months of a strict economic blockage of Germany - made universal by the peoples of the world...will stop not only the Hitler war threat but Hitler as well. Hitler must and will be stopped. There is no reason in this civilization for the sadistic-cracy of Nazi Germany.<sup>212</sup>

Consequently the following instructions were issued to the boycott conscious people as the economic means by which Hitler might be dethroned:

1. Buy no goods manufactured in Nazi Germany. Examine purchases carefully. Return articles purchased by mistake explaining your reason for returning them.
2. Do not patronize Nazi services - for example, do not travel on Nazi boats.
3. Report to our office the names of stores or merchants dealing in Nazi goods so that we may communicate with them. Our experience has been that most American merchants will cooperate with us when our policy is carefully explained.
4. Refer to our offices any one desiring information about adequate substitutes for goods made in Germany or any other questions about the boycott. We have complete data on substitute products, including a catalogue of goods made in democratic countries.
5. Report to our office removals of labels on Nazi-made goods. It is a violation of Federal law to remove such labels.
6. Enlist as a volunteer on one of our investigating committees.<sup>213</sup>

The various boycotting activities, vigorously and publicly undertaken by the American Jewish Congress, by virtue of which numerous lesser bodies were drawn to its support, further strengthened its standing in the American Jewish Community. The American Jewish Congress' Boycott Committee, very shortly thereafter, expanded into the Joint Boycott Council by winning the alliance of Jewish labor, the B'nai Brith, the Jewish War Veterans and other agencies, some of which formerly identified themselves in support of the Ameri-



can Jewish Committee.<sup>214</sup>

The American Jewish Committee, unlike the Congress, never wavered from the anti-boycott attitude which it first assumed and which it articulated with great force. However, whereas it may be argued with some justification that the Congress was in part motivated to enlist in favor of the Boycott so as to focus the public spotlight upon itself as champion of an extensive mass movement, the Committee's motives are not so readily disentangled from the numerous explanations it volunteered.

At first the Committee did not take the Nazi menace seriously<sup>215</sup> and regarded therefore as "premature" any public agitation by American Jewry inasmuch as Germany was in a "transitional period" and the Jews of Germany had faith in their fellow citizens and were confident that the civil rights guaranteed by the German constitution would not be violated. It would be unwise, therefore, for the Jew of America to "take any hand in the German situation".<sup>216</sup> But as the downward course of events in Germany quickened without abatement, the Committee advised that while it "appreciated and understood the natural impulse for the expression of indignation aroused by reports from Germany"<sup>217</sup> nevertheless, it felt that a boycott was a "perilous enterprise" which would certainly aggravate the condition it sought to cure. "It will lead to retaliatory measures," the Committee argued..."and will immediately

provide the pretext for further excesses against the Jews in Germany".<sup>218</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr writing in the "Christian Century" took a similar position which the American Jewish Committee quoted:

The total situation is such a dismal one that one wonders whether anything can be done to prevent one of the darkest pages in modern history from becoming even more tragic. The Jewish boycott will probably do more harm than good, at least from the perspective of the Jews who are still in Germany and who must suffer from the increased ferocity which the boycott instills in the Nazis. This boycott is like waging war against a nation which holds over a million of your own hostages and which may be sufficiently angered by hostilities<sup>219</sup> practically to exterminate the hostages.

The Committee argued, therefore, that American Jewry should refrain from publicly expressing indignation so as to enable the Jews of Germany "to adjust themselves as much as conditions permit, to their new situation"<sup>220</sup> without providing Nazi Germany with a protest to justify the wrongs they perpetrated and to retaliate with harsher persecution.

