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American Jewish Committee, 1936-1937.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

461 FOURTH AVENUE

NEW YORK, N. Y.



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December 31, 1936

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Friend:

We have been informed that there is about to be published a popular edition of an English translation of Hitler's MEIN KAMPF. A natural impulse has prompted some persons to request that efforts be made to suppress the book. Any step of this kind which would violate the fundamental American principle of freedom of press is regarded by the Committee as obnoxious as well as unwise. Avoidance of advertising, however, is not a violation of this principle, and, in line with this thought, it is respectfully suggested that no reference be made to the book in sermons and lectures. We venture to hope that the suggestion will be received by you graciously and with approval.

Very sincerely yours,

Issued by
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
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DIGEST OF AMERICAN EDITORIAL OPINION
ON TOPICS OF INTEREST TO JEWS

Number Three

March 16, 1937

La Guardia Address Arouses Much Comment

New York's Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia was the subject of much comment in the press when, in a speech before a Jewish women's organization, he proposed to make an exhibit of Adolf Hitler in a "Chamber of Horrors" at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. "I'd like to have a Chamber of Horrors and as a climax," he said, "I'd have in it a figure of that brown-shirted fanatic who is now menacing the peace of the world. I'd give them an exhibit they would look at and learn."

This remark touched off a storm of epithets in the Nazi press in Germany, and resulted in an apology to the German Government by Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Several days later, Ambassador Dodd brought to the attention of the German Government the torrent of abuse heaped upon American individuals and institutions, and elicited an explanation from Foreign Minister von Neurath.

Comment in the American press was varied. The Times pointed out: "One may as a private American citizen say what one thinks about a totalitarian State, whereas in accepting such high office as the Mayoralty of the greatest of cities one has to accept with its honors its restraints -- in other words, must adopt its urban manners, toward the rest of the world. It is a real sacrifice that an official has often to make."

The New Yorker Staats Zeitung, German-Language daily owned by Victor Ridder, was outspoken in its criticism, accusing Mr. La Guardia of "bad manners the like of which New York has not seen in a long time."

The New York Daily News gave a political note to the incident, declaring: "We don't think the Mayor's tongue slipped.... or that he spoke before thinking. He is a shrewd politician; he expects to run for re-election this year; there are some 2,000,000 people of all or part Jewish blood in New York City. Hitler, prime present-day Jew-baiter, is a natural target for La Guardia. We agree with the Mayor's general criticism of Hitler. The German-Americans who are protesting the Mayor's remarks might reflect that in Germany La Guardia, who has some Jewish blood, would not even be allowed to vote. Anybody who likes such a system is welcome to it; we think our system is much better. Anybody, too, who rejoices in the fact that Hitler is threatening to crash the world into another war can go ahead and rejoice; we can't."

Ernest L. Meyer, Columnist in the New York Post, considered the Chamber of Horrors proposal seriously, "for an honest World's Fair should exhibit not only the beauty but the blunders in the works of mankind"; and he suggested that all visitors be given free passes to the exhibit. The press later reported that a well-known showman had deposited \$5,000 with the World's Fair Corporation as a preliminary to staging such an exhibit.

Syndicated columnists debated Mayor La Guardia's declarations. Westbrook Pegler declared that "as a result of this crack we have had another demonstration of the fierce vituperation and wild recklessness, the filth and slander which the Nazis use in lieu of argument when they are sore. It must be remembered that anything which is print-

ed in a Nazi newspaper represents Adolf Hitler's sentiments on the subjects under discussion, because the papers are strictly dictated by Joe Goebbels, the sinister little man in command of the propaganda department. So when Der Angriff says in a tone of mysterious menace, 'We could take an interest in the United States and United States affairs which would not be pleasant,' that is not merely some editor speaking but Hitler himself." And General Hugh S. Johnson, former NRA administrator, contrasted German resentment of the Mayor's remarks with American apathy in the face of Nazi anti-American diatribes by recalling that "Mark Twain explained it once and for all. He said that when a man is called a name in which there is not a shadow of truth -- that is a joke. It is a dirty dig that hits the bulls-eye that calls out the reserves."

