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*Director: JACOB RADER MARCUS, Ph.D.
Milton and Hattie Kutz Distinguished Service Professor
of American Jewish History*

Assistant Director: ABRAHAM J. PECK, Ph.M.

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In This Issue

Report from the Magazine Rack: What are the
Rabbis Reading? ALLEN S. MALLER 131

Where is American Jewry going? Is it assimilating or acculturating? Using the reading patterns of Reform and Conservative Rabbis as an indicator, the author discovers some surprising results.

Eleazer Block: His Family and Career IRA ROSENWAIKE 142

Eleazer Block (1797-1886) was an atypical member of his generation of American Jews. A highly educated lawyer and businessman, Block pursued the dream of opening an academy of education for the Jews of New York.

American Jewish Leaders and the Emerging Nazi Threat,
1928—January, 1933 SHLOMO SHAFIR 150

The growing anti-Semitism of the German National Socialists during the half-decade before their takeover was a point of grave concern to American Jewish leaders. But their solutions to the Nazi menace, like those of their German-Jewish counterparts, were often varied and diametrically opposed.

The Jewish Community of Hartford, Connecticut,
1880-1929 SANDRA HARTWELL BECKER and
RALPH L. PEARSON 184

The Jewish community of Hartford, Connecticut, has established an enviable record of service to people, city, state, and nation. This study highlights an important chapter in its history.

Book Review

Hertzberg, Steven. *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915.* 215

Reviewed by STEPHEN G. MOSTOV

Brief Notices 219

Index to Volume XXXI 227

Illustrations

Cyrus Adler (1863-1940), facing page 154; Felix M. Warburg (1871-1973), facing page 156; Good Will Club for immigrant boys, Hartford, Conn. (ca. 1900), facing page 198; Hirshberg Family and Grocery, Windsor St., Hartford, Conn. (1910), facing page 192; YWHA Basketball Team, Hartford, Conn. (1930-31), facing page 204.

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Report from the Magazine Rack: What are the Rabbis Reading?

ALLEN S. MALLER

Is the American Jewish community assimilating (melting pot) or acculturating (cultural pluralism)? This question is one of the major conceptual issues in writing American Jewish history. Many studies have shown a great decline in traditional Jewish practices from first to third generations. On the other hand, Jewish life continually shows signs of amazing vitality, especially if judged (not against an ideal standard of 100% but) against a comparative standard of other organizations, groups and institutions in American society. Part of the problem exists because sociologists have measured the decline of traditional forms without measuring the rise of new forms of Jewish expression. Another part of the problem came from measuring the Jewish community as a whole. It is entirely possible that some segments of the community will indeed assimilate over time, while other segments will become more Jewish from generation to generation. One can then look, for instance, at the lower level of traditional observance and values among Reform Jews in three ways:

1. Reform Jews are somewhat more third and fourth generation and therefore are a harbinger of what Conservative Jews will be in another generation and Orthodox Jews will be in two generations (melting pot model).

Allen S. Maller is the rabbi of Temple Akiba, Culver City, California. He has published articles in *Jewish Social Studies* and *Judaism*, among others. We are grateful to Rabbi Wolfe Kelman for facilitating the Rabbinical Assembly questionnaire.

2. The less Jewish members of the community tend to identify with Reform Jews (and vice-versa), so this group is transitory to assimilation, but the more Jewish Jews will come to dominate that part of the Jewish community that is still Jewish in another generation or two (the saving remnant model).
3. New modes of Jewishness are arising to replace the traditional forms and Reform Jews participate in these new forms as much as other Jews (cultural pluralism model).

Due to cross currents and to different rates of change in different areas of the Jewish community, it will probably take another two generations to see clearly the dominant direction of American Jewry. We will need numerous studies over the course of time which will attempt to measure the assimilation/acculturation rate for different elements in the community. The study reported on below is one step in that direction. The periodical reading habits of Reform and Conservative Rabbis will give us some clues about the assimilation/acculturation process.

Rabbis are the teacher transmitters and judge interpreters of a traditional sacred literature. The sacred texts, such as the Talmud, the Codes, the Zohar, the Midrash and the Bible, with their associated commentaries, are the source of the traditional Rabbinical worldview. What about modern Rabbis? To what extent do they read or study traditional texts or problems? What are their current sources of information and how do these sources reflect the worldview of Reform and Conservative Rabbis? To begin forming an answer to these questions, a questionnaire was mailed in February of 1978 to the 1,200 members of the C.C.A.R. [Central Conference of American Rabbis]* asking them to list the magazines, Jewish and general, they were currently reading. They were asked to include scholarly, hobby and technical, as well as any Hebrew or Yiddish magazines they receive. A total of 283 valid replies were received by the end of June.

Shortly after I had finished my analysis of the responses of CCAR members, I had the opportunity to send the same questionnaire to the 980 members of the RA. [Rabbinical Assembly]* This was done in August of 1978. By the end of November I had received 133 replies of which 121 were usable.¹ Since the RA sample

* The association of Reform Rabbis

* The association of Conservative Rabbis

¹ This is a 23% reply rate. Younger Reform Rabbis were more likely to reply than older

was smaller and the respondents were older than the CCAR sample, an exact comparison of the two groups would be misleading. (see Table 1).

Table 1
Age Distribution

<i>Age</i>	<i>CCAR</i>	<i>RA</i>
50+	30.4	34.7
37-49	23.3	24.8
- 37	46.3	40.5
	100.0	100.0

However, we will be able to see if the same trends hold across the three age groups.

An Analysis of the Findings

Before turning to the questionnaires we must note that periodical reading patterns are not typical of book reading patterns. By their nature, periodicals are current and therefore people will read them to keep up with what is developing. Thus, people read periodicals in fields they are already familiar with just to keep current. They will also read current event periodicals disproportionately since books rarely relate "news."

The first observation derived from the questionnaires is that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Reform Rabbis do not read periodicals in any language other than English. Even more interesting is the generation difference. Of those 50 years and older, 29% receive a Hebrew magazine. In the 37-49 age group the figure is 21%. Only 15% of those under 37 read a Hebrew periodical. In spite of the fact that almost all of those ordained since 1967 have spent a year studying in Israel, the proportion reading a Hebrew magazine is only half of the oldest group. The impact of Israel is evident, however, in the fact

Rabbis. Those ordained in the 10 years between 1967 and 1977 (90% of whom are in the 37 group) made up 46% of the Reform respondents while they comprise only 39% of the CCAR. The RA sample is a little older than the CCAR sample. The RA response rate was only 13%.

that those under 37 who read Hebrew frequently read the weekly edition of an Israeli newspaper, while the older men are much more likely to read *Hadoar* (an American Hebrew periodical.) This suggests that the older generation acquired its Hebrew fluency in traditional Yeshivas or Hebrew day schools. Since very few of the recently ordained Reform Rabbis come from such a background², the 15% who are Hebrew readers must be largely the product of study in Israel³.

Conservative Rabbis read more Hebrew periodicals than Reform Rabbis ($\frac{3}{4}$ of Reform Rabbis do not read a Hebrew periodical compared to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the Conservative Rabbis). However, the trend already noted for Hebrew reading to decline with age group is just as true of RA members as CCAR members.

Table II
Percentage of readers of Hebrew periodicals

<i>Age</i>	<i>CCAR</i>	<i>RA</i>
50+	29	62
37-49	21	53
- 37	15	40

While both groups of Rabbis are increasingly becoming "English only" readers, the decline, in percentages, is more rapid in the CCAR. As previously noted for the CCAR, the impact of study in Israel on younger RA members is clear from the large numbers of younger members who read Israeli newspapers, while the older generation mostly reads *Hadoar*. Nevertheless, although Israel's impact may retard, it does not reverse, the decline in Hebrew periodical reading. If the trend continues, Hebrew periodicals will have little if any influence on American non-Orthodox Rabbis in the 21st century. However, the rapid rise in non-Orthodox day schools should reverse this trend before the end of

² A 1967 survey of first and third year rabbinical students at the Reform and Conservative rabbinical schools found that 74% of the Conservative students had fathers who were born in the U.S. or came here by age 13, compared to 88% of the Reform students. "The Training of American Rabbis" by Charles Liebman, *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 69, p. 12 (1968).

