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American Jewish Committee, 1933-1935.

Dear Rabbi Brickner:

April 26, 1933.

As you probably know, Dr. Adler was virtually bedridden for three weeks and although now up and about and feeling much better, he has been ordered by his physicial to suspend all activity for a week or so. He has therefore asked me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 16th instant on his behalf.

You have learned from both Dr. Adler and me that neither the B'nai B'rith nor the American Jewish Committee was responsible for the break up of the joint body that had been created of the three organizations to deal with the German situation and that the American Jewish Committee is ready and eager to secure united action in the present situation.

It is very difficult, through the mails, to clarify our respective minds regarding the subject of "an organization that can speak in the name of the Jewish people of this country". There have been a number of attempts in the past three decades or more to bring about unity in the Jewish community, so-called. That was the central purpose for the creation of the American Jewish Committee, as indicated in Dr. Adler's address delivered at our Twenty-Fifth Anniversary meeting, copy of which I enclose. Incidentally you will see from this that you are laboring under a misapprehension in believing that the American Jewish Committee is a self constituted body. The American Jewish Committee has not however succeeded in bringing unity in the field of protecting the civil and religious rights of Jews, to say nothing of unity in other fields of activity. Dr. J. L. Magnes in his youthful and optimistic days attempted to bring about "unity" in one city through the Kehillah, and as you know that was a failure too. Is there any city in the United States today where there exists an organization that can speak in the name of the local Jewish community? And yet you are optimistic enough to believe that an organization can be created covering the whole territory of the United States with its hundreds of Jewish communities and its countless number of organizations, -- an organization that will speak in the name of the Jewish people. It is of course a consummation devoutly to be wished but in my opinion it will never be more than that. It seems quite simple when it forms the subject of a sermon in the pulpit or an editorial in a Jewish weekly, but it bristles with difficulties and complexities when subjected to a pragmatic test. You know as well as I do how fundamental the differences are of Jewish Weltanschauungen, to say nothing of differences of interests, temperament, methodology, etc., etc.

The only instance of united action in Jewish life during our generation was the war and post war relief work abroad. The material relief needs are the one thing on which we can all unite to a fair degree, even though in that direction there have been many differences. At the present juncture there does not seem to be unity even in that direction. There are several organizations that are making appeals for the material relief of German Jews, namely, the American Jewish Congress, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Hias, the B'nai B'rith.

Because of fundamental differences it has been impossible thus far to secure even cooperation, to say nothing of the organization of one body that shall speak for all of the people of America. The latter, frankly, I regard as a will o' the wisp. Cooperation, on the other hand, is within the range of possibility; so let us work for that for the time being. Perhaps some day the Jews of this country may be sufficiently homogeneous to make possible one body that shall speak for it. I am not so sure that I should welcome that day because I have the feeling that the Jewish community would be a pretty dead sort of thing. Virtues carried to extremes become vices. As chauvinism is the vice of patriotism, so I believe unity may become

Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner
4-26-33

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the vice of cooperation because it is likely to reflect nothing but a compromise of inaction.

The practical things to do now are two, -- one, to secure genuine cooperation (not lip service) among the three organizations specifically engaged in this field, and two, the consent of all other organizations, local and national, as well as private persons (like Samuel Untermyer), rabbis (like Margolis of New York who sent a cable to the Pope), editors of Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish weeklies (who say what they please regardless of consequences), veteran societies (who promoted a boycott), and Jewish Congressmen (who introduced injudicious bills and resolutions), not to act independently but to place themselves under the aegis of the joint conference of the three organizations. This is what we had hoped and planned to do, and probably would have succeeded in doing had not suddenly one of the organizations gone off of its own accord against the entreaties of the other two, with demonstrations. All the responsible organizations of Europe, the Zionists included, warned against the condemned this action.

Very sincerely yours,

Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner,
Euclid Avenue Temple,
Euclid at East 82nd Street
Cleveland, Ohio
MDW



Guggenheimer & Untermeyer
30 Pine Street, New York

May 4, 1933.

Morris Waldman, Esq.
American Jewish Committee,
171 Madison Avenue, New York City

Dear Sir:

The circular letter of May 1, 1933, signed by you as Secretary, together with the accompanying report of your Committee, have just reached me. I quote from that letter as follows:

"Above all, it is imperative that in this grave and highly delicate situation no individual should speak or act for the Jewish people but all should entrust the responsibility to recognized organizations like the American Jewish Committee and the B'nai B'rith who have been dealing with these problems for many years."

It is with great hesitation and deep concern that I feel constrained to take issue with your distinguished body, representing, as it does, the best thought and highest influence in American Jewry, the integrity of whose conclusions I do not question, although I may differ from those conclusions.

