

Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

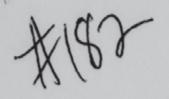
Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated. Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

Reel Box Folder 48 15 849

The Not So New Germany, 1966.



Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Write this for a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.'

When the children of Israel left Egypt the Amalekites were the first desert people with whom they came unto contact. Israel asked for rights of passage and water. Amalek responded with an unprovoked attack on the Israelite's baggage train and the women and children. 'He smote the hindmost; all that were enfeebled in thy rear; when thou was faint and weary, and he feared not God.'

Spiritual romantics blanche at this caution to be perpetually on one's guard against a dangerous neighbor. 'Remember what Amalek did unto thee...thou shalt not forget.' Such romantics have confused religion with an unworldly innocence and morality with an endless passivity and a boundless capacity for suffering. Their's is the romantic and unsupported hope that the tears and the anguished patience of the decent will bring out the innate decency of the violent and the ruthless. Their's is the innocent and unsupported faith that acquiescence and forgiveness are in themselves ultimate virtues and the ultimate weapon against evil.

Forgiveness, dear friends, belongs only to God. Acquiescence and passivity only encourage the callous and the ambitious. Of course, it is foolish and worse to nurse a petty grievance or bruised ego and

to seal yourself off from family and neighbors; but it is equally foolish and worse to accept at face value the simply made profession, 'I am sorry,' and to let the matter go at that. Words are not sufficient proof of a change of heart, and when the highhandedness of a man or nation has been evidenced again and again in a contemptuous disregard for the basic values of civilized life, then surely it is only prudent and wise to be on your guard and to demand repeated proof of the professed change of heart. The Deuteronomic caution "Remember what Amalek did unto ye...thou shalt not forget" was not written after the one dastardly surprise attack in the desert, but much later. The Book of Judges is filled with the details of incessant raids and depredations by these desert pirates against the Hebrew settlements. These raids lasted for some three and one-half centuries until Saul captured the Amalekite King Agag and David decimated the Amalekite army in a decisive and devasting battle.

In Rabbinic literature Amalek symbolized the cruel, indefatigable and implacable enemy. Amalek was Rome; the Rome which crushed Jewish independence; the Rome which over long centuries trampled Jewish dignity under its iron boot; the Rome which prohibited the sages to teach, the congregations to meet and the nation to venerate and respect its traditions. In the Middle Ages Amalek was the Church Militant; the Church of the Jew badge; the Church which taught a doctrine of Jewish perfidy and merited degradation; the Church of

forced conversion; the Church whose pastors more than occasionally inflamed their congregations to sack the Jewish quarter and murder its people. More recently Amalek was Germany; the Germany of pogroms and blood libel; the Germany of cultivated anti-semitism and of deliberate social and professional exclusion; the Germany of Auschwitz and Dachau; the Germany which shouted: "Juda verreck," the Jew must perish." Over the memorial flame to the six million victims of the Nazi holocaust in Paris you will find inscribed the simple caption: "Remember Amalek."

There are those among us who would bury the past. Hitler is dead. There is a new Germany. The Nazi criminals have been punished or are being sought. What is done cannot be undone. Is it not better to accept German protestations of a new heart and the reparations money and to say that the slate has been wiped clean?

Many are saying that Hitler was an aberration, the Nazi period one of temporary insanity, and that crushing defeat has shocked the German people to their senses. Unfortunately, German history is not that simple. Read the history of the Jews of Germany - a history, by the way, that reaches back into Roman times, long before there was a Germany - and you will be struck by the steady pattern of anti-Jewish contempt, economic suppression, political oppression and period bloodletting.

Our tradition emphasizes the importance of wariness by underscoring the unhappy consequence of King Saul's impulsive but well-intenioned pardon of the captured Amalekite King, Agag. Agag became the direct ancestor of Haman the Agagite, the first to determine on the extermination of our entire people. The politics of hate may be defeated but the poison of hate buries itself underground and courses for generations in a people's heart. Purim retells Haman's blood lust.

On the Sabbath before Purim we hear in the synagogue the public admonition: "Remember what Amalek did unto you...thou shalt not forget." A pointed warning derived from our sad experience of history, that prejudice and hate are not arrested with political defeat.

Prejudice may disappear from public view but all too often it is expressed and re-enforced in the privacy of home and club and office until another propitious occasion comes into being and the hate emerges as public policy and the rallying cry of a nation.

This week a one-time and long time Nazi, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, became the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of West Germany.