³ By 1968 no fewer than 80% of those who entered HUC-JIR came from Reform backgrounds. *HUC-JIR: At One Hundred Years*, ed. by S. Karff, HUC Press, 1976, p. 225.

the century. A replication of this survey in another 2 decades would indicate if this prognosis is correct.

When we turn to periodical reading in general we find a similar pattern of decline by age groups. Rabbis are extensive readers. The average number of periodicals read is 13.5 for Reform Rabbis and 13.7 for Conservative Rabbis. Impressive as this is, the fears expressed by some that television will have a negative effect on reading gains support even within such a highly educated and literate group as Rabbis. The decline in the average number of periodicals read from the oldest to the youngest groups is 10% for the CCAR and 7% for the RA. This decline applies with even greater force for Jewish periodicals where the decline is 11% for the CCAR and 18% for the RA. (See Tables III & IV)

Tables III & IV
Average number of periodicals read

<i>Age</i>	<i>Jewish</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>CCAR</i>	<i>RA</i>	<i>CCAR</i>	<i>RA</i>
50+	9.6	11.4	14	14.3
37-49	9.0	10.2	13.5	13.7
under 37	8.5	9.3	12.5	13.3

The younger RA members read 18% fewer Jewish periodicals than the older members. Their reading of non-Jewish periodicals has not declined. Thus the percentage of Jewish periodicals read has declined from 80 to 71. This brings the younger RA members close to the CCAR percentage which seems to have stabilized at about 2/3 Jewish periodicals.

Table V
Percentage of Jewish periodicals within all periodicals read

<i>Age</i>	<i>CCAR</i>	<i>RA</i>
50+	68	80
37-49	65	75
- 37	67	71

The decline in periodical reading is probably a general cultural phenomenon that affects everyone. It is not therefore a sign of assimilation. The decline in percentage of Jewish periodicals read by

the younger RA members is an indication of assimilation. The stability of the CCAR percentage indicates the establishment of an acculturation norm. If this is true, we would expect the RA percentage of Jewish periodicals read to stabilize very soon at the current level of the younger Rabbis.

Zionism and the Arab/Israeli conflict are two of the most potent influences working against Jewish assimilation in America today. Conservative Rabbis have been overwhelming supporters of Zionism. Reform Rabbis were sharply divided during the first half of the twentieth century. The post-Six Day War period saw a much stronger Zionist tendency within the Reform movement. Nevertheless, criticism of Israeli political policies is still much more open in the CCAR than in the RA. The same tilt is evident in non-political areas. For example, in the autumn of 1975 427 Conservative congregations had High Holiday Israel Bond appeals compared to only 130 Reform congregations. Thus we would expect that RA members would read a higher percentage of Israel-oriented magazines, and that CCAR members would have a higher percentage of Rabbis who do not read any Zionist or Israel-oriented magazines at all. Also, if assimilation is taking place we would expect a decrease by age groups in the number of readers and the proportions read in both groups. Both of these hypotheses turn out to be false. (see Table VI)

Table VI
Israel Centered % of Jewish periodicals read and % none

<i>Age</i>	CCAR		RA	
	<i>% Israel</i>	<i>% None</i>	<i>% Israel</i>	<i>% None</i>
50+	16.9	21	15	24
37-49	15.7	27	14.3	20
-37	16.3	26	15.6	24

The greater saliency of the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967 probably accounts for the upturn in the under 37 group. CCAR members read a slightly higher percentage of Israeli-centered periodicals but the difference is not significant. 25% of CCAR members do not read any Israeli-centered periodicals at all, vs. 23% for RA members, also an insignificant difference. A solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict will probably result in a slow but steady decrease in the readership of Israeli-centered periodicals.

All members of the CCAR and the RA receive the professional journals published by their respective organizations. The majority of Rabbis read only their own denominational journal. The younger Rabbis in both groups are more likely to read other rabbinical journals than the older men. Although most Rabbis are directly involved in Jewish education, very few read the professional journals published for Jewish educators. An equally small number subscribe to journals of pastoral psychology or to sermonic services. Taken all together, less than 10% of rabbinic reading is professionally- or trade-oriented.

46% of Reform Rabbis and 54% of Conservative Rabbis read periodicals that I shall call scholarly.⁴ By this I mean either academic journals or semi-popular periodicals in specialized fields (*The Biblical Archeologist* or *The Ecumenical Review*, for example.) The journal read by the greatest number of Reform Rabbis is the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* [now known as *American Jewish History*]. Actually the *American Jewish Archives* was listed even more frequently by Reform Rabbis, but since it is received by all Rabbis in the Reform movement it is not fair to rate it with other periodicals that must be paid for. A much smaller percentage of RA members read the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*. The field with the greatest appeal is Bible and Archeology. Almost a third of those who read scholarly periodicals read one of the following: *Biblical Archeology Review*, *The Biblical Archeologist*, *The Israel Exploration Journal* or *Dor Ledor*. The field with the smallest following is the area of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the subjects that formed the core of scholarship in rabbinical school. Only a handful of Reform and Conservative Rabbis read such journal as *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, *Jewish Social Studies*, *Zion*, *Bitzaron*, or *Molad*.

There is a noticeable decline in the percentage in each age group of Reform Rabbis who read scholarly periodicals. Only 41% of the "under 37" Rabbis read scholarly periodicals, compared to 44% of those age 37-49 and 55% of those age 50 and over. This decline is not found among RA members. 55% of the "under 37" Rabbis read scholarly periodicals, compared to 50% of those ages

⁴ I excluded members of the CCAR who are also full time faculty members of HUC-JIR from the data, but I have included CCAR members who teach at any other colleges or universities. I did the same for the RA sample.

37-49 and 57% of those age 50 and over. This is our first finding of divergent trends. The insignificant gap of two points between Reform and Conservative Rabbis in the oldest group expands to 14 points in the youngest group. I cannot account for this divergence especially since a survey of the two upper classes of three rabbinical schools in New York in 1974 found that the Reform students ranked the role of scholar higher than Conservative students did. See Table VII.⁵

Table VII
Rank Order of Religious Activities and Interests

<i>Orthodox</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Reform</i>
Spiritual Guide	Teacher	Counselor
Teacher	Spiritual Guide	Teacher
Scholar	Priest	Spiritual Guide
Priest	Counselor	Scholar
Counselor	Scholar	Priest
Administrator	Reformer	Reformer
Preacher	Administrator	Administrator
Reformer	Preacher	Preacher

The larger percentage of Reform Rabbis who read the *A.J.H.Q.* is the result of the greater emphasis HUC-JIR [Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion]* places on American Jewish history (which is virtually ignored at the JTS [Jewish Theological Seminary]**). It also results from Reform Judaism's traditional "American" view. The low level of readership of *Wissenschaft* journals by RA members probably is due to the lack of connection between their subject matter and issues of concern to Rabbis in today's world.

One of the most interesting findings in the survey is the correlation of age of readers and age of magazine. The older magazines that have been published for 30-40 years or more are read by a higher portion of older Rabbis. The more recent magazines are read by a higher proportion of recently ordained Rabbis. See Table VIII.

⁵ Jerome H. Bass, "Role Preferences Among Jewish Seminarians," *Sociological Analysis* 1977, 38, I 59-64.

