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Germany's stepchildren, 1945.

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GERMANY'S STEPCHILDREN

Solomon Liptzin's challenging book of the spiritual tragedy of some of the foremost Jewish representatives of the German culture who tried to answer the question: German or Jew, or German and Jew?

By

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, January 7, 1945



A very interesting book appeared recently published by the Jewish Publication Society of America, written by Dr. Solomon Liptzin called "Germany's Stepchildren." It is interesting not only because it gives the story of the inner spiritual struggles of some of the foremost leaders of German Jewry in the days before the advent of Hitler in their effort to adjust themselves to German life, their efforts to be incorporated completely within the German community, it is of interest also because it foreshadows similar problems of Jewish communities, Jewish peoples in other parts of the world -- the effort of the Jew to adjust himself to his environment, to establish the proper relation between himself as a Jew and the people in whose midst he lives. There has been attendant considerable difficulty, at times considerable tragedy for the Jews, and nowhere are those difficulties so great, tragedies so numerous as in Germany. As long as the Jew lived in the ghetto, in Medieval Europe, he had many problems to face. He was subjected to severe restrictions, political, economic and was persecuted. Life was insecure and uncertain. But with all these difficulties which attended the status of the Jew in Medieval Europe in the ghetto in which he lived, his inner life was never cleft in twain. His soul was one with his fellow Jews. The Jews knew that they were Jews, racially, nationally, wherever they lived. They had ~~in~~ their own way of life, their own culture, their own schools. They were permitted to use their own language. Certainly they used their language for prayer, for instruction and scholarship.

They were integrated spiritually. Within the ghetto walls they were at home spiritually. And while all around them there raged hate, animosity and suspicion they found great and sufficient compensation within the culture and tradition of their Jewish way of life. There was little, if any, intercommunication between Jewish groups and non-Jewish groups, except those of trade, as financial agents, or occasionally in more tolerant lands and times a peripheral ~~peripheral~~ social and intellectual contact.

But the Age of Enlightenment which began in the 19th Century ushered in a new ~~era~~ era for the Jews, especially the Jews of Western Europe. The ghetto walls began



to crumble. The French Revolution was the climax of this Age of Enlightenment. The French Revolution and its intoxicating ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity made religious bigotry and intolerance unfashionable and discriminatory laws based upon such bigotry as archaic. Leaders of Enlightenment began to welcome Jews within the new fellowship of free and emancipated human beings, so that by 1780-90, for example we find that Jews were mingling with Germans in the Berlin salons. We find pro-Jewish literature springing up led by such gifted writers as Lessing. The literature intended to show that Jews are as good as anyone else and should be treated like anyone else. The rich Jews of Berlin, those who had accomplished so successfully German trade and industry were especially welcomed, and in turn invited their Christian clientele to their homes. We find quite a number of Jewish salons which attracted the foremost Prussian aristocracy, poets, philosophers of the country. There were many brilliant and beautiful Jewish hostesses like Henriette Herz and Rahel Varuhagen who became the very nub of German cultural life for half a century.

But the first result of this impact between the Jews who had just emerged from the ghetto and the upper crust or intellectual crust of the German people was a flight from Judaism and a wholesale conversion. For example, Henriette Hertz left the Jewish fold. So did Dorothea Mendelssohn, the oldest daughter of the philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn who was first converted to Protestantism and then to Catholicism. And there were many many others. Rahel Levin Varnbarger, one of the famous women of that day regarded her Judaism and her Jewish ancestry as a stain on her personality, as a stigma <sup>with</sup> which cruel fate branded her. She never wanted to be known as Jewish. She regarded her life as one long bleeding because of her Jewish heritage. She completely dissociated herself from the Jewish people. In 1819 when the poisonous sentiment against the Jews swept the country, and toward the end of her life she, unlike many of the others, reconciled her self to her origin and ancestry. In fact she came to declare toward the end of her life "That which for so long a period of my life seemed my greatest disgrace, my bitterest pain and misfortune, namely to have been born a Jewess, I would



not now dispense with at any price." This late return to the Jewish fold happened quite frequently -- these Jews who first fled their people seeking new homes among the German people, but finding they are unwelcome there, return to their own homes.