As I view the tragic predicament of our unfortunate brethren in Germany, whom it is our duty and to our self-interest to protect, the report of your Committee offers no hope for relief and no alternative other than through the boycott.

I have given considerable study to this subject and have gathered a mass of information, all leading to the conclusion that the Hitler Party is bent upon the extermination of the Jews in Germany, or upon driving them out of the country. The men in control are bigoted fanatics to whom neither reason, justice nor humanity makes the slightest appeal. Their hatred is deep-seated and nothing but the fear of consequences will affect them. With all due respect I therefore differ from the policy that has been recommended and is being pursued by the American Jewish Committee and shall feel at liberty, but always on my own responsibility and without assuming to act for the Jewish people, to make such recommendations as in my judgment will best conserve the interests of the Jews in Germany.

Morris Waldman, Esq.

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I am fortified in my course of action by a large body of the Jewish people in this country - a body vastly larger though less influential than that represented by your Committee.

Permit me to repeat my deep regret at the differences in policy that seem to separate us.

Very truly yours,

(sgd) SAMUEL UNTERMYER

SU-R



C O P Y

May 9, 1933

My dear Mr. Untermeyer:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your esteemed favor of the 4th instant which has only just arrived, having been addressed mistakenly to 121 Madison Avenue. I shall present it to our Executive Committee at their next meeting.

In the meantime, may I express my profound regret that you do not approve of the position of the American Jewish Committee with respect to massmeetings, other violent forms of demonstrations, and punitive expeditions. It is exceedingly difficult, you will agree with me, to argue the merits or demerits of such tactics through the mails (in the final analysis our differences of opinion revolve only around the question of tactics). All that I should want to emphasize here is that our position has been governed not only by the wishes of all elements of the Jewish population in Germany, but by the unanimous advice of responsible organizations in England, France, and other countries who are especially engaged in the work of protecting the civil and religious rights of Jews. Only in this morning's Jewish Daily Bulletin is a cable dispatch from London on the middle column of the first page with the caption "Chief Rabbi Hertz Aligned With American Jewish Committee Against Demonstarations". We have been further reenforced in this position by most distinguished and influential non-Jewish groups in this country, who, stimulated by us, are working energetically to mobilize general sentiment in protest against the medieval practices of the Nazis. We have also been persuaded in this course by the official authorities at Washington, who, we have been assured, are doing everything in their power.

Reliable persons who have been in close touch with the German authorities have advised us that the situation, grave as it is, is not hopeless; that avenues of approach toward a mitigation of the terrible anti-Jewish measures are not closed but that it is imperative, if results are to be attained, that actions tending to further irritation be avoided. Only yesterday an outstanding German Jew now in Paris actively engaged in efforts to ameliorate the situation, in a letter describing that situation in great detail said

"If the whole world's indignation at the happenings in Germany discontinues and the world will stop stigmatizing present Germany, then and only then, it will be possible to bring about some alleviation. Only then we may perhaps hope that the percentages will be somewhat increased and the lot of the Jew (businessman, employee, and workman) eased. Even so the Jewish tragedy will be monstrous, but at least we shall be able to do something for the German Jews in Germany itself."

Strong as your convictions, which we respect, may be, I keenly regret, frankly, that a man of your outstanding position in the community whose utterances undoubtedly exert a great influence upon public opinion, did not consult with the American Jewish Committee to ascertain the reasons for their attitude, and what methods they have been following, before giving public utterance to views which, you must have known, would be widely published and profoundly influence public sentiment.

C O P Y

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Samuel Untermyer, Esq.
5-9-33

I venture to speak so frankly to you not because of pride of opinion, but because of the profound concern which we share with you for the welfare of the Jews of Germany and of the Jewish people throughout the world, which I fear can only be injured and not benefitted by giving vent to the strong emotion which we all feel equally. It is impossible to predict what methods will be effective in the premises. We are dealing with a unique and unprecedented calamity, different in character and extent from anything that has happened to our people in the last two thousand years. As Alienists, psychiatrists and philosophers have pointed out, the German people are suffering from mass paranoia, delusions of persecution (on part of the countries of the world induced by the alleged machinations of the Jewish world conspiracy) and the racial boastfulness which is the defense mechanism of inferiority complexes. Confidentially, Victor Ridder, the other day, stated that the German people sincerely believe all the hideous absurdities charged against the Jews. God forbid that we Jews should be seized with similar psychosis.