* Seminary for Reform Rabbis

** Seminary for Conservative Rabbis

Table VIII

Magazine	Years First Published	CCAR% of Readers under		RA% of Readers under	
		37	46%	37	40.5%
<i>Moment</i>	1975	58%	(+12)	47%	(+7)
<i>Sh'ma</i>	1970	53%	(+7)	45%	(+5)
<i>Midstream</i>	1955	50%	(+4)	40%	(norm)
<i>Judaism</i>	1951	46%	(norm)	50%	(+10)
<i>Commentary</i>	1945 (1938)	35%	(-11)	37%	(-3)
<i>Jewish Spectator</i>	1935	39%	(-7)	22%	(-18)
<i>Reconstructionist</i>	1934	28%	(-18)	18%	(-22)

The different reading pattern in the area of general Jewish magazines probably reflects habit more than style or content. Rabbis who already subscribe to several Jewish magazines are less likely to start subscribing to a new one than younger Rabbis who haven't started subscribing yet. The publishers of the older Jewish magazines would do well to give a free subscription to all newly ordained Rabbis.

The most popular magazine among Reform and Conservative Rabbis is *Judaism* (169 readers). Closely bunched up about 12-15% behind *Judaism* are *Commentary* (148), *Sh'ma* (146), *Moment* (140) and *Midstream* (139). If present trends continue, *Commentary* will drop considerably (it is already below the *Jewish Spectator* in percentage of young Reform readers even though the *Jewish Spectator* is several years older) while *Moment* and *Sh'ma* will rise to the top. The correlation of age of reader and age of publication is clearly seen in non-Jewish magazines also. Many younger Reform Rabbis read *Rolling Stone* or *Mother Jones* while only a handful over 37 do so. Very few Conservative Rabbis read these "leftish" periodicals; also almost a dozen Reform Rabbis read *Playboy* (clergy subscription rate is only \$3.00) while only one Conservative Rabbi did.

Summary:

Rabbis are not average Jews. They are both leaders as well as models of Jewishness. They influence other Jews. The Rabbinic world view is molded largely by the sources of information they use. Our examination of the periodical reading patterns of Reform and Conservative Rabbis has uncovered the following:

1. Hebrew-language periodicals are a declining source of input for both Reform and Conservative Rabbis. The decline is more rapid for Reform Rabbis but is greater numerically for Conservative Rabbis since they initially had a higher percentage of Hebrew readers.

2. General periodical reading has declined slightly. Jewish periodical reading has also declined. The decline is greater for Conservative Rabbis than Reform Rabbis. The youngest Conservative Rabbis are close to the norm for all Reform Rabbis in proportion of Jewish periodicals read.

3. There is no difference in the percentage of Reform and Conservative Rabbis who read Israel-oriented periodicals, or in the amount they read.

4. There is a difference in the percentage of Rabbis who read scholarly periodicals. Younger Reform Rabbis read less than their elders. This is not true for the RA.

5. There is no significant difference by denomination in Jewish periodical reading, but there is a difference by age. Younger Rabbis read more magazines that started publishing recently.

6. There is a sub-group of younger CCAR members that read magazines like *Mother Jones*, *Runners World*, *Ms*, or *Playboy*, etc.. There is no RA sub-group like this.

The decline in reading seems to be the result of assimilation into contemporary American culture. The decline is greatest in Hebrew, less in Jewish, and least in non-Jewish. But the direction is the same for all of them. Without knowing how many periodicals are read by other similarly educated professionals I cannot prove anything⁶ but I think the decline in periodical reading is moving Rabbis closer to the lower level of periodical reading of other professionals. The stability of Israel-centered reading provides support for cultural pluralism. It is related to the Israel/Arab conflict orientated activities which occupy a significant place in

⁶ The only other study I could find reference to was "Reading and Library Habits of Connecticut Pastors," by Duncan Brockway, reported in the *American Theological Library Association Proceedings* Vol. 28, pp. 125-27, 1974. Unfortunately, this issue was not held by the U.C.L.A., U.S.C., Loyola, L.A. County or City Libraries. Actually, surprisingly little research is available on periodical reading patterns; "We need to know more about why people read magazines," by D. Arnold in *Media Decisions* (Fall 1977), 12:92.

current Jewishness. Scholarly reading is a divergent trend; the only one. It illustrates the possibility of a "saving remnant" development. The younger generation's preference for newer Jewish magazines shows the importance of tracing not only the decline of the old, but the rise of the new.

The American Jewish Archives announces the addition of two posters to its multicolor series on the American Jewish experience. Both posters deal with American Jewish philanthropists.

The subject of the first poster is Judah Touro (1775-1854), who was the first notable American Jewish philanthropist. Touro is best remembered for the sum he donated for the completion of the Bunker Hill monument.

Jacob H. Schiff (1847-1920), the subject of the second poster, was an international financier who gave large amounts of money for the care of newly-arrived Jewish immigrants, for the advancement of Jewish scholarship and for the care of Polish and Russian Jews living under Czarist rule.

The above two posters are available without charge for display by all schools, libraries, congregations and organizations interested in American Jewish history. Requests from these groups must be made on official stationery bearing the organization's name and address. Individuals may request these posters at the cost of \$2.00 each.

Inquiries concerning the entire poster series should be addressed to Ms. Wanda Reis, American Jewish Archives, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220.

Eleazer Block—His Family and Career

IRA ROSENWAIKE

The Reverend Isaac Leiser, founder and editor of *The Occident* and perhaps the foremost Jewish religious leader of his day, wrote in 1847 that “there is no man among us, who possesses more general and classical knowledge” than Eleazer Block of Baltimore.¹ Yet Block has remained the subject only of bits and pieces of information (most notably the fact that he was the “first Hebrew lawyer” in St. Louis).² As one of the more interesting representatives of nineteenth-century American Jewry, Block is eminently worthy of characterization.

Eleazer Block was born March 26, 1797, in Williamsburg, Virginia, the son of Jacob Block, the latter a member of a large family of Bohemian Jews who migrated to America during the era of George Washington’s presidency. Jacob Block lived briefly in Baltimore and perhaps in other towns but, by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century,³ had permanently settled in Richmond, Virginia. While in Baltimore, Jacob Block had been a grocer; in Richmond he became a merchant. Before his death in 1835 he had served as president of Beth Shalome, Richmond’s only Jewish congregation.

¹ *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, V (Oct., 1847), 371.

² Louis Houck, *A History of Missouri*, III (Chicago, 1908), p. 23.

³ New Orleans Hebrew Cemetery Inscriptions (NOHCI) (card file), Louisiana State Museum Library; Herbert T. Ezekiel and Gaston Lichtenstein, *The History of the Jews of Richmond from 1769 to 1917* (Richmond, 1917), pp. 133, 242, 282; Ira Rosenwaike, “The Jews of Baltimore to 1810,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (AJHQ), LXIV (1975), 310.

Eleazer Block was among that small group of Americans at the time—estimated at no more than one-tenth of one percent of the population—who had attained a higher education.⁴ For this purpose he had returned to Williamsburg in order to study at the College of William and Mary. He received an A.B. from this institution in 1814.⁵

While Eleazer was attending William and Mary he was close to his kinsman Simon Block. An advertisement in the *Richmond Enquirer* of July 9, 1813, indicated that lottery tickets were “to be had of Simon Block, Williamsburg, and of Simon Block, Jr., Richmond.”⁶ When Simon Block and Simon Block Jr. (not his son; the “junior” was to distinguish him from “old” Simon Block) moved to the Territory of Missouri, Eleazer Block followed. While Simon Block Jr. established himself in Cape Girardeau, Eleazer chose to settle, about 1817, in a Mississippi River port to the north, St. Louis.⁷

Block was not the first Jewish resident in this frontier town of less than four thousand inhabitants; the Philipson brothers, enterprising merchants from Philadelphia, had already preceded him.⁸ There, in addition to practicing law, Eleazer joined with the other Blocks in a number of real estate transactions. In 1818 Eleazer and a partner (Richard Venables) paid five thousand dollars for a large lot on Main Street in St. Louis. Part of this was sold in 1819 for three thousand dollars to Simon Block Jr. and part in 1820 for twenty-five hundred dollars to Simon Block Sr., described as of the town of St. Genevieve. Still later in 1820 Eleazer also joined with the elder Simon Block, now referred to as from the town of St. Charles, in the sale of a lot on the bank of the Mississippi above the town of St. Louis.⁹ In 1821, when the first directory of

⁴ Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War* (Lexington, Mass., 1973), p. 87.