The transition from the isolation of the ghetto to full cooperation and participation in German life was to be attended for a century and a half by a varying degree of hardship and struggle and failure for the Jews of Germany. Some who sought this synthesis were spiritually defeated and destroyed. Some came to deny themselves, to despise themselves, to humiliate themselves. Some sought escape into philosophies of international-cosmopolitanism for which the German people were not at all prepared. Some despaired of ever being received into a society for which they pathetically hankered and committed suicide. Still others became voluntary exiles.

Still others discovered their peace of mind, in a positive re-affirmation of their Jewishness, and on insistence on being accepted for what they are -- free men, proud of their ancestry, and ready to participate in the full life of their country, if permitted which has no right to demand of them other than performance of their duties as citizens. All the rest is their own concern.

But this adjustment of the Jews to Germany, German culture, was made difficult mostly because in Germany, it is more difficult in Germany than anywhere else in the world, because the German people themselves are not quite adjusted themselves. They are politically immature. They were the last people in Europe to be unified. Germany has no political sense. The German people has been obsessed for many generations with a race megalomania, which is a product of this political inferiority. No people in Europe is so obsessed with a mission in the world, a sickly concept of a chosen people destined to rule the world, not to serve mankind, but to conquer and dominate mankind, destined to dominate the rest of the world.

Now it is clear that people obsessed racially, like the German people, itself ~~seeking~~ sick in a certain fundamental emotion -- that those who do not belong to that racial stock <sup>who</sup> will nevertheless seek identify with the people will have a very difficult time. And it is also clear that certain Jews in Germany desperately seeking



to be identified more closely with the German people, who come to truckle with this race egoism of Germany, who try to find favor with them by giving evidence of a super-patriotism, by trying to out-German the German with the result that no country in the world produced so many and ~~such~~ tragic cases among its intellectuals, poets, essayists, so many sad cases of assimilationism, sycophants, apostates, self-haters as those who spat upon themselves as German Jewry. None hurled themselves so madly into the arms of an over-idealized Germany as did these German Jews. To be German, nothing but German became the *sumum bonum optimum*, the great obsession of the life of these Jews.

As a result none were so spiritually tortured. None spent so much time and energy to persuade the Germans what 100% Germans they really were, how they should not be confounded with those Eastern European Jews with whom they had no affinity whatsoever, how completely they had sloughed off their ~~ancient~~ ancestral characteristics and none failed so miserably. None were so bitterly disillusioned. Some were finally destroyed by the Nazis either by actual physical extermination or by exile. All their labors were in vain. All their inner soul agonies were in vain. The books of writers, essayists treating of this subject made sad reading. They are <sup>so</sup>/misguided, so false, so pathetic, such futile sacrifices!

Take the extreme case of that brilliant young writer, Otto Weininger, a Viennese young Jew who wrote a book called "Geschlecht und Charakter", "Sex and Character," which book created quite a sensation. The Jew Weininger came under the influence of that notorious anti-Semite, Houston Steward Chamberlain, whose book came to be the textbook of all German anti-Semites. This Jew, Otto Weininger, came to hate himself and his people. He came to extoll the myth of Aryan superiority to a degree never attained by any Nazi. He identified Aryanism with masculinity, Judaism with femininity. Feminism was the principle of evil in the world. "Aryanism is Being; Judaism is non-Being. The Aryan possesses individuality; but the Jew has none. The Aryan believes in some Absolute; the Jew is ever the unbeliever. The Aryan strives for eternal being and



therefore is something; the Jew, utterly without faith, is Nothing. The Aryan, like Man, knows extremes of good and evil, of brilliance and stupidity. The Jew, like Woman, is utterly devoid of genius, and hence always mediocre and imitative." Not very complimentary to womanhood. This is the main thesis of the book. With that scientific drivel we are not concerned, but we are concerned with the manner in which it carried over and applied to our own people and our own faith and to their utter degradation.