Furthermore the Committee asserted that an official Jewish boycott of Germany would accentuate the breach which exists between Germans abroad who are opposed to Hitler and the Jews outside of Germany. "Out of a sense of injured patriotism these Germans...will be drawn into an alignment with the Hitler regime and against their Jewish fellow citizens in the various countries."<sup>221</sup> The Committee advised that the German non-Jews ought to be convinced that the Jew is not hostile to Germany and its people and that "we sincerely believe that the

present situation is only a tragic interlude" after which the  
fundamental rights of the Jews in Germany will be restored. <sup>222</sup>

The Committee policy envisaged that enlightened Christian opinion and representation by the American government would bring influence to bear upon the German government. Reinhold Niebuhr expressed the view that "all Jewish actions, whether boycotts or protests, are insignificant in their effect compared to what Christian pressure might be able to accomplish". <sup>223</sup> Furthermore, the American Jewish Committee announced that it has

requested the American government to make proper representations to the Government of Germany and we pledge ourselves to continued and unremitting efforts in behalf of the Jews of Germany. We confidently hope that enlightened opinion...can be made aware of the gross injustices of these Anti-Jewish actions...

Every proper step must be taken to remedy these injustices. Such efforts must at the same time be intelligent and reasonable. Prejudice must not be fought merely with appeals to passion and resentment... <sup>224</sup>

We have, however, sought every other honorable and legitimate means through the government of the United States...to bring to the attention of the Germany authorities the amazement and condemnation of the people of America.

Dismayed as we are that no evidence has as yet been given by the authorities of Germany of their intention to undo the incalculable injury...we nevertheless consider such forms of agitation...as boycotts, parades, mass-meetings and other similar demonstrations as futile. They serve only as an ineffectual channel for the release of emotion...and on the other hand, distract those who desire to help with more constructive efforts. <sup>225</sup>

The American Jewish Committee, furthermore, announced that "Nazism is not alone a Jewish problem, but a world menace". A Boycott by Jews, however, gives the impression that Nazism is solely a Jewish affair, whereas the evidence from within the borders of Germany is unmistakable that Nazism threatens the freedom of all. In view of this, while the American Jewish Committee recognizes that individuals have the right to refrain from purchasing German made goods, "it reaffirms its definite decision not to endorse or participate in a boycott organized by Jews in the U. S." <sup>226</sup>

In addition to these explanations justifying its opposition to public agitation by the Jews of America certain other moves may be said to have induced the American Jewish Committee's anti-boycott attitude. The Jewish upper socioeconomic class which the American Jewish Committee represented had assimilated the values of that strata of American society. Public manifestations such as the boycott are associated with the lower class behavior patterns of labor to whom the upper echelon of society is negatively disposed. The upper class level of Jewry recoiled from public demonstrations which would heighten the conspicuousness of the Jew and resisted the boycott in an effort to paralyze the prevailing image of the Jew as a radical, Communist sympathiser. <sup>227</sup> The upper class value structure moreover often precludes positive identification with the original group from which one emerges. The American Jewish

Committee did not reject the Jewish group but was committed with deeper allegiance to the value of its class and the will of the host culture. So self-conscious of the social visibility of the American Jew were they that not only did they endeavor to "ease off the Jewish boycott" because of its public character but made efforts as well to "reduce the number of Jews in high positions in the U. S."<sup>228</sup>

The American Jewish Committee therefore was American first and Jewish second, and inasmuch as the boycott was not in the United States' political interest, Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, who was to become president of the Committee, announced "I oppose an organized boycott which imperils the foreign relations of my country - which is America - with a government with whom we are at peace."<sup>229</sup> The Committee, in addition, opposed the boycott on the grounds that it was not in the United States' economic interest and will stimulate anti-Semitism in America.

The United States has for a number of years been exporting very much more than it has been importing from Germany. Should trade from Germany be curtailed as a result of retaliatory measures to such a degree that it will affect American merchants, they may point to the Jew as the cause of the already complicated economic situation. Furthermore, the United States has at least a billion dollars worth of investments in Germany. The collapse of German economic life would mean that their investments would...be valueless. Among the investors there are Jews who may be willing to make the sacrifice; but the non-Jews cannot be expected to accept their loss with-

out complaint. The hard-hit American investor may look for a scapegoat in the Jew.<sup>230</sup>

Alarmed at the possibility of increased anti-Semitism in America, the American Jewish Committee expressed the apprehension that a fate similar to that which had overtaken the German Jewish community may confront the Jew of America if he carries on with, and persists in, the boycott. Additionally the Committee pointed out that the boycott will result in retaliation against Jews and their interests in countries other than America.<sup>231</sup>

It is foolhardy to engage in a battle with 100,000,000 Germans all over the world when the Jew numbers but 15,000,000.