⁵ *The History of the College of William and Mary from its Foundation, 1693 to 1870* (Baltimore, 1870), p. 101.

⁶ The specific relationship of Eleazer Block to the two Simon Blocks has not been established.

⁷ Frederic L. Billon, *Annals of St. Louis in its Territorial Days* (St. Louis, 1888), p. 163; Isidor Bush, “The Jews in St. Louis,” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, VIII (1951), 61.

⁸ Marietta Jennings, *A Pioneer Merchant of St. Louis* (New York, 1939), p. 17.

⁹ St. Louis Deed Records Book (City Hall), Book G, p. 207; Book H, p. 511; Book I, pp. 382, 506.

the residents of St. Louis appeared in print, "Block, Eleazer, attorney at law" was listed as living at "north Church, n.e. corner B."¹⁰

Sometime in the mid-1820's, Eleazer, perhaps tiring of his bachelor life, returned to the familiar surroundings of Richmond. Here he participated in his father's business and married Abigail DePass, scion of one of the leading Sephardic families in the Virginia city. Abigail's mother, Sarah, was the first-born of the eleven children of Hillel Judah and his wife, Abigail Seixas, a sister of Gershom Mendes Seixas, New York's Revolutionary War patriot rabbi. Sarah's parents had settled in Newport, Rhode Island, before the Revolution. In 1798, at the age of thirty-eight, Sarah married Ralph DePass, a widower who was close to sixty-five, and moved to Charleston, where Abigail was born in 1800. After her husband's death in 1812, Sarah evidently made Richmond her permanent home. Several of her brothers were prominent residents of this city.¹¹

Following the death in Missouri of Simon Block Jr. the Hustings Court of Richmond on February 14, 1826, appointed Eleazer Block the guardian of the ten minor children of the Cape Girardeau merchant, adding new responsibilities to his activities. The children remained with their mother in Missouri and gradually were married off or reached legal age.¹²

While Eleazer, in all probability, desired to be close to his wards, he did not choose to return to St. Louis. Perhaps he felt that a town without a Jewish congregation was not an appropriate place to raise his own family.¹³ In any case, Eleazer had established himself in Cincinnati, the city closest to St. Louis in which Jewish worship had been organized. There his family experienced steady

¹⁰ *The St. Louis Directory and Register* (St. Louis, 1821).

¹¹ Malcolm H. Stern, *Americans of Jewish Descent* (Cincinnati, 1960), pp. 101, 102, 189. In his will David Judah refers to Abigail Block as his sister. (Baltimore County Will Book, vol. 33, p. 266). It must be inferred, since David was born in 1789 in Newport, that he was born out of wedlock before his mother's marriage to Ralph DePass. (Ezekiel and Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 72.) *The Occident*, XXIV (July, 1866).

¹² Ezekiel and Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Cape Girardeau County (Mo.) Marriage Records.

¹³ The Blocks' first child, Rosalie, was born in Virginia on November 20, 1828. (NOHCI).

growth. By this period Eleazer no longer practiced law, but as city directories reveal, was a full-time merchant.¹⁴

The patriarch of the Block family, Simon Block, now in his nineties, also was in Cincinnati, residing with Eleazer. In the 1829 directory both are listed as being located on Front Street, between Race and Elm; and in 1831, described as merchants, they are at Fifth street between Walnut and Main.¹⁵ When Simon Block died in 1832 Cincinnati's Jewish congregation mourned "the loss of Simon Block, Esq., formerly of Richmond, Va. This venerable gentleman had filled the office of Parnass. . . . Being the oldest amongst us, we considered him as the father of this congregation."¹⁶

By the 1830's the old Sephardic community in Richmond was disintegrating, through out-marriage and out-migration. A number of the more prominent individuals settled in Baltimore, including David Judah, Eleazer Block's brother-in-law. Block came to join this group, entering into partnership (as commission merchant) with Judah.¹⁷

After more than a decade in the commercial world of Baltimore, Eleazer evidently became restless and was determined to move to New York, where he felt he could indulge in a dream of his: "opening a seminary of classical learning, combined with religious instruction." Rabbi Isaac Leeser, with whom Block corresponded, believed that New York "from the number and wealth of its Jewish inhabitants, is precisely the spot where Block's attempt can best be made with hopes of success."¹⁸ There can be little doubt that Leeser, perhaps the most active organizer of Jewish communal life in his day, and Block were well acquainted. Leeser had resided in Richmond before accepting the post of rabbi of Phila-

¹⁴ *The Cincinnati Directory, for 1829* (Cincinnati, 1829); *The Cincinnati Directory, for 1831* (Cincinnati, 1831).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* The 1829 directory incorrectly spelled their surname as 'Black'. *U.S. 1830 Census, Population Schedules, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

¹⁶ Morris U. Schappes, *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875* (New York, 1971) p. 229.

¹⁷ Ira Rosenwaik, "The Jews of Baltimore, 1820 to 1830," *AJHQ*, LXVII (1978), pp. 246-59; *Matchett's Baltimore Directory, corrected up to September, 1835* (Baltimore, 1835); *Matchett's Baltimore Directory, for 1840-1* (Baltimore, 1840).

¹⁸ *The Occident*, V (Oct., 1847), 371.

delphia's Mikve Israel congregation in 1829. While in Richmond he had lived with and worked for his uncle, Zalma Rehiné, whose wife also happened to be the aunt of Block's wife, Abigail. Furthermore, the Rehinés had moved to Baltimore before the Blocks and very likely housed the newcomers in their own home while they were getting established.¹⁹ Thus, when Leeser printed a report of Eleazer Block's plans to open a school in New York in his national monthly *The Occident* in October 1847, he had more than a journalistic interest in the endeavor.

After two years in New York, Block sorrowfully reported his disappointment with his career in education to Leeser:

I am grieved and mortified to have to state that my endeavors to establish a classical school for the Jews of N York have completely failed—whether because of my want of capacity or moral unfitness or simply from the want of proper patronage & support. That portion of the Jewish public who feel any interest in the matter will judge and of course for the greater part unfavorably to me, the unfortunate are always in fault.²⁰

Block lamented that during the first six months of its establishment his school "had as many classes nearly as pupils" and that he personally taught "all the various branches of instruction" except Hebrew and German. Academically the school was better off during its last year when it "was supplied with capable teachers in Hebrew in German in Music, in Latin, French, Algebra and Geometry and the English branches. . . ."²¹ But a chronic shortage of students and difficulty in the collection of tuition payments from the parents of some of those who did attend made the end of the venture in education inevitable. Block felt he had no choice but to resume his former occupation as a commission merchant. "I do not flatter myself," he told Leeser, "with hopes of immediate sweep and expect to encounter many difficulties."²²

There was at least one consolation for the Blocks in New York. They were able for the first time since moving from Richmond to

¹⁹ Ezekiel and Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-40; Stern, *op. cit.*, pp. 102, 109. Both Eleazer Block and Zalma Rehiné are listed as residing at Holliday street near Pleasant in the Baltimore city directory for 1835.