Heywood Broun, on the other hand, questioned the advisability of the Mayor's remarks. "When Mayor La Guardia gets into a lather about the very definite evils of the Nazi regime in Germany," the columnist said, "I suggest that he let some newspaper commentator take over his thoughts and release them.I'm afraid that the end result of Fiorello's foray will be nothing more than another letter from poor Mr. Hull and a new rallying cry for the Hitlerites and, worse than that, the half-Hitlerites in this country."

The Hollywood (Calif.) Citizen-News remarked that "in this country, people say much worse things than that about our own country's Chief Executive and it passes unnoticed. That's because our Chief Executives have some bigness. While Hitler tries to contend that the remark was an insult to his nation, it should be well to keep in mind that Hitler is a dictator and acts for himself and not for the German people. Americans respect them."

A middle-of-the-road position is taken by the New London (Conn.) Day, which, after balancing the Mayor's remarks with the Nazi replies, declared: "There is little doubt that the Mayor would have been displaying more sense if he had suppressed whatever feelings he has toward Hitler in this public address, because of the high position he holds. His remarks, in other words, directly involve the federal government, in the eyes of Germany. Yet there is no doubt that it is his right to criticize Hitler if he wishes to; the question is one of fitness or good taste of the remarks coming from the Mayor of the largest city in the United States. Of course what he said is no worse than the things many other persons have said in this country about the Nazi leader, if as bad. Originating with the Mayor of New York they carry more sting."

The Hartford (Conn.) Times points out that although "formal apology by our State Department was in order," the incident nevertheless "illustrates how such too free use of freedom of speech is something that can happen only in this country. Men dare to speak their minds. The concentration camp does not lurk in the background. If, on occasion, that leads to abusive language, that is a small price to pay for free exchange of opinion."

The Shreveport (La.) Journal saw no reason for the State Department's apology, aside from "diplomatic usage." "If the State Department undertook to express formal regrets every time an American says something that gets under the thin skin of the Nazi dictator," the paper adds, "the wires and mails would be overburdened 365 days of the year -- for Hitlerism is everywhere in this country regarded as an abhorrent thing." As for Nazi attacks on La Guardia and Governor Lehman, the Journal pronounces them "as silly as was the demand for an official 'apology' from the government at Washington. It is almost as silly as the making of the apology by the Department of State."

Conjecturing on the real reasons behind the unprecedented attacks on Mr. La Guardia in Germany, the New York Herald Tribune remarks: "It can hardly have been designed merely to silence the Mayor; obviously ineffective for that end, it has served only to swallow up and excuse the Mayor's original indiscretion. It cannot have been intended to uphold the dignity of the German nation abroad; it has had exactly the opposite

result. Was it a reaction purely emotional, reflecting the intense nervous strain under which the modern German state is alone kept going? Perhaps; yet the Germans maintain a Minister of Propaganda to make sure that there will be no purely emotional outbursts save for some calculated end. Is it possible that the emotional pressures are rising in Germany to a point where some convenient 'enemy' has to be discovered against whom they can be harmlessly discharged? Has Dr. Goebbels picked on Mayor La Guardia deliberately as a safer substitute for Stalin? It is a fantastic explanation; but ours is a fantastic world."

And the Watertown (N.Y.) Times asks: "Is it not about time that someone told the truth about Hitler and told it in a way no one could mistake? Mayor La Guardia voiced the opinion of the great majority of the American people and what is more he told the exact truth. Hitler is a fanatic and he is menacing the peace of the world. The German people should be made to know that as long as they continue the Nazi regime in office, they are subject to condemnation on the part of the peace-loving people of the world."