"The world is too well integrated economically not to have the boycott affect the wielders of it at least as much as those against whom it is being employed."<sup>232</sup>

The Jews of Mexico and Latvia for example who joined in the boycott of German merchandise are themselves being boycotted and have as a result almost entirely lost their markets.<sup>233</sup>

In many sections of America the identical situation obtains. Furthermore, the Committee indicated since the anti-German boycott has been extended to many countries of the world, the anti-Semitic myths, "that the Jews exert a... 'world economic influence' "<sup>234</sup>

and that the Jewish people constitute a "state within a state",<sup>235</sup> are again gaining currency. Walter Kappe, editor of the Deutsche Zeitung, the official organ of the Friends of the New Germany explained in an anti-boycott rally:

Who is the disturber of the peace? Who is acting contrary to the interests of this country? It is that portion of the Jewish people who has placed itself under the leadership of the boycott, General Samuel Untermyer and his lieutenants, Rabbi Wise and Congressman Sammy Dickstein; that portion of the Jewish people which constitutes a state within a state, who have set up here in New York, their own government, and are waging a private war against Germany.<sup>236</sup>

Unquestionably the anti-German boycott was not in the national interest of the United States.

Germany was purchasing far more from the United States than she was selling there. From this point of view, America, whose best foreign client was Germany, would sustain a considerable economic loss from a buying or selling boycott. Louis Zahne, leader of the Friends of the New Germany assailed the boycott as distinctly against United States trade interests:

Germany has been a tremendous buyer of materials of which we here in America have the greatest available surplus - surplus which make a great problem in our country. The boycott is an economic fallacy. It is an economic insanity. The inevitable result of the boycott will be that Germany will buy where she can also sell.<sup>237</sup>

The cotton producers of the south, the oil producers of Texas, the copper producers of Utah and Montana could not be expected to look favorably upon such an enterprise as a boycott. "A great industrialized nation in the midst of a modern industrialized world is an organic member of the whole industrial and commercial body. You could not inflict injury on that member and not feel the reaction throughout the whole

body." <sup>238</sup>

Secretary of State Cordell Hull declared that a boycott is an unwarranted interference with the normal flow of international trade. American industry stands to lose at a rate of five dollars for every one if German imports are boycotted, as Germany would inevitably retaliate. In addition, many American firms had large investments in Germany and had built costly factories there. <sup>239</sup> America's efforts to recover from the agonies of an intensely acute economic depression made the anti-German boycott seem "economically unwise".

By sponsoring the economic blockade of Nazi Germany, the American Jewish Congress, found itself endorsing a movement favored by the masses of American Jewry but which evidently conflicted with the best interests of the United States. It was imperative therefore for it to respond in such a way so as to counterpoise the government's contentions as well as neutralizing the Committee's vituperations.

Seeing that the economic expostulation was hardly convincing the boycott advocates concentrated for the most part upon political reasoning in favor of boycotting Germany. It was pointed out however that the boycott which seeks to prevent American purchasing power from being spent abroad encouraged domestic spending thereby enhancing the nation's economic recovery. <sup>240</sup> But the person of Hitler and the Nazi



Regime were the major targets. The chairman of the Joint Boycott Committee, Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum, asserted in an address delivered at the Peace and Democracy Rally at Madison Square Garden:

The anti-Nazi boycott started with Hitler and will end with Hitler. It has been one of the most amazing feats in history. It has proved a relentless grinding mill, in which Hitlerism must turn to dust...The only means of averting this great disaster to all mankind...The only peaceful weapon which will lead Hitlerism to its doom. The only logical answer to the Nuremberg laws, to the Aryan madness, to the Concentration Camps and Nazi threats, is the Boycott. The only practical way to safeguard religion, freedom of conscience, democracy and the reign of human decency...the only way to prevent war ...is through an economic blockade of Nazi Germany. 241

Stephen S. Wise introduced by Dr. Tenenbaum as "the  
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chosen leader of world Jewry" addressed the same rally in these words:

Our moral and economic boycott means that the governments may continue their official relations with one another, but we the American people remain free to take every step, moral and economic, that shall indicate that we American citizens have nothing in common with the Nazi government and we Americans refuse to hold any commerce or traffic with it.