²⁰ Letter to Isaac Leeser from E. Block, dated New York, Sept. 5, 1849, Leeser Collection (microfilm, American Jewish Archives).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

attend Sephardic services and one *Shabbat* in 1854 they had the joy of seeing their youngest son, Herman, *Bar Mitzvah* at Congregation Shearith Israel.²³ Guests were frequent; one of these was a young Yale student, Henry J. Labatt, who visited during school holidays and charmed the ladies of the household.²⁴ After attaining his bachelor's degree in 1852 Henry married Block's daughter Eleanor and with his wife moved to San Francisco to practice law. Henry was one of the sixteen children of Abraham Cohen Labatt, a Charlestonian who had moved to New Orleans in 1831 and who migrated once again in 1849, taking the old Santa Fe trail to the California gold fields.²⁵

Eleanor was an exception among the Block women; her three sisters all married men named Jonas. It seems to have become a tradition among Blocks to marry members of the Jonas family, or at least those of the twenty-two children and untold number of grandchildren of Benjamin Jonas and Annie Ezekiel of Exeter, England, who had migrated to the American hinterland. Block's oldest daughter, Rosalie, married George Jonas, who had settled in New Orleans, and his second daughter, Sarah, married George's nephew Charles, a son of the Quincy, Illinois, lawyer, Abraham Jonas, who has been described as a long-term friend of Abraham Lincoln. Charles and most of his brothers settled permanently in New Orleans; one of these, Benjamin Franklin Jonas, married Block's daughter, Josephine.²⁶

Not only did Eleazer Block's daughters gradually make their way to New Orleans, but his eldest son, Rehine David, also chose to settle in the Louisiana metropolis and was by 1853 listed in the New Orleans city directory.²⁷ With most of their grown children

²³ Congregation Shearith Israel (New York) Register, Births, Deaths, Marriages, vol. II, p. 329 (microfilm, American Jewish Archives).

²⁴ Block to Leeser, *op. cit.*

²⁵ *Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut 1701-1915* (New Haven, 1916), p. 136; Norton B. Stern and William M. Kramer, "The Historical Recovery of the Pioneer Sephardic Jews of California," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, VIII (1975), 10-12; Richmond Chancery Court, Deed Book 96A, p. 314; *Galveston Daily News*, Aug. 17, 1899.

²⁶ Bertram W. Korn, *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (Waltham, Mass., 1969), pp. 162, 326; Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 98; Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (New York, 1970), pp. 189-94.

²⁷ *Cohen's New Orleans Directory for 1853* (New Orleans, 1852).

resident in the Crescent City it was only a matter of time before Eleazer and Abigail too decided to relocate in the city that would be their home for the remainder of their lives.

The Jonas brothers all seemed destined for successful careers but none matched that of Benjamin F. Jonas (1834–1911). After deciding on his father's profession, he entered the law school of the University of Louisiana, where he graduated in 1855. Like his father, who had served in the state legislatures of both Kentucky and Illinois, he was captivated by politics. In 1860 Jonas was an unsuccessful candidate for delegate to the state convention called to consider the question of secession. When war finally came Jonas entered the Confederate service. His achievements in the ensuing years were numerous; as one writer has observed, "to write the life of Jonas after the war is to write the history of Louisiana for that period." Jonas served various terms in the state legislature, was a delegate to the Democratic convention of 1872, and was for two terms city attorney of New Orleans prior to his election as United States Senator from Louisiana for a term running from 1879 to 1885.²⁸

Although some of Eleazer Block's children remained permanently in New Orleans others settled in diverse areas. The place of residence of five of his seven sons and daughters living in 1871 is mentioned in a deed transferring property in Richmond that they had received from their mother (who in turn had inherited it from her uncle Isaac H. Judah). Sarah DePass Jonas (wife of Charles) was then living in Mississippi; Eleanor Elizabeth Labatt in Galveston, Texas; David Judah Block and his wife Sally in Decatur, Illinois; Herman Mendelsohn Block and his wife Jennie Sampson in Fort Clarke, Texas; and Josephine (Mrs. Benjamin F.) Jonas in New Orleans.²⁹

Rehine David Block, the oldest son of Eleazer and Abigail, arrived in New Orleans as a youth and remained in the Louisiana city until his death more than fifty years later. Rosalie (Mrs. George Jonas), the first-born daughter, who lived until 1911, resided in New Orleans even longer.³⁰

²⁸ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, vol. 1 (Chicago, 1892), pp. 495–98; U.S. Congress, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774–1971* (Washington, 1971), p. 1201.

²⁹ Richmond Chancery Court, *op. cit.*

³⁰ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, Feb. 2, 1903; Nov. 22, 1911.

When Benjamin F. Jonas moved to Washington to serve his term in the Senate he apparently paid for the care in New Orleans of his elderly father-in-law and mother-in-law. Eleazer Block wrote to his son-in-law in 1881 expressing his "desire that all accounts expended by you on our account for board and lodging be repaid to you out of the proceeds of the estate I leave. . . ." In Block's will he appointed Benjamin F. Jonas his executor, remarking that he held "the most implicit confidence in his integrity and ability and in his friendship and regard."³¹

Eleazer Block died in New Orleans on February 2, 1886, at the age of eighty-eight. His widow Abigail survived him, and died November 16, 1893, at the age of ninety-three.³²

³¹ Eleazer Block will, dated Oct. 15, 1877, with codicil of July 5, 1881, New Orleans Probate Court Records, Civil District Court.

³² NOHCl.

American Jewish Leaders and the Emerging Nazi Threat (1928–January, 1933)*

SHLOMO SHAFIR

I

Did the National Socialist Party's global anti-Jewish thrust and the onset of its persecution of the Jews in Germany after 1933 really come as a surprise to leaders of the American Jewish community and of the major Jewish organizations in other parts of the world? Overall, the answer must be no. In fact, these individuals and groups—as this study will seek to demonstrate—had been in constant touch with German Jewish groups, and had frequently visited Berlin and other European capitals. Thus they were rather well informed about the all-pervasive Nazi hate-campaign and the party's anti-Jewish policies, and were conscious of their implications for the entire world Jewish community. They watched Hitler's program with growing apprehension, and discussed the problem at closed meetings and in their mutual correspondence. The deteriorating situation in Germany was also reported extensively in the Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish press, though interpretations varied. Yet all the reliable information, the intellectual analysis, and the recognition of the danger by at least some of the more far-sighted community leaders still did not guide them into any forceful preventive political and philanthropic action. And while the record of a few low-keyed activities is certainly not one of which the commu-

* *The researching of archival sources, on which this article is primarily based, was facilitated by a grant from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.*

nity can be proud, the question still remains: What kind of meaningful action was possible fifty years ago, taking into account the domestic and international atmosphere in the late twenties and early thirties, and the position of the Jews in America at that time.¹

American Jewish leaders had been alerted to the danger that the anti-Semitic extreme right-wing presented to the German Jews as early as 1922–1923. In November, 1923, a great number of Jewish stores were robbed in Berlin, Jews beaten up in the streets, and, in Bavaria, the expulsion of foreign Jews launched by the provincial authorities a few days before Hitler's ill-fated coup d'état in Munich. The American Jewish Committee, representing the affluent, acculturated part of the community, contributed \$5,000 in 1922 to counteract the agitation. While Louis Marshall, the Committee's president, did not believe the accuracy of the alarming reports, he brought the Nazi threats against the Jewish community to the attention of Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. Similarly, the State Department was approached by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, president of the reestablished American Jewish Congress which reflected the ethnocentrism and the national consciousness of newer Jewish groups, mainly of Eastern European origin. The German Embassy in Washington was also contacted. Wise subsequently dispatched Judge Aaron J. Levy, one of the Congress' vice-presidents, to Berlin in order to explain to the German government how disastrous the reaction of the American public would be to Germany if such excesses continued.²

¹ The most important primary sources for this subject are the Cyrus Adler Papers, as well as the minutes of the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee and other relevant files at the American Jewish Committee Archives, New York, N.Y.; the archives of the American Jewish Congress and the Stephen S. Wise Papers at the American Jewish Historical Society Archives, Waltham, Mass.; and the Felix M. Warburg Papers at the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, which contain a great number of American Jewish Committee documents.

² Adler Papers: chronological folders, October–November 1923, and minutes of the executive committee, quoted in Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee 1906–1966* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), p. 147; Wise to Ismar Elbogen, Berlin, November 13, 1923; E.W. Lewin-Epstein, Warsaw, to Wise, November 18, 1923; American Jewish Congress, Confidential Bulletin #2, November 30, 1923; Wise Papers, Box 82.