Germany's Shaky Financial Structure Causes Suspicion

The condition of Nazi finances has aroused suspicions as to Germany's next move on the international scene. The New York Times points out, however, that the current financial situation in the Reich seems "to be forcing at least a change of emphasis in German economic policy. Industrial interests, which appear to be under the leadership of Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, the Economics Minister, maintain that the armament and self-containment programs have been pushed too far even for their own purpose. A Germany powerful in war must be a Germany powerful in industry and trade. It must be a Germany with cash and credit and foreign exchange. This faction insists, therefore, that fewer importations must be diverted to armament and to the building up of 'Ersatz' or substitute manufacture, and more must be in the form of raw materials for Germany's export industries. The ultimate aim of such a program, it will be seen, is the same as that of the program already being pursued -- a strong Germany."

Meantime, George Berkalew writes in the Magazine of Wall Street, "seventy per cent of German industry is working solely, or as a result, of the rearmament program. Any let-up in rearmament would occasion widespread unemployment and engender a credit inflation of terrific proportions. The Nazi regime is desperately in need, not only of raw materials but of markets." And the Elizabeth (N.J.) Journal reiterates that "Germany's problem is economic stability and not prestige. Even if the Germans have been drugged with propaganda to a point where they are insensible to their physical needs, it is more and more evident that the country is economically bad off. There is not enough food produced in its boundaries to supply 66,000,000 people and with the present policies of the Hitler regime there can be little money to buy it. German industries have been paying their own subsidy taxes so long that if American business men could see their account books they would wonder how they can continue to operate."

In view of this condition, continued talk of an impending loan to Germany takes on added significance. Discussing these reports, M. S. Rukeyser writes in the New York American that foreign propagandists "want us to put up the money, in the interest of world peace, to provide Germany with raw materials either to stave off an economic collapse or a war in behalf of greater resources." But Mr. Rukeyser points to official Nazi figures showing that the proportion of domestically produced foodstuffs in total consumption, per capita consumption, and agricultural production, have all increased. "Until Germany itself provides different figures," he concludes, "it does not seem reasonable that Americans should concern themselves with rescue loans."

King Cotton and Herr Hitler

A question uttered by Dr. Otto Dietrich, Nazi press overseer, has aroused the ire of the New Orleans Item. Dr. Dietrich had asked, "How long shall America's grasping cotton kings preserve power over the world in 'white gold?'" And the Item

replies: "Every country in the world that thinks it has any chance of growing usable cotton has been trying for many years, as hard as it knows how, to grow it in competition with our crop. Our crop is for sale to anybody in the world who can pay for it at the market-price. We should like to sell a great deal more of it to Germany. We thought everybody in business knew this. Dr. Dietrich does not appear to be an expert on such matters. Much talk recently has been heard of a conciliatory trade-spirit in Germany, of a disposition to abandon chip-on-the-shoulder nationalism which has made hard economic problems for the Hitler Government. But if that spirit is to work any beneficial wonders, the Dietrichs will have to be muzzled."

Wickham Steed Says Britain and France Unite in Rejecting Nazism

In a featured article in the New York Times Magazine, Wickham Steed (former editor of the London Times) reported that the "main fundamental" of the peoples of Great Britain and of other self-governing British nations "is the upholding of individual freedom through representative parliamentary democracy. They want no dictatorships of any kind." He declared that relations between Great Britain and France "are now closer than they have been for a long time," in the face of the Nazi menace to European peace.

"In extraordinary times or moments of real crisis," Wickham Steed continued, "Anglo-French misunderstandings melt like hoar frost in the sun, and Paris and London go hand in hand as if there had never been any differences between them. By this recurrent miracle the Germans are invariably nonplussed. German propaganda in England is steadily, and often crudely, anti-French. German propaganda in France is no less steadily, although rather less crudely, anti-British. Yet as soon as the purpose of this propaganda is recognized on both sides of the Channel all the money spent on it by an ostensibly depleted German Treasury is seen to have been lost. At the lowest estimate Great Britain knows that the safety of France is indispensable to her own, and the French reflect that a breach with England would leave them at the mercy of Hitler and Mussolini. Frenchmen and Britons who are old enough to remember the heady harangues which the German Emperor used to deliver to his subjects under the influence of pan-German ideals, and who have read in the original Hitler's 'Mein Kampf,' are well aware that the aims of the Third German Reich are not essentially different from those of the earlier pan-Germans. France is still the primary, and England the ultimate, obstacle to German territorial expansion."