Weininger regarded it as the mission of his life to liberate mankind from the guilt of womanhood as in Judaism. A few months after the publication of this book, he committed suicide. He could not convince the Aryans of his real Aryan transformation. The circle of splendid free Aryans would not receive him in spite of his lick-spittle adoration of their race. This, of course, is an extreme case, almost a psycho-neurotic case.

There were others, Jakob Wassermann whose books many of you undoubtedly have read, the great writer, the greatest writer, perhaps of decadent Europe in the years before the last world war.... In 1922 he wrote a book "My Life as German and Jew." In it, Wasserman championed complete assimilation. He was violently opposed to Jewish nationalism and to Zionism. The Jews are not a people he claimed, never can be a people. Jews are strong only as individuals, as servants of the spirit, as such they had a world mission, although he realized that the Jews about him did not seem to be aware of any special world mission. He himself was not a believer in Jewish faith. "He had no sense of kinship with non-German Jews. These were completely alien to him, alien in their idiom, alien in their every breath. He could bring himself to sympathize with some of them as individuals; but as a group they were repulsive to him. He spoke of the Austrian Jews, who came to Germany during and after the World War, as Galician moles whom the Europe cataclysm had driven out of their filthy holes. He spoke of the Polish and Russian Jews as the misfortune let loose upon Germany, and again as hosts of semi-~~xxx~~ barbarians lusting for life and booty after generations of imprisonment in a ghetto jungle by a savage autocracy. He exclaimed wrathfully: 'What have I to do with them, I, whose ancestors on my father's and on my mother's side have for six hundred years lived



and worked in the heart of Germany?"

In the end Jakob Wassermann died, overcome with the hopelessness of being accepted on terms of equality with the German people. All his wooing was of no avail and he reacted to this rebuff with a great deal of fury and a great deal of despair. It was at the end of his life when the Nazis came into power he cried out:

"Vain to adjure the nation of poets and thinkers in the name of its poets and thinkers. Every prejudice one thinks disposed of breeds a thousand others, as carrion breeds magots. Vain to interject words of reason into their crazy shrieking. They say: He dares to open his mouth? Gag him! -- Vain to act in exemplary fashion. They say: We know nothing, we have seen nothing, we have heard nothing. -- Vain to seek obscurity. They say: The coward! He is creeping into hiding, driven by his evil conscience. -- Vain to go among them and offer them one's hand. They say: Why does he take such liberties, with his Jewish obtrusiveness? -- Vain to keep faith with them, as a comrade-in-arms or a fellow citizen. They say: He is Proteus, he can assume any shape or form. Vain to help them strip off the chains of slavery. They say: No doubt he found it profitable. -- Vain to counteract the poison. They brew fresh venom. -- Vain to live for them and die for them. They say: He is a Jew."

In the last year of his life, in 1933, Jakob Wassermann, who had tried to be an exemplary German was fated to see his books burned in the public places of Germany and banned from every library and school.

Take the case of Walter Rathenau, the great economist, the great industrialist, the foreign minister of Republican Germany, a great man in many ways. And had he not been assassinated, he might have saved Germany many of the tragedies and calamities which came on it. He was an assimilationist par excellence. Early in his youth he wrote an essay called "Hear O Israel" in which he asked the Jewish people to commit national suicide, to be reborn as Germans, and in that essay his criticism of the Jew, the Jewish people, the Jewish way of life is so ruthless, so objectionable that the Nazis used that essay in their propaganda against the Jews. In 1933 the



Nazis gave it wide circulation. He too truckled with a race-obsession egoism of the German people. Hardly any Nazi spoke with greater adulation for race superiority, the Nordic race than did Walter Rathenau.