Similarly, the Joint Foreign Committee (J.F.C.) of the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association in London had been in touch with the British Foreign Office and suggested the consul in Munich inform the Bavarian authorities of the British government's

In a response that would often be repeated in the future, Secretary Hughes drew a clear line between the rights and interests of American citizens, which would be defended forcefully, and persons who were not U.S. citizens and for whom the American government was not entitled to intervene. He assured Wise that this distinction did not mean "that we are oblivious to the demands of humanity" and that American diplomats would "express in an informal and appropriate manner the humanitarian sentiment of our people." Yet the real significance of that and similar statements was clear: the disillusioned isolationist administration would not follow earlier, humanitarian precedents. The German ambassador, on his part, told the American Jewish Congress that he had warned his government that the publication of such reports would cause damage to Germany's image, especially "in view of the great charitable work done by Jewish communities . . . for the suffering population of Germany." He had been reassured that the police were ordered to protect the Jews from the rowdies. Because of the changing political climate, his successor in the early thirties would follow a more cautious line in contacts with the representatives of American Jewry.³

The twenties, as Naomi Cohen has remarked in her history of the American Jewish Committee, were not a good time for American Jews, despite the economic progress achieved by many of them: "As Americans they shared the frustrations of a society whose ideals had soured; as not-quite-acceptable Americans their feeling of security in that society was shaken." In those years of the revived Ku Klux Klan, anti-alien restrictions, and heightened

disapproval of the expulsion of the foreign Jews. Lucien Wolf, the J.F.C.'s secretary general, offered to defray expenses for any telegraphing (!) which the urgent action might require. The J.F.C. also contacted the ambassadors of Poland and Czechoslovakia. In principle, Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon's answer was identical with that of Secretary Hughes. Still, the effect of the British consul's unofficial representation was believed to have been salutary. But the J.F.C. preferred not to publicize these activities because of its traditional approach of "backstage diplomacy" and because German Jews were afraid that the anti-Semites would exploit the fact that foreign intervention had been brought about due to international Jewish action.

Lucien Wolf to the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office, November 14, 1923, and Wolf to Bernard G. Richards, n.d.; Miles W. Lampson, F.O., to Wolf, November 26, 1923; Wise Papers, Box 82.

³ American Jewish Congress Confidential Bulletin, November 30, 1923, *ibid.*

racial tensions, anti-Semitism, for the first time, began to assume significant social dimensions.⁴ Yet social anti-Semitism in the U.S. could in no way be compared with the virulent Nazi anti-Semitism in the Weimar Republic, plagued as it was by economic, social, and national grievances. Whereas during the Wilhelmine Empire the Jews were regarded by the majority of the German population as outsiders in spite of their emancipation, in the Weimar Republic they became, in the eyes of the *voelkisch* groups, "the enemy." Anti-Semitism, which successively spread among all strata of German society, was a major subject at thousands of Nazi gatherings, even at a time when they did not obtain more than 2.7 percent of the vote in national elections (1928). There were instances of actual violence against Jews in that year. Jewish-looking persons were assaulted by Nazi hooligans in Berlin; in Hanover the police succeeded in quelling a riot before it reached a violent stage; and Nazi gangs broke up meetings called by the *Centralverein* (C.V.), the liberal political organization of "German citizens of the Jewish faith," to counter anti-Semitic propaganda. In a number of universities, student assemblies, swayed by Nazis and other extreme nationalists, demanded the introduction of a restrictive *numerus clausus* for "students of alien blood." Whereas it was hard for many American Jewish leaders to grasp immediately the full implications of the irrational Nazi campaign, they were certainly aware of these events as well as other anti-Semitic outbursts throughout Europe. Many of them were reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) and appeared in the Jewish press. They were also recorded in the American Jewish Committee's annual report and published in the *American Jewish Year Book*.⁵

In 1928 the *Centralverein*, which at that time represented approximately 60,000 members and was the most influential of the German Jewish organizations, asked the American Jewish Committee for a grant for its publicity campaign. Earlier the C.V. had

⁴ Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁵ Review of the Year 5689 and 22nd annual report of the American Jewish Committee, *American Jewish Year Book* (AJYB), XXXI, pp. 43-47, 362-63. On the demographic and economic structure of the German Jews see Esra Bennathan, "Die demographische und wirtschaftliche Struktur der Juden," in Werner E. Mosse and Arnold Paucker, eds., *Entscheidungsjahr 1932: Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik* (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1966), pp. 83-131.

presented the Committee with a report concerning international anti-Semitic activities which, if unchallenged, could also affect the United States. The C.V.'s request was renewed in 1929 when one of its leaders visited New York.⁶ Marshall, the distinguished corporation lawyer, doubted the efficacy of the C.V.'s methods in fighting Nazi anti-Semitism and regarded them as "dull and theoretical." He would have preferred, he wrote, ridiculing the Nazis in the way he had been fighting the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Henry Ford, and the Ku Klux Klan. As to the requests for financial aid, he thought the 500,000 Jews in Germany, many of whom were very rich, could collect the necessary funds themselves. Indeed, this great American Jewish leader, who had distinguished himself for many years in fighting anti-Semitism and discrimination, showed less understanding of the Nazi threat than a number of his colleagues. Morris D. Waldman, the Hungarian-born executive secretary of the Committee who had spent several weeks in Germany in 1928 and was better informed about the situation of the Jews in Europe, shared some of his president's misgivings about the C.V.'s tactics. Yet he, as well as the scholarly Cyrus Adler, who was soon to succeed Marshall as president, did not underestimate the gravity of the anti-Jewish challenge. Waldman regarded it as incomparable with the anti-Semitic campaign in the U.S.:

The murder of men like [Walther] Rathenau, threatened assassination of men like Max Warburg, was inconceivable in this country, even at the very hey-day of superpatriotic agitation, a few years ago.

Moreover, I believe there is a difference between the temper of the American people and the Germans. The cosmopolitan character of America, due to the diversified racial elements combined with the English sense of fair play which our culture here has inherited from our English mother culture, is much more impervious to anti-race propaganda than the less sportsmanlike temper of the German people.

Waldman emphasized that the increased economic burdens of the Germans and their chagrin over their defeat in the war offered a more fertile soil to race hostilities than the American scene.⁷ At

⁶ Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 149, 156; Max Eisenkraemer (C.V.) to Morris D. Waldman, June 27, 1929, Warburg Papers, Box 251; minutes of the executive committee, November 9, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives.

⁷ Louis Marshall to Waldman, July 10, 1929; Waldman to Marshall, July 11, 1929,



Cyrus Adler (1863–1940)
American Jewish communal leader, academic, and a founder
and president of the American Jewish Committee

his suggestion, Marshall discussed the situation in Germany with Max Warburg and others during the first meeting of the Jewish Agency in Zurich, a short time before he was struck by a fatal illness.⁸ While Marshall's death was a major blow to the American Jewish Committee and deprived it of its most forceful leader on the eve of the critical thirties, the contacts with the C.V. were to continue. At the beginning of 1930, the Committee transmitted to the German organization \$7,500, a modest sum in comparison with the C.V.'s original request for \$175,000.⁹

II

The Growing Menace

The Nazi Party's major success in the Reichstag elections of September 14, 1930, which accorded it 107 out of the 577 seats (6.4 million votes) and made it the second largest parliamentary group, brought Hitler to national and international prominence. The results should not have come as a total surprise to close observers of the German political scene. Nazi agitation had increased in the preceding months due to the economic crisis, the growing unemployment, and the campaign against the Young plan dealing with reparation settlements. Wilhelm Frick, a leading Nazi official, was already serving as minister of the interior and education in the Thuringian provincial government and gaining publicity due to his racial and anti-Semitic policies. In many universities the elections to the student councils in 1929 had provided the National Socialists with more than 25-30 percent of the representatives.

In the summer of 1930, Cyrus Adler, who divided his time between the presidency of the American Jewish Committee, Phila-

Warburg Papers, Box 251; Waldman to Marshall, July 18, 1929, Morris D. Waldman Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, Box 640; Werner Senator to Waldman, December 11, 1929, *ibid.*; Marshall-Waldman letters also quoted in Morris D. Waldman, *Nor by Power* (New York: International Universities Press, 1953), pp. 40-41. For a sympathetic appraisal of the C.V. defense activities see Arnold Paucker, *Der juedische Abwehrkampf gegen Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Leibniz-Verlag, 1968).