Contrasting the principles of democracy and dictatorship, the author concluded: "It may help the French and the British democracies to understand that there is nothing inherent in their political systems that they need be ashamed of and that there is much they have a right to be proud of and will be justified in defending. If they are prepared, as I believe they are, to stand together in defending them stoutly -- not intolerantly against other systems, but with reasonable faith that peoples now imprisoned in other systems will one day return to the paths of freedom -- they may remind the whole world of a crude yet fundamental truth which partisans of absolute political theories are prone to overlook. This truth is that, while dictatorships and totalitarian States under omnipotent leaders may attain for a time a higher degree of efficiency than parliamentary democracies can normally achieve, the margin of inefficiency in democratic countries is in the nature of an insurance premium which those countries pay against the risk of catastrophe whenever change becomes necessary. Such systems may seem at first sight to lack heroic qualities. But in the long run men and nations do not live on or by heroics. And there is more true heroism in the steady facing of the difficulties and hardships of individual and national life than in the attempts of any nation or race to assert its God-given superiority over other members of the human family."

Religious Struggle in Reich Becomes Increasingly Bitter

"Every passing month," writes Dr. Henry Smith Leiper in Opinion, "makes it more likely that without some change in the government of Germany there is no future there for either the Jewish or the Christian faith. 'Positive Christianity' which the

milder Nazis preach as over against the avowed paganism of their wild men, is scornful of 'negative Christianity' and regards as 'negative' practically everything of importance that has come down across the centuries from the prophets of Israel or from Jesus himself. The church may remain, but it will be as the prostitute of the sadistic race-state, not as the House of the Eternal God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob."

As for the forthcoming elections within the Confessional Church, the Washington (D.C.) Star remarks that "it is a question whether the Confessional Synod has strength enough left, after protracted battle for existence against Nazi encroachments, to mobilize its adherents in sufficient numbers to win." And the Hartford (Conn.) Times points out that "it is entirely possible that if in an election the Evangelical Germans are a minority and so cannot control the Synod, Hitler may decree that the majority shall rule," since "it is not the Hitler fashion to pay much respect to minorities."

Characterizing the election decree as a "Trojan horse," the Christian Century expresses the opinion that "all the propaganda pressure of the Nazi Party will again be brought into play in the election on the side of the German Christians, who want to construct a bastard Christianity, half Christian and half Nazi.... The government and the German Christians will have free access to all voters while every channel of publicity is denied to the opposition.... The final difficulty arises from the weakness of the church itself, particularly from the division of the forces opposed to the government." The magazine continues: "The increasing paganism of government officials and the influence of this paganism upon youth makes the outlook for Christianity in Germany dark indeed, no matter what the outcome of the coming church election may be. The logic of events is driving Christianity into the catacombs in Germany. The hope of maintaining Christianity as the dominant religious and cultural force in the nation is becoming increasingly vain. Fascism is itself a religion just as much as Communism is. This is what makes the effort of conservative Christians to avoid the perils of Communism by embracing Fascism so pathetic."

Meantime, Ludwig Lore reports in the New York Post that it is not certain that the church elections will be held at all, because "it is more than questionable whether the Confessionals will take part."

Nazi Jew-Baiting Continues to Arouse Comment

The American press has not forgotten the continued persecution of German Jewry. Says the Buffalo (N.Y.) Courier: "Word comes from Munich, Germany, that the Nazis plan to produce in June an exhibition entitled 'The Eternal Jew', to answer Max Reinhardt's production, 'The Eternal Road', a spectacular pageant of Jewish persecution now playing to capacity in New York. The Nazis may undertake to answer the pictorial poem of Franz Werfel and Max Reinhardt with some super-project of propaganda from the idea of Julius Streicher, and 'The Eternal Jew' may perforce prove a smash hit in the Reich; but elsewhere propaganda of the sort will go begging on artistic counts. Spiritual inspiration is not answered or muted but rather underscored for added impress by blunt repercussions of prejudice and spite."