"The progress of humanity, wrote Walter Rathenau, "was linked with the welfare of the blond and marvelous people which arose in the north. In the past this people, in overflowing fertility, sent wave upon wave into the southern world. Each migration became a conquest, each conquest a source of character and civilization. But, as the population of the world increased, the waves of the dark people made inroads upon the Aryan territory. At last the south attained its first important victory, when it forced its oriental religion, Christianity, upon the northern lands. The Germans continued to defend themselves by preserving their ancient code of ethics, their Viking courage. But the worst danger of all loomed when industrial civilization gained control of the world. Brains and cunning, embodied in democracy and capitalism, were pitted against the heroic Nordic soul. Rathenau wished to identify himself unreservedly with this soul. 'I have and I know no other blood than German, no other stem, no other people. If I am driven from my German soil, I shall remain German and nothing will be altered...I share nothing with the Jews save what every German shares with them: The Bible, the memory and the figures of the Old and the New Testaments. My ancestors and I myself have been nourished by German soil and German spirit, and have given to the German people whatever lay within our power. My father and I have had no thought which was not German and for Germany; as far as I can trace back my family, this has been so. " "My people are the Germans and no other. For me the Jews are a German tribe like the Saxons, the Bavarians, or the Wends...For me the factors that decide whether one belongs to a people or a nation are those of heart, mind, character, and soul. From this point of view, I place the Jews somewhere between the Saxons and the Swabians. They are less near to me than the Brandenburgers or Holsteiners and perhaps somewhat nearer than Silesians or Lorrainers. I am speaking, of course, only of German Jews. Eastern Jews, I regard as Russians, Poles, or Galicians, just as every other German does; Western Jews, I regard



as Spaniards or Frenchmen. Anti-Semitism and local nationalism are for me on an equal plane; if I examine myself closely I find that I am hurt more if a Bavarian declaims against the Prussians than if he does so against the Jews!"

Rathenau wished to identify himself unreservedly with the German people. That was Walther Rathenau. Unfortunately for him, this did not protect him from German hatred. In fact he became in their eyes the very symbol of Jewish influence which they hated. They denounced him as one of the leaders of the Elders of Zion. When the Jews asked Walter Rathenau to join with them in an aggressive fight against anti-Semitism he said he couldn't do that. He said it was undignified and unnecessary. On January 24, 1922 Walter Rathenau Foreign Minister of the German Republic was riddled with bullets and fired at by Nazy fanatics.

There are many other Rathenaus and Wassermanns among the German-Jewish leaders and intellectuals.

Take for example the case of Ernst Toller, gifted poet and dramatist, who sought escape from his Jewishness in a vague cosmopolitanism, communism. After the first World War in which he fought, he agitated for pacifism, against war. He was a leader of the Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919. He was arrested and imprisoned for five years. He wrote some great revolutionary dramas. Many of you have read "Hinkemann". He, too, couldn't solve the German-Jewish problem. At 45, exiled, Ernst Toller committed suicide.

I should not like to leave you with the impression that there were no Jewish people who did not believe in and who would not consent to seek identification with German life.

Thus, for example we have the famous Richard Beer Hofmann, the greatest lyric poet and dramatist of modern times. Some of you may have read his "Jacob's Dream." he didn't try to run away from his people. He was proud of his people, looked upon the Jews as a great historic community held together by faith and common experience who had given much to the world and still had much to give. He drew his subject matter for his great novels and plays out of the rich store-house of Jewish life, literature, of the Bible and used those themes superbly and through his plays and poems he came to



voice the vision, the idealism, the hopes of his people through the ages, as well as the protests of his people, the injustice of discrimination and persecution. In one of his fine novels, "Der Tod Georgs", through the mouth of his hero, who finds his way back to Judaism, he said: "Over the life of those whose blood flowed in him, justice was ever present like a sun, whose rays never warmed them, whose light never shone for them, and yet before whose dazzling splendor they reverently shielded their pain-covered forehead with trembling hands. -- Ancestors, who wandered from land to land, ragged and disgraced, the dust of all the highways in their hair and beards, everyman's hand against them, despised by the lowest yet never despising themselves, honoring God but not as a beggar honors an almsgiver, calling out in their suffering, not to the Lord of Mercy, but to the God of Justice. -- And before them, many ancestors whose dying was a great festival prepared for others; round about them festive robes, the sparkle of noble Jewels, fluttering flags and pomp and the sound of bells and the song of vesper hymns, and over all a reflection of the sinking sun and of flames kindled by royal hands -- they themselves tied to stakes, awaiting the fire, in their innocence fabricating sins for themselves and calling their tortures punishment, solely in order that their God might remain a God whose justice is unquestioned. -- And back of these ancestors, a people which did not beg for grace but wrestled fiercely for the blessing of its Deity, a people wandering through seas, unhindered by deserts, always as aware of a God of Justice as of the blood in its veins, calling its victory God's victory, its defeat God's judgment, selecting for itself the role of witness to God's power, a people of saviors, anointed for thorns and chosen for pain. And slowly releasing ~~xxx~~ their God from sacrifices and burnt-offerings, these ancestors raised him high above their heads until he stood beyond all transitory suns and worlds, no longer a warrior God of herdsmen, but a guardian of all right, invisible, irradiating all. -- And of their blood was he."