⁸ Waldman, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁹ Minutes of the executive committee, December 8, 1929, American Jewish Committee Archives. See also Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

delphia's Dropsie College, and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, spent a month in Germany and met with a number of German Jewish leaders as did Morris Waldman. Banker Max Warburg, the brother of Felix M. Warburg, chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) and one of the American Jewish Committee's most influential members, appeared to him somewhat more optimistic than the husband of Walther Rathenau's niece, though Warburg too regarded the situation as very serious.¹⁰ One could also read in-depth analyses of the growing danger to German Jewry in such important Jewish publications as the London *Jewish Chronicle*. The German Jews—the weekly noted—were

profoundly alarmed and gravely concerned about the growth of the organized militant anti-Semitism which . . . has lately become a powerful force in the political, municipal, and social life of the country. . . . The Jews are now faced with a movement based on a definite theory—cool, deliberate, and determined—aiming at the destruction of Jewry in Germany as a collective body.

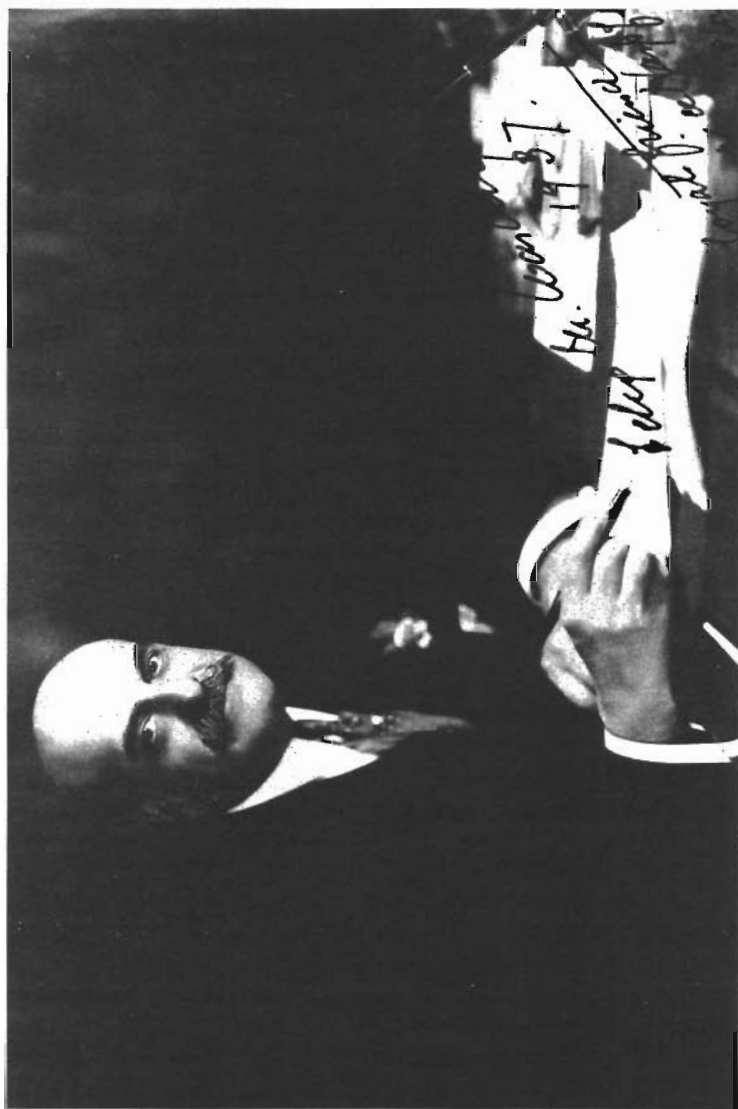
The *Chronicle's* analyst recalled that “the National Socialists [had] created a most efficient machine for the carrying out of these aims. A staff of intellectuals, professors, scientists, artists, writers, and journalists is at their disposal.” At the same time, he extolled the defense activities of the C.V. and its representatives all over Germany who were exposing the Nazi party's chauvinistic views and anti-democratic, anti-republican character.¹¹

German officials had tried to calm foreign fears concerning the outcome of the Reichstag elections. But even a cautious diplomat such as the American ambassador to Berlin, Frederic M. Sackett, intimated that “on the whole, the outlook for the future democratic political development in Germany is not favorable.” After the elections, the U.S. chargé d'affaires called the vote “another overpowering example of Germany's lack of political education and wisdom and a body-blow to the republican form of government.”¹² This pessimistic conclusion did not at all affect the

¹⁰ Adler to Mortimer Schiff, November 3, 1930, Adler Papers.

¹¹ “The Anti-Semitic Movement in Germany,” condensed from articles in the *Jewish Chronicle*, April and May 1930, Warburg Papers, Box 269.

¹² Sackett to Stimson, July 22, 1930, U.S. Department of State, Decimal Files, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (D.S.) 862.032/17; Gordon to Stimson, September 17, 1930, D.S. 862.00/2518.



Felix M. Warburg (1871-1937)
Leading American Jewish philanthropist and long-time chairman
of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

administration's attitude towards Jewish calls for intercession. The official argument was the same as in 1923. When a Jewish citizen from Massachusetts appealed to President Herbert C. Hoover for "the protection of property, liberty, and lives of people of Jewish faith" in Germany, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson assured him that the Department of State would take care of the rights of American citizens, but that the government was not in a position to intercede on behalf of other persons.¹³

When the newly elected Reichstag opened on October 13, windows of Jewish shops in Berlin's Leipzigerstrasse were broken and some Jews molested. The anti-Semitic outburst caused grave concern among some Jewish groups in Germany, and a number of Jews left the country; the exodus from Bavaria was the greatest. Whereas the Zionist minority, acting in the community through the *Juedische Volkspartei* [Jewish People's Party], called for consolidation of all forces and a strengthening of ranks by the creation of a representative Jewish community organization, the *Centralverein*, representing the liberal non-Zionist majority, did not budge from its integrationist doctrine. It stressed the link of the German Jews to the German people, and its leaders warned against panic and hysteria.¹⁴ Professor Albert Einstein, the world-renowned physicist, endorsed calls for Jewish solidarity, but he too regarded any special measures as a result of the election as unnecessary. Einstein contended that the huge increase in the Nazi vote did not indicate a corresponding growth of anti-Semitism but was rather a symptom of despair in the face of depression and unemployment.¹⁵

The events in Germany were anxiously watched by many Jewish communities. Dr. Joseph Wirth, the leftist Catholic minister of the

¹³ B. Ammerman to Hoover, October 14, 1930, D.S. 862.4016/26, and Stimson to Ammerman, October 16, 1930, D.S. 862.00/2546.

¹⁴ Review of the year 5691, also 24th annual report of the American Jewish Committee, *AJYB*, XXXIII, pp. 75-78, 363-68; 25th annual report of the American Jewish Committee, *AJYB*, XXXIV, pp. 304-306; *C. V. Zeitung*, September 26, 1930, and *Juedische Rundschau*, October 1, 1930, quoted in Margaret T. Edelman-Muehsam, "Die Haltung der juedischen Presse," in Robert Weltsch, ed., *Deutsches Judentum: Aufstieg und Krise* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1963), pp. 358-61.