The methods employed in case of discrimination and violence in countries like Poland and Roumania may not only be ineffective, but may be altogether wrong tactics. We are not even certain as to the effectiveness of protests in Parliaments and Congresses or even of informal or formal representations on the part of governments, can they be persuaded to make formal representations, though we have been strongly urging such courses of action.

You say you are fortified in your course of action by a large body of Jewish people. I venture to remind you such popular support does not necessarily make your course right. It is hardly necessary to remind a master of public affairs like yourself that the mass of people feel more strongly than they think. Many of the great creative figures of the world to whose genius human progress is due were in the minority, and usually only secured posthumous endorsement of their ideas.

Permit me respectfully to remind you, too, that Hitler has a large body behind him in Germany, vastly larger than Stresemann or Bruening had.

I am sure our Committee would gladly welcome a conference with you at any time in this or other matters.

I am

Very sincerely yours,

Samuel Untermyer, Esq.,
120 Broadway,
New York, N. Y.
MDW

January 22, 1934.

Mr. Morris D. Waldman, Secretary,
The American Jewish Committee,
171 Madison Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Waldman:

I have seen a printed copy of the statement of the American Jewish Committee on the subject of the anti-German Boycott. I would appreciate very much if you would let me know whether that statement has been circulated among the members of the American Jewish Committee and to what extent, for if it has, the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League will feel obligated to answer it in public.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK

Vice-President.

The Temple,
Ansel and E. 105th St.,
Cleveland, Ohio.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

171 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK

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NEW YORK, N. Y.

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MORRIS WOLF,	PHILADELPHIA, PA.

January 23, 1934.

Dear Rabbi Silver:

Replying to your inquiry of the 22d instant, I beg to state that last summer we printed a statement explaining the position of the American Jewish Committee with respect to an organized Jewish boycott in the expectation that this would be circulated among the corporate and sustaining members of the Committee. This statement, however, was not circulated, not even among the three hundred or so corporate members of the Committee because the Executive Committee feared that any extensive circulation even under the seal of confidence and injunction against publication might nevertheless lead to its publication, and this accentuated the difference of point of view which exist in our community and lead to unseemly public dissension which would be harmful to the Jewish cause. In possibly a dozen instances where friends sought from us an explanation for our known position on the boycott, we sent them a copy for their confidential information.

This statement was referred to by Dr. Adler in his report at the Annual Meeting of the Committee held on December 10th, and at the specific request of those present he read the statement, but it was not given to the press and has not been incorporated in our printed Annual Report. The Annual Meeting, by the way, was in camera.

Personally for your information, I regret that the statement has not been circulated among all the members of our Committee, even though I honor the considerations which actuated our Executive Committee. I am convinced that the organized Jewish boycott as it has been promoted and conducted is a sad mistake not only because it has been quite ineffective, but because of the harmful repercussions it has produced. May I venture to remark that even if it had been circulated among the members of the American Jewish Committee as a confidential communication, I should regard

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

1-23-34

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it as a very questionable procedure on the part of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights or any other organization or individual to publish it or to discuss it in public.

I was very glad to read your views under the caption "The Emergent Community" in last Sunday's issue of the Jewish Daily Bulletin. I have become quite weary of the Shibboleth of "unity in Israel" and I have expressed my views on this subject not only in private but in public, the last time at the annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee in 1932. I had occasion to say this months ago in a letter to Rabbi Brickner of Cleveland, copy of which I enclose. I warmly endorse any program that will make the world safe for differences. I even have the feeling that public emphasis on the differences in Jewish life would benefit the Jewish people instead of, as is generally supposed, injure them. What is lacking, however, is an inclination on the part of some people to consult with recognized bodies before voluntarily assuming grave public responsibilities. I made this clear in a letter I wrote to Mr. Untermeyer on May 9th, copy of which I enclose.

With Kind regards, I am

Very sincerely yours,



Norman Dworkin

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver,
The Temple,
Ansel and E. 105th St.,
Cleveland, Ohio.
MDW

January 23, 1935.

Mr. Morris D. Waldman, Secretary,
American Jewish Committee,
171 Madison Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mr. Waldman:

Cleveland has a very large Hungarian population. A committee of the Hungarians in the city called on me this morning stating that they would like to arrange a mass meeting in the city celebrating what they regard as a new change of policy on the part of the Hungarian Government towards the Jews. That is to say, a friendlier and more cooperative one. They feel that the occasion is significant enough to call public attention to it. The Jewish members on the committee feel that it will be particularly helpful as it will call attention to the contrast of the attitude of the German Government towards the Jews of Germany.

