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Our national battlefield, 1934.

OUR NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD
Abba Hillel Silver

Germany is our national battlefield. We are fighting not for the six hundred thousand Jews in Germany alone but for ourselves and our children and for Jewry throughout the world.

If Hitler succeeds in permanently undermining the economic and political position of the Jewish community in Germany it will serve as a guide and an inspiration to our enemies throughout the world. A triumphant Naziism will not stay confined within the boundaries of Germany. It will spread like a plague. No Jewish community anywhere in the world will be safe.

One of the vicious elements in Naziism is its pseudo-scientific race doctrines. Race bigotry is far more dangerous in the modern world than religious bigotry. The latter has been fairly well discredited. The former has not yet been sufficiently exposed and discredited and the minds of men, especially of young men, can still be swayed and their passions aroused by an appeal to primitive race loyalties and idolatries. If the Nazis' contention that the Jews are members of an inferior human species, whose blood is tainted, whose minds are vicious, whose souls are corrupted and whose very presence among other races is a baneful influence, receives prestige and respectability through the success of the Nazi regime, our position in the world will become intolerable. There is a fatalism, an irrevocable and inescapable doom, about such a doctrine which is far deadlier than any prejudice to which our people had been subjected at any time in the past.

We are entering a desperate stage in our history. In the bitter struggle of the next few generations which will engulf the whole world, the struggle between private capitalism and the corporate state, or between bourgeois

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society and the socialized or socialistic society which is coming to be, the Jew more than any other group will suffer. The Jew has always suffered the labor pains at the birth of every new social order. The contending economic forces will not hesitate to use anti-semitism as a weapon, a ready means of propaganda and a remarkable easy method by which to incite both the masses and the classes.

The Nineteenth century was the most prosperous century for the Jewish people in Western Europe. It was the period when the bourgeois civilization triumphed. The power of the State was delimited and the rights of the individual were established. As an individual, the Jew was the equal of his neighbor. He could hold his own in the economic struggle. With the World War, the world entered upon a new era, that of the corporate state where the rights of the individual will be sharply circumscribed and where groups and syndicates rather than individuals will count. The Jew everywhere will constitute a minority group which will be pushed and crowded and hemmed in on all sides. The state will control and direct the economic life of the country and the majority racial or national group will determine the policies of the state. The Jew will in no country belong to this majority. He will have to fight desperately to maintain his economic and his political status everywhere in the world. To keep from being utterly beaten down he will have to employ every means of self-defense and to utilize and exploit his powers to the utmost.

The struggle with Hitlerism, therefore, at the present time, is of utmost historic significance for our future. It will turn out to be either a

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strategic victory or a strategic defeat of major significance.

It is gratifying to note that organized labor throughout the world has rallied to this war upon Naziism, for Naziism is as fatal to the interest of labor as to the Jewish group. The same bloody hand which laid waste the Jewish community also destroyed all the agencies and institutions ^{of} mutual help and protection which organized labor had established in Germany over a period of many years, outlawed its unions, scattered its forces, imprisoned its leaders, confiscated its funds and reduced the working men to a condition of feudal vassalage.

This, of course, was the prime objective of the Nazi movement. That is why it ~~is~~ was so heavily financed by the big industrialists, bankers and manufacturers of Germany. The bogey of Communism which the skillful Nazi agitators raised was a ruse and a camouflage. The German Republic was never seriously threatened by Communism. It was the rising power of organized labor and the clear trend towards socialization of industry which the hard-pressed and frightened magnates of Germany were passionately eager to check and which they succeeded in checking. At least for the time being.... For no such victory can long endure at this late day. Those purblind industrial rulers of Germany who have succeeded in destroying the only free institutions whereby the progress of the people could have been assured through peaceful ways of evolution have laid up for themselves a bloody day of reckoning.

It is a commonplace of Jewish history that the reactionary forces of a country which are aligned against the Jew are also aligned against the working classes. The fortunes of our people throughout the world have been linked up always with the progress of freedom and political and economic liberalism. Wherever these ideals flourished, the position of our people was satisfactory.

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Wherever they were suppressed, its position became insecure and frequently desperate. Similarly the fortunes of labor are linked up with the progress of these great social ideals. Those who attack them attack also the security and rights of labor. It is therefore no accident of history that Nazism, which is the implacable foe of the Jewish people is also the implacable foe of organized labor.

It is well to remember that the whole of modern anti-semitism is to be traced back to Bismarck's Germany. It was after Bismarck turned reactionary and broke with the liberals, that the signal was given for a concerted attack upon the Jews in Germany as a means of undermining and discrediting liberalism and socialism. It was from Bismarck's Germany that modern anti-Semitism spread to Austria-Hungary, France and Tzarist Russia. There is not an argument which the Nazis used in their fourteen years of vicious anti-Jewish propaganda after the World War that was not first propounded by the henchmen of German political and economic reaction fifty years ago. The present Nazi leaders borrowed their entire ideology from the writers, journalists, politicians and theologians who did the dirty work for Bismarck half a century ago -- During, Marr, Rohling, Stocker, etc.

Even the definitive program of the Nazis for exterminating the Jews from the life of the country was formulated in scientific detail at that time -- the removal of all Jews from public office and from the education system of Germany, their exclusion from the press and from all economic activity and their disfranchisement. In the same way the international aspect of Nazi anti-Semitism was anticipated by the German reactionaries fifty years ago when they convoked the first international congress against Jews at Dresden.

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Every reactionary movement has used the Jew as the pivot in the fulcrum for dislodging liberal and progressive ideas and institutions. The enemies of the Third Republic in France stigmatized it as Jewish. Tzarist Russia pogromized the Jew because it claimed that he was responsible for the revolutionary movements which were undermining the regime. Hitler attempts to inodiate democracy by declaring that it is fundamentally Jewish and not Germanic.

Our strongest weapon in this war upon Hitlerism is the economic boycott. We must use it to the utmost.