The Des Moines (Iowa) Tribune remarks on "Nazi consistency" by pointing to Hitler's charge that the Jews of Germany are pacifists, and then to Dr. Goebbels' declaration that "the Jews want war, but German rearmament is frustrating them and insuring peace." "This," comments the Tribune, "is a proper sequel to the Hitlerian consistency which traced Communism in the Reich to the Jewish philosophy while at the same time damning big business in Germany as Jewish and therefore wicked."

Polish Developments Interest Press

Announcement of the Government-inspired Fascistic Party in Poland has roused mixed emotions in American editorial columns. The Springfield (Mass.) Republican condemns the plan to make 35% of the Polish population, including the Jews, into second class citizens "in a state governed by a dominant race. The injustice of such a proposal is

the more glaring because most of these aliens are in Poland not by immigration but by conquest, the Polish state having been forcibly expanded far beyond the racial frontier. That such treatment of racial minorities would add to the unrest of Europe seems certain."

Replying to such statements, Casimir Gonski complains in the Milwaukee Sentinel: "The average American does not have and cannot receive a clear understanding of the situation from the American press. The pro-Jewish articles are freely given publicity, but replies thereto usually remain unpublished. The Polish government and Americans of Polish birth or extraction, grouped in their powerful and wealthy organizations, fail to realize the importance of true and necessary publicity in the American press, or, realizing it, they remain inactive, if not altogether indifferent." Mr. Gonski asserts that anti-Jewish demonstrations have never been widespread in Poland since her liberation, that the Government has not demanded the evacuation of three million Polish Jews, that Polish Jews helped the Communists in 1920, that business control remained in Jewish hands until the Polish youth began to look for business opportunities, and that the Polish Government "has not only granted equal rights but special privileges to the Jews."

In a letter to the editor of the Cleveland (O.) Press, Dr. Karol Ripa, Polish Consul General at Pittsburgh, declared that "the policy of the Polish Government is to eliminate all anti-Semitic feelings and there are no plans of mass emigration of Jews from Poland." A reply by Abraham Kollin was published in the same paper. "The government of Poland," he wrote, "has given direct and indirect support to a system of economic discrimination, to a vicious organized anti-Semitic movement and to a system of violence and boycott against the Jews which has swept through the country unchecked by representatives of the government or by organs of public opinion, with the result that 76 per cent of the Jews of Poland are without means of livelihood."

Typical editorial comment on the Polish situation follows:

"The (new) program repudiates anti-Semitism, but Polish Jews, mindful of their German co-religionists' plight, have no reason to welcome fascism. Believers in democracy the world over will regret to see Poland abandon its short-lived attempt to function as a republic." -- Houston (Tex.) Chronicle.

"Relief must be found for the 75 per cent of Poland's population engaged in agriculture and unable, because of circumstances beyond their control, to make a living out of it. Relief must be found for the three million odd Jews engaged in trade who are unable to remain in the professions which, in different circumstances, they have pursued for centuries. Various ways have been suggested for the solution of this difficult problem. Increased facilities for emigration, a better availability of raw materials, a greater industrial progress in Poland, increased exports -- all these can form the elements of a constructive plan of relief. In an atmosphere of good-will and mutual understanding a satisfactory solution may easily be found. One thing, however, is certain. The Jewish problem in Poland is not a problem for politicians. And not until the professional politicians have yielded the championship of the Jewish cause to economists and cool-headed business men, can relief from the implications of this vexing problem be expected." -- Rev. John S. Gulcz in Wilmington (Del.) Star.

"The latest available statistics state that the population of Poland is 74.9 per cent Roman Catholic. Would it be unreasonable to expect the Roman Catholic Church, now so ardently and properly solicitous for the religious liberty of Catholics in Spain and Mexico, to bring pressure to bear in the interest of liberty and justice for a minority group of another faith in a country whose population is three-fourths Catholic?" -- The Christian Century.

In this connection, it is timely to note a Jewish Telegraphic Agency despatch from Chicago, which states that Professor Paul H. Douglas, of Chicago University, declared that a word from the Pope would be sufficient to end persecution of Jews in Poland.