Kiesinger joined the Nazi party in 1932. He remained a member until the German defeat, though apparently he became disillusioned when the tide of war turned against the Reich. Kiesinger has stated that he joined the Nazi party because there wasno other course open for a young lawyer and that he was never in sympathy with its anti-Jewish policies. De-Nazification proceedings have cleared him of participation in actual acts of violence and murder against Jews. Kiesinger's election is justified to the world by an official logic which runs along these lines: Under Hitler horrible crimes took place. The

German nation, however, rejects the concept of collective guilt.

Only the person with blood on his hands is guilty and Germany
has created investigative agencies to ferret out these criminals.

They are prosecuted and punished according to German law. In a recent speech West Germany's ambassador to the United States,

Heinrich Knappstein, reviewed this position and added:

I would like to deal with a question often asked in this country: How is it possible that so many former Nazis are still in office - sometimes even in high office? To this question we have a realistic approach. A real 'Nazi' we would consider a person who was an active promoter of Nazism, or worse, who had committed crimes out of such motives. A man who joined the Nazi Party only because of the pressure typical of every totalitarian regime might have been an opportunist or politically not very intelligent. But if he had never actively furthered the cause of Nazism or committed crimes, we called him a Mitlaufer, a follower or a nominal party member, but not a'Nazi'. More than seven million people were Nazi Party members, of whom a relatively small percentage were 'Nazis' in the sense I described. Thus, it was decided after the war that we had to grant the 'right of political error' to nominal party members and keep them in their jobs.

Kiesinger is thus, by the testimony of his own Ambassador, either an "opportunist" or "politically not very intelligent;" neither qualities, I submit, would lead one to repose much confidence in his effectiveness as the West German chief of state. As one who remembers Amalek, I

find myself dissatisfied with this overly neat official logic. There are many degrees and qualities of guilt beside the blood guilt of the commandant and guards at Bergen, Belsen and Maidenek. The argument that one was ignorant of the camps and of their violence and that there was no immorality to being a Nazi simply will not hold water. From 1933 to 1938, the year of the first mass deportations - years of Kiesenger's Nazi Party membership - so much happened within the sight and hearing of the entire German people that none of them has a right to say: 'I did not know.' There were almost daily attacks on Jews as they went to their business in Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. Jewish businesses were aryanized. Jewish lawyers and physicians were removed from accredited lists. Jewish professors were barred from their classes. Happy ruffians danced around bonfires made of books by Jewish authors. The music of Jewish composers was no longer played. Jewish children could not attend public schools. The Nuremburg laws of 1935 made the Jews third class citizens and denied them the protection of German law. Every applicant for Nazi Party membership had to prove that his blood line was racially pure. In November, 1938 on Kristal Nacht, the synagogues of Germany were torched, sent up in flames. Kiesinger saw, but like millions of his fellow Germans he did not choose to see. He saw only his goal - advancement in the civil service of the Foreign Office. Kiesinger has been guilty of opportunism and he stands guilty of callousness towards fellow human beings - but then, perhaps like so many Nazis, he did not consider the Jews to be

human beings. Those who watched from the sidewalk as Jewish women and children were dragged through the streets and beaten by Nazi devils - those who watched and joined the party of the toughs - are surely guilty in the sight of God, if not under the laws of the Government of the Federation of West Germany. 'Remember what Amalek did ...thou shalt not forget.'

The spiritual romantic dwells on the fact that a majority of the German people of 1966 were children while Hitler was in power and a great number of them were not even born. Surely these are innovent. Innocent of Hitler's crimes, to be sure, but have they remained innocent of the hatred and prejudices of their fathers? How many of them dream their fathers dreams of a powerful fatherland? On the sixth of November this year the ultra-right wing National Democratic Party, which is a fusion of ex-Nazis and the neo-Nazi element, polled over 10 percent of the vote in the State election of Hesse; two hundred thousand votes. By the testimony of a member of the Bonn Cabinet far more than half of these ballots were cast by voters under the age of 30. Point 9 of the National Democratic Party manifesto reads: Twenty years after the war we demand an end to one-sided trials which aim at wiping out the past, while in other countries millions of war crimes against German women and children go unpunished." Point 10 of the same manifesto demands: "An end to the lie about sole German responsibility whereby thousands and millions of money has been extracted from our nation."