What are the real facts as regards this changed attitude on the part of the Hungarian Government? Is it merely a political maneuver? Is there any merit to the suggestion of the local committee that such a meeting should be held in order to strengthen those forces in Hungary who are working for a complete reconciliation with the Jews? I would appreciate receiving from you any information which you may have on the subject and any advice. I am to give an answer to the committee by Wednesday.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK

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FELIX M. WARBURG,	NEW YORK, N. Y.
MORRIS WOLF,	PHILADELPHIA, PA.

January 29, 1935.

Dear Rabbi Silver:

Please accept my apology for not having answered your letter of January 23 sooner. I have just returned from a ten-day trip through the south, and your letter arrived while I was gone.

There has been no recent change in the policy of the Hungarian government toward the Jews. This attitude today is the same as that in 1924. However, this policy is certainly in contrast to that of Nazi Germany, Austria, Roumania, and other European jurisdictions. For that reason, it may be useful to emphasize the difference in a meeting of non-Jews and Jews. The occasion could not, I think, be a change in policy. It should rather celebrate the comparative liberality of the Hungarian government's policies. Certainly, since this proposal is made by non-Jewish Hungarians in Cleveland, it could not but be advantageous from the local, and American, point of view. As you know, Hungarians believe firmly in the revision of the Versailles Treaty; and in that respect they find a natural kinship with Germany. Anything which would serve to emphasize the value of a government policy friendly toward the Jews and other minorities would be helpful.

However, we cannot be too sanguine about the Hungarian condition, even though at present it is in healthy contrast with other situations. First of all, there is the possibility that Prime Minister Goemboes may not remain long in power. In fact, a meeting of this sort may, when the news is received in Hungary, help to sustain the government in its tottering position. The latest reports show not only that two of the most influential Cabinet Members have resigned, but that the friends and supporters of Count Stephen Bethlen are gaining in power. Count Bethlen had no disagreement with the present Prime Minister on the question of foreign policy. But, he is more closely identified in domestic affairs with the aristocratic tradition. Goemboes is, despite his fascist code, a self made man and a democrat. His second wife was the daughter of a Jewish champagne merchant. She died last summer. Of course, Goemboes' past is

none too favorable toward the Jews. When Bela Kun set up a Communist dictatorship following the war, Goemboes united with the ruthless anti-Semitic societies to overthrow the insurrection. The nationalistic government which then assumed power initiated a "white terror" which, among its other oppressive activities, purged public offices and the army of Jews, restricted their number at the universities, and withdrew government monopolies and trade licenses. Anti-Semitism was thus made a guiding principle of this national awakening.

Yet, the present government while identifying itself with Germany in matters of foreign policy, has rather vigorously suppressed Nazi activity especially where it affected the Jews. In a public address on November 13, 1933, the Prime Minister declared that equal rights for all citizens of all faiths was a cardinal principle of his government. Earlier in the year, the use of the swastika was prohibited as the emblem of an alien state. In July the Hungarian Nazi party was dissolved by order of the Minister of the Interior.

Despite this effort on the part of the government, anti-Semitism is constantly aroused by the agitation of Nazi propagandists. Especially among the university students this strong feeling is felt. Last November, there were serious riots at the University of Budapest, directed against the liberal policy of the government toward the Jews. Following these attacks, a memorandum of "demand" was submitted to the Ministry of Education, seeking the strict enforcement of a numerus clausus law and a boycott of the Jewish students. When Goemboes received the nationalist students and condemned the riots, disorders broke out anew at the universities of Budapest, Szegeg and Bebrece. The universities were later closed.

Hungarian anti-Semitism has never been so much a racial as a religious issue, nor has it taken the thorough going character of the German type. As a result, the Jewish population, well-assimilated and sustained by the liberal policy of the government, has been free from general fear.

Nevertheless, it would perhaps be premature to envisage any permanent condition at this time. There are too many cross currents which tend to make our conclusions of today outmoded by tomorrow. First of all, the economic situation of Hungary can lead to severe disturbances. The reform proposed following the war to turn over part of the large estates to the proletariat has not succeeded. Perhaps 1,500,000 farmers have no land or too little land to make a living on. In the light of this fact, and considering the amount of agitation which is being carried on, it would be best in the meeting of praise not to suggest an unqualified endorsement of whatever course Hungary decides to take.

And yet I think it would have a fine effect upon the situation there if the news that in Cleveland a meeting of Jews and non-Jews, Hungarians and others, were held to pay tribute to the country which

has remained true to certain civilized principles could be transmitted back to Budapest.

Very sincerely yours,

Leon Dwaedman

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver,
The Temple,
East 105th St. at Ansel Road,
Cleveland, Ohio

MDW:mew