There spoke a Jew steeped in the law and tradition and prophetic vision of his people, speaking out of a sense of dignity, self-respect, speaking to the world as an uplifted human being, not seeking a society which does not want him, but living in his



world secure in spirit, ready to work with his fellow men everywhere for the advancement of the common ideal. That is what right-thinking Jews in all parts of the world have discovered, and their discovery should be the golden rule for Jews to follow. Not assimilation and self-effacement. Not going where they are not wanted. But living their own lives, drinking deep from the fountains of their own inspiration, and as Jews conscious of their great heritage and of their great destiny, participating so far as permitted to participate, eagerly, avidly in the life of the country in which they find themselves, faithfully performing their duties as citizens, caring everywhere for the well-being of peoples in whose midst they find themselves.

This, basically is the one philosophy of Jewish existence which can bring peace into the heart of any member of a minority group. Everything else leads to inner restlessness and turbulence. The destiny of the Jews in the diaspora, in the countries in which he lives, is to be self-loyal member of the country, a faithful citizen of the country in which he resides. That is not difficult in some countries which are not as obsessed by racism as in Germany.....

This is a good book to read. It will help you to think through many vital problems of our day.



## Solomon L. H. Z. v.

4

1) The to - many problems - severe restriction - persecution But man life  
not cleft in two - Their Soul was one! They were Jews -  
racially - nationally - religiously - wherever they lived. Own  
way & life - own culture - own schools - own courts - own  
language - certainly for prayer - instruction - scholarship -

2) They were integrated spiritually! Within the ghetto walls - they were  
at home! - and what around them their hate, suspicion - visits  
upon them as an alien prof. - steps there were great and safe -  
and compensation within the faith, culture, traditions & their  
way & life. They did There was little if any intercommuni-  
cation bet. them and the people in who midst they lived - except  
those / trade, as financial agents, or occasionally in more  
tolerant lands & times a peripheral social contact.

3) The Age of Enlightenment - 18<sup>th</sup> c - and began for the Jews, W.  
Europe a new era. Ghetto walls beg. to crumble. The 7<sup>th</sup> Rev.  
& the enlightenment ideal, liberty, equality & fraternity - made  
by other enlightenment unfortunately - and all discriminatory laws  
based upon such by other - as archaic - The leading Enlightenment  
statesmen, the 7<sup>th</sup> Rev. was - welcomed the Jews with their  
new fellowship & free human beings.

By 1780 - Jews were mingling with Germans in the  
Berlin salons - a pro-J. lib. was springing up - led by  
such figures as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing - to show that  
the Jew can be good as any body else and should be  
treated like every body else. The rich Jews  
who were helping to develop Ger. Trade & industry











20 years of  
such tragic cases of ~~assaults~~ <sup>assaults</sup> among its intellectual, writers,  
poets, essayists, of ~~assaults~~ <sup>assaults</sup> apostates, self-haters - men  
who spat after each other in German Jewry - none hurdled  
so much into arms of an over-idealized Germany - 'To be German -  
nothing but German'

5/ They were so sp tortured. - They spent so much time  
& energy to persuade the Germans - what 100% Germans they really  
were - how they should not be confronted with this East European  
Jews - with whom they had no affinity, whatever - ~~none~~  
how completely they had sloughed off their overhead  
characteristics - and none failed so miserably - and even  
so bitter by disillusionment

For the entire German-Jewish community - was  
finally destroyed - ~~by force~~ <sup>by force</sup> either by phys. extermination or exile.  
All their labor was in vain - All their visions found  
agony - futile. Their books were sad reading today!