Far from being disloyal Americans in refusing in any way to deal with the Nazi Germans, to buy its goods, and to use its services, those Americans are disloyal, those Americans are treasonable, who for the sake of material gain or commercial bondage or any grounds whatsoever, continue to maintain such relations with the Hitler government, Loyal Americans, loyal are we, not they, we who are ready at every cost to maintain, to coordinate a boy-

cott which if it were shared by all the civilized peoples of the earth would at one and the same time destroy the Hitler government and make free the great German people.

...even a defensive war against Hitler may be avoided if the nations unitedly act to make further aggression by the Hitler regime impossible. Instead of disarming Hitler after another war, instead of disarming Nazism after another war shall have begun, the Hitlerism which menaces civilization and all that civilization prizes can and must be disarmed before it is able to wage war.

The boycott, moral and economic, is a warless war against the war makers. The boycott is a moral and economic method making war impossible.<sup>243</sup>

The American Jewish Congress constantly emphasized this theme in its boycott publication "Boycott Nazi Goods and Services."

Remember: the fewer goods Germany sells, the less money Germany has with which to buy the weapons of war; the more seriously you thus curtail Hitler's war program; the more quickly you spread the showdown between Hitler and the German people whom he has betrayed.<sup>244</sup>

We'll keep on building it /the boycott/ until the 'made in Germany' label has the same significance to the people of America as the skull and crossed bones has on the poison bottle. We want no Nazi poison in America, in the world.<sup>245</sup>

The American Jewish Congress offered publicity as one of its reasons for being. However, "an essential ingredient of the boycott action is publicity."<sup>246</sup> Forasmuch as the American Jewish Congress employed publicity as its major weapon in the political battle it was waging upon its adversary, it decidedly held the strategic advantage.

Accordingly, the American Jewish Congress anathema-

tized in the press, at rallies and demonstrations those who "denounce the boycott...as treason to the American interests" as "supersensitive...superpatriots", "pussyfooting meddlers and unauthorized shtadlanim".<sup>247</sup> They "pretend to measure the advisability of boycott by the yardstick of so-called American economic interest".<sup>248</sup> These "blind men...fail to see the great material as well as moral force of the boycott".<sup>249</sup>

And now we come to a much more serious charge. We advocate, we are told, a 'Jewish Boycott', and a Jewish Boycott is likely to defeat its own purpose. If this shall imply that we seek to limit the boycott solely to Jewish participation, then we must repudiate such an insinuation as groundless. We advocate not a Jewish Boycott but a Boycott by Jews.

True, Hitlerism is a menace to the world and not only to the Jews. But while the Boycott is the concern of all,...it is a matter of life and death to the Jews. Let us not hide our identity.<sup>250</sup>

The boycott advocates argued that no action by Jews could aggravate the condition of the Jews of Germany for they "can meet with no severer treatment".<sup>251</sup> The Congress President Stephen S. Wise, condemned the silence of the American Jewish Committee which had "put aside...self defense...with the timidity of incomprehension and the delays of self-distrust."<sup>252</sup>

The American Jewish Committee resisted the American Jewish Congress incessantly and could never be reconciled with the idea of the boycott although it was overwhelmingly commended by American Jewry. The Committee's policies relative to the boycott, therefore, set it at further odds with the American

Jewish masses and widened the breach between them.