On November 20th during a State election in Bavaria, this party, which denies Nazi guilt and which looks upon reparation monies as extortion, again polled more than 10 percent of the total vote - a total of some 780,000 votes - and again far more than half of these ballot were cast by young people under the age of thirty. The leader of The National Democratic Party exalted: "This election is a springboard from which we will jump into national politics." The next day Franz Joseph Strauss, who may have the Finance Portfolio again in the new "Grand Coalition Cabinet" exalted: "this is an answer to all those who have tried to pull Germany through the dust." A week later swatiskas and the slogan "Jews out of Germany" were painted on a monument of Jewish victims in the memorial cemetery at Dachau.

"Remember what Amalek did unto you...thou shalt not forget."
Kiesinger's election and the Hesse and Bavarian vote are evidence
of a past which has not been buried and of passions which still
burn. The issue is not anti-semitism. The issue is not simply
the persistence of anti-semitism. Hitler for all practical purposes accomplished his task. The Jewish settlement in Germany is
pitifully small and comprises in all perhaps 25,000 souls. The
issue is not the instability of those small and scattered communities
but the peace of the world Swastikas and anti-semitic slogans are
the lodge symbols of German militarism, of German ambition - an ambition which twice in the life time of many here has plunged the
world into suicidal bloodshed.

The Germany of today is not the Germany of thirty years ago.

West Germany is more or less a democracy. East Germany, though

not recognized by Bonn or Washington, is de facto, an independent

nation. The so-called German miracle has brought prosperity and

prosperity has brought a certain degree of political calm. At

the same time we cannot speak of a new Germany. The past is there.

It breathes. It is alive.

Reunification is the stated aim of every West German Party. Germany is assmed officially to be the Germany of 1937, which means not only West Germany and the East, but the Sudetenland and Polish territories east of the Oder and Niesse Rivers. Children are taught in their schools that all this is the fatherland, rightfully German. It is official doctrine that there cannot be peace in Europe until this total reunification is accomplished. At the present, of course, the government talks of reunification in terms of broader east-west trade and the possibility of an economic union of all Europe; but one wonders how long Germany will seek its Volk through the techniques of diplomacy and trade and at what point frustration will call out the now largely silent voices which demand more active and aggressive policy. Need I remind you that the Bundesvehr, 450 thousand strong, is seond only to the Russian Army in all of Europe and that it is armed with the most sophisticated of American weapons; that it has aircraft and missile crews trained to fire nuclear weapons - although the United States still holds actual war heads under lock and key. Need I remind you that this past summer saw the first attempt by the high command of the Bundsvehr to free itself of civilian controls and from those provisions of the German

Constitution which were designed to see that the army would serve the State and not dominate it.

This is not the hour for forgiveness nor forgetfulness. Germany has yet to prove its steadfastness in the cause of mankind. Germany has yet to provide effective antidotes to the poisons of hate and ambition. And so, despite the pressures of Viet Nam the American presence in Germany cannot be dismembered. We must review carefully every German program for a military build up. We must resist the temptation of involving Germany in a multi-lateral nuclear force. We must see the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain not as unacceptable barriers, but as walls that keep peace between neighbors. Our long standing policy of encouraging Bonn's claim as the sole legitimate German nation must be reviewed and with it the propriety of making German's passion for reunification a commitment of our own govern-One prays that democracy will thrive in Germany. One prays that this class conscious nation will mature in freedom. One prays that the German educational system will offer a full opportunity to all -- not only to the privileged and the able. One prays that Germans of conscience and moral sensitivity will remake and strengthen the moral fabric of their society. The world prays and hopefully the world stays on its guard and remembers Amalek.

The Temple

December 4, 1966

Kaddish

Friday 12-2-66 Sunday 12-4-66

Those who passed away this week

CELIA BLACHMAN

Vahrzeits

MICHAEL J.MARGOLIS
RYNETTE LOIS KRAUS
ROSA KOHN
FANNIE H.WEBER
STELLA S.KOLLER
WILLIAM N.OSTERMAN
ANNETTE W.ABRAMS
DAVID SAFIER
ANN FRANKEL
MINA LEVIN
ARTHUR WALLACH

CHARLES A.STONE

ANNA BROWN
BELLA FRIEDMAN
HARRY C.KATZ
JEROME A.LEVY
CARRIE KOBLITZ KOHN
KARL FORCHHEIMER
: JACK M.SHEPARD
SAM H.MEISTER

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REDUCTION RATIO:

REDUCTION RATIO 13X