~~The League would not talk the facts~~  
So misguided, so false, so pathetic; such futile  
efforts!

6/ Talk the case - extreme case - of Orth. Wanger - Viennois  
"Beschreibung und Charakter". Sap and Character - Came under  
influence of Houston Stewart Chamberlain - extolled the myth  
of Aryan superiority - to a degree never attained by any Nazi  
~~Jew~~ A fierce hatred of Jewish people & Judaism  
He identified Aryans with masculinity and  
Judaism with femininity



Inst p. 187 and such detail

Regarded it as his mission in life to liberate mankind from the "evil, womanhood" and the sin of Judaism.

A few months later - fired a bullet into his heart!

- Could not convince anyone of his real intentions.

- Circle of splendors, few anyone would not receive him in spite of the black-splitted relations, their race

7/ SatCol Wasserman - chronicles decadent Europe in pre-war decade  
- "The Walden's Illusion" -

- Greatly shocked - 1921 - "My Life as German and Jew"

- He championed complete assimilation.

- He was violently opposed to J. nationalism & Zionism.

- The Jews are not a people - and can never again be a people.

- Jews are nothing only as workers - as servants, the spirit - as such they had a world-mission - altho he realized that the Jews about him did not seem to be aware of any special world-mission. - Himself not a believer in Jewish faith -

= He ~~was~~ had no sense of kinship with non-German Jews (178)

= In the end - hard as he tried - he ~~became~~ was concerned with the business - his efforts to be accepted on terms of equality

① Best as years before Barthold Amend - did not belong to Christ (180)  
Burned his books - 1933 - burned



Walter Rathenau - economist, industrialist

- Foreign Minister, Republican Germany.

An assimilationist - par excellence. - Early  
 Asked J people to convert nat. Swedes - voluntarily  
effort itself - complete absorption in majority population  
 Perish as Jews to be reborn as Germans.  
 Early in his life - 1897 - "Hear, O Israel" - objectively  
 characteristics of his fellow-Jews - that Nazis in 1933  
 saw it wide circulation - youth - as "Jewish  
 example of Jewish parasitism + degeneracy".

- (a) Found in favour of hyacinths (193 to 195)
- (b) Opposed to Zionism - Expected the solution of  
 the J. problem to come from a general revision on the  
 moral scene, the world, not from a return to J.  
 state.  
 pursued him - ultra-nationality
- (c) German hatred - symbol of Jewishness in politics  
 + industry - on the basis of "The Eden of Zion"
- (d) 1920 - Refused to join in light of antisemitism -  
 - "Undesired and unnecessary"
- (e) Foreign Minister - Jan 24 - 1922 - ended his  
 work with Hitler -



9/ Ernst Toller - lifted poet & dramatist - socialism /  
a conscience - inter nationalism

① Fought in I World War - opposed against war -  
unpopular - leader of German Soviet Republic 1919 - 5 yrs  
in prison -

② Rev. dramas - These Men - Maschinenstürmer -  
Hinkemann -

③ German-Jewish duality (~~200~~)  
at 45-6 committed suicide - in exile

10) There were others - Healthy souls! Dignity - Self respect  
lyric poet - dramatist  
① Richard Beer-Hofmann - poet - master of pathos  
few rivals -

② Jews - an inst. community - held together by a faith,  
by common experience - a community of fate

③ was Jewish Biblical themes superbly

④ Voices the protest of his people - the vision - the idealism

⑤ Novel - "Der Tod Georgs" - 1900 - Here speaks -  
an understanding Jew - returns to his people

(241)

11) Martin Buber - one of the philosophers of German-Jewish  
Renaissance - Zionist -



12/ Moses Hess - championed 7 J. nat. regeneration ⑦  
Himself an early assimilationist - for more Prussian > the  
Prussians

Shocked by J. Antisemitism  
"Rome + Jerusalem" . 1862

~~At~~ A natural solution

13/ Theodor Herzl - "Jewish State" - Zionism

= No problem - America