It was the intention of the American Jewish Congress not only to replace the American Jewish Committee as America's major Jewish institution by sponsoring the boycott but at the same time to exert pressure upon the Nazi government to reassess its policy relative to the Jewish people. Assuredly it cannot be maintained that the boycott had any lasting effect upon the long range Nazi program for the annihilation of the Jews. At the same time it cannot be denied, for the little it is worth, that the boycott was to some extent a moral success in that it contributed to the unification of the bulk of the American Jewish Community at a time of severe social stress.

With regard to its material affect upon the German economy, the American Jewish Congress in its publications and elsewhere asserted that the Nazi government sustained considerable economic losses due to the blockade of German trade. The Congress pointed out that "the boycott against Nazi goods and services has had a disastrous effect upon Germany...According to the latest figures published by the Department of Commerce, Germany continues to lose ground in the world export trade."<sup>253</sup> League of Nations' statistics showed that Germany's place in the world economy declined<sup>254</sup> and a memorandum prepared for Hitler cites the "anti-German trade boycott as an explanation". The New York Times in a similar vein reported that "Germany's exports have dwindled to a low point because

of boycotts, the government's gold reserves have shrunk... and the country generally is in the grip of the severest economic crisis that Chancellor Hitler and the Nazi party have had to face."<sup>255</sup>

Unquestionably Germany was in the "grip of an economic crisis" and there may be legitimate justification for assuming that the boycott contributed to that crisis. If the economic decline was accelerated because of the boycott of German goods and services alternate avenues of argument may be pursued to discover whether the boycott ameliorated or exacerbated the condition of the Jews of Germany. It may be reasoned that the Nazi regime, frustrated at its inability to draw funds from abroad through customary channels, was compelled to turn upon its Jewish residents more suddenly and more stringently than it intended initially for sources of revenue for Germany's rearmament in preparation for war. Desperate to relieve its economic distress aggravated by the boycott, Germany was obliged to forward the date of its declaration of war thereby allowing less time for escape, the result of which was the magnification of the dimensions of the catastrophe. Conversely it may be reasoned that with the boycott's acceleration of the economic decline of Germany rearmamentation was retarded and the date for the declaration of war in accordance with Hitler's plans, perforce, postponed. Following from this the war's delay brought an additional period of

time for Jews - albeit few in number - to escape.

In either circumstance the effect upon Nazi action and intent proved insignificant. The reprobation leveled at the Third Reich from the rostrum of the League of Nations similarly proved unavailing. Without the instrumentality to enforce the implementation of Germany's assurances, the League disconcerted the Nazi government not in the least. Even with regard to Upper Silesia, Germany's de jure compliance with the League's directives never became de facto and the Jews of that territory were hardly in better standing than Jews elsewhere in Germany. The downward course of events could not be arrested by any course of action on the part of American Jewish organizations whether openly - by political representation at the League of Nations and by means of the economic blockade - or privately by personal negotiations and diplomacy; the former course was undertaken by the American Jewish Congress, the latter by the American Jewish Committee. The Third Reich remained imperviously resistant to all attempts to impede the fulfillment of its design.

As concerns the American Jewish Community during the period of the rise of the Third Reich, the instrumentalities employed by the two competing bodies in dealing with the crises occasioned a political transformation in the American Jewish Community's power structure. The unpublic character of the American Jewish Committee's private negotiations and

its opposition to mass action when the temper of the times distinctly demanded it <sup>256</sup> contributed to the Committee's alienation from the bulk of American Jewry. The ideology of democracy and public action prevailing in American society from the onset of Wilsonian Democracy through Roosevelt's New Deal, ran counter to American Jewish Committee principles thereby intensifying the divorcement of that body from the masses. <sup>257</sup> As various groups proceeded to separate themselves from the American Jewish Committee, it sought to arrest the trend by reconstituting its organizational structure to provide for wider contact with the Jewish community. But the effort was too little and long overdue; Jewry had found leadership elsewhere. The American Jewish Congress adopted and applied the prevailing ideology in its encounter with the crises of German Jewry and succeeded in supplanting the American Jewish Committee as the leading agency in the American Jewish community during the rise of the Third Reich. East European Jewry had finally established a firm beachhead upon American shores.

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