¹⁵ Philipp W. Fabry, *Mutmassungen ueber Hitler: Urteile von Zeitgenossen* (Duesseldorf: Droste-Verlag, 1969), p. 130. In contrast to Paucker, Fabry is critical of the C.V.'s record, pp. 128-29.

interior in Chancellor Heinrich Bruening's cabinet, who later, as an anti-Nazi refugee in the U.S., was employed by the American Jewish Committee, tried to reassure Jacob Landau, J.T.A.'s managing director, that the government would not "be driven along with the anti-Semitic flow." He repeated the argument that not all the millions of Nazi voters could be regarded as "enemies of the Jews."¹⁶ Bernard G. Richards, the executive director of the American Jewish Congress, rebuked Henry Luce's *Time* magazine for speaking in slurring terms of Jews leaving Germany and of alleged offers of Jewish money to appease the wrath of the Hitlerites.¹⁷ Stephen Wise, who would soon play an active role in the efforts to combat the Nazi policies, expressly distinguished between Germany "at its best and highest" and Nazi rowdyism, which "by its conduct dishonors Germany as truly as it dishonors Germany's loyal citizens." The *American Hebrew*, a magazine for American Jews which generally reflected an integrationist, anti-nationalist attitude, cautioned against panic and shared the views of the liberal Jews of the C.V. in Germany that

the successes of the anti-Semitic parties in Germany possess no quality of permanence. They cannot endure. We know the courage and spiritual stamina of our German brethren. They will be neither frightened nor dismayed.

Despite the ideological gap between that magazine and Cleveland's Zionist Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, he too believed, as he told his congregants at The Temple, that

German Jewry will know how to meet the present situation with patience, courage, and dignity. They will continue to identify themselves with every movement which makes for liberalism and against every movement which makes for reaction. Their destiny is bound up with the destiny of liberal thought.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, September 30, 1930. On the American Jewish Committee's cooperation with Dr. Wirth see Waldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-100.

¹⁷ American Jewish Congress, Press Release, October 6, 1930, and Henry R. Luce to Richards, October 7, 1930, American Jewish Congress Papers, Box 2.

¹⁸ *The American Hebrew*, October 24, 1930 (includes also the quote from Stephen Wise's statement to the American Jewish Congress convention in Washington); Abstract of the address "The Jewish World Scene Today" by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, October 19, 1930, Abba Hillel Silver Papers, The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio, Sermon 331.

American Jewish Committee leaders, most of whom were descended from German-Jewish families, discussed the situation in Germany at meetings of their executive committee and at a special *in camera* session which was convened during the Committee's annual meeting in November, 1930. At Waldman's suggestion, a number of influential Jews who were not actively associated with Jewish communal life were invited to attend the session. He hoped that a more broadly-based group of leaders would help to secure moral and financial support on a much larger scale; but the response was disappointing. Among other factors, growing business depression made it increasingly difficult to arouse interest in the problems of overseas Jews. In an incisive analysis presented at the meeting, Waldman, who had spent some time in Germany during the summer, stated:

What is now transpiring in Germany is of greater significance than any pogroms committed in Eastern Europe. Hitler's party is determined to destroy what the Jew has gained through emancipation—his equal status as a citizen. Should the Jewish position in Germany break down, automatically the Jewish position throughout Eastern Europe will suffer the same fate. This is likely adversely to affect the Jewish position throughout the world. It is this fact that makes the developments in Germany particularly disturbing for the Jews everywhere.

Waldman warned the American Jewish public of the dangerous repercussions on the American scene:

If anti-Semitism gains strength in Europe, if the anti-Semites succeed in putting through anti-Jewish laws, if the outlawing of the Jew by the *numerus clausus* and other measures becomes a permanent feature . . . it will have a suggestive influence on public opinion in the United States and adversely affect the position of the American Jew.

The future nonsectarian strategy of the American Jewish Committee, which often clashed with the plea of the American Jewish Congress for a special Jewish response, was implied in Waldman's call for combatting the forces of Fascism and international reaction on a broad front; a Fascist takeover of Germany would threaten the peace of the whole world. The fight against Fascism was proclaimed to be "the duty of all Jews and non-Jews alike

who wish to safeguard the principles of liberalism and tolerance."¹⁹

As Waldman recalled in his memoirs, those dire warnings, while taken seriously by some of the attendants, among them future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo, did not convince the whole audience. Many regarded the report as an exaggerated alarmist appraisal. Ludwig Vogelstein, the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, for instance, again voiced his belief that "Germany was the most civilized country on the European continent . . . and the German people too progressive and too humane to countenance the gangster conduct of Adolf Hitler and his colleagues." Only one person, the rabbi of a German-speaking congregation, demanded organized action.²⁰

Subsequently, the issue was again taken up at a leadership meeting that was summoned to hear a report by Dr. Bernhard Kahn, the Joint's European director, on the latest developments in Germany. The Swedish-born former secretary general of the German Jewish *Hilfsverein*, a son of Lithuanian Jewish parents, was regarded as one of the most astute observers of the Jewish situation in Europe. Kahn, while stressing the essential differences between anti-Jewish outbursts in earlier times and the much more dangerous Nazi anti-Semitism, feared that Nazi accession to power would first of all affect the 100,000 foreign Jews; neither did he think that German Jews would be disfranchised in such an event. Yet German anti-Semitism could not be confined within the frontiers of the Reich; it was overflowing into other countries. When asked what could American Jews do to help in this situation, Kahn did not exclude protests by American Jewish organiza-

¹⁹ Waldman's confidential memorandum on his trip to Europe, June-September, 1930, Warburg Papers, Box 269; minutes of the executive committee, November 8, 1930; American Jewish Committee Archives. Report by Morris Waldman submitted at a special executive session of the American Jewish Committee's annual meeting, November 9, 1930, quoted in Waldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-47. As Waldman later recalled, to face the emergency he hoped to obtain the active help—"brains, money, and influence"—of such people as Bernard M. Baruch, Walter Lippmann, Felix Frankfurter, Albert Lasker, Benjamin N. Cardozo, Louis Brandeis, the Schiffs, the Speyers, the Seligmans, George Blumenthal, the Strauses, the Guggenheims, and Adolph S. Ochs.

²⁰ Waldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48; Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-58.

tions, though he preferred arousing public opinion outside Germany. Kahn conceded that, under certain conditions, if any repressive measures were actually attempted, mass meetings such as those which took place after the Russian pogroms of 1881 and 1882 might have a positive effect.²¹

Following an exchange of letters with the C.V., Ernst Wallach, one of that organization's vice-presidents, discussed different measures for combatting anti-Semitism with Waldman during a visit to New York. Wallach advised arousing American public opinion by sponsoring a League for Human Rights and fighting Nazi propaganda in the U.S. He thought an additional fund of \$250,000 would help reduce the Hitler movement to a "negligible quantity." But such an amount was not forthcoming. After the 1929 crash, contributions had fallen off drastically, and in the early thirties the yearly budget of the American Jewish Committee did not exceed \$30,000, whereas the C.V. itself was collecting \$300,000 annually. Waldman argued that the Committee should refrain from any contribution unless it was able to raise a considerable sum. The British Joint Foreign Committee, which was also approached by the C.V., told the German organization that the affluent German Jewish community was quite capable of taking care of the anti-Semitic propaganda by itself. There was no great enthusiasm in the American Jewish Committee's ranks for the C.V.'s proposal to sponsor a scientific investigation into the question of race in order to refute Nazi theories. Some members, such as Max Kohler, called for a more militant policy regarding the German crisis. Kohler also stressed the importance of involving the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in the fight against anti-Semitism. Herbert H. Lehman suggested that

emphasizing the anti-Semitic phase of the National Socialist movement would not be as effective as making known to the American public the possible unfav-

²¹ Minutes of the executive committee, December 14, 1930; American Jewish Committee Archives; abstract of Kahn's statement at that meeting, Warburg Papers, Box 269. The meeting took place at the home of James N. Rosenberg. Bernhard Kahn, Miscellaneous file, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. For a very positive appraisal of Kahn's person see Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929-1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974), pp. 21-22, 252.

orable effects of Hitlerism upon American international relations and the antagonism of the National Socialists towards the U.S.²²

With the help of the Committee, a number of German Jewish organizations and clubs in New York initiated a new group to be known as the American Friends of German Jews for the purpose of influencing public opinion in the U.S. against the anti-Jewish agitation in Germany. A concise bulletin by Mildred S. Wertheimer on the Nazi program, the party and its scheme of organization was published in January, 1931, by the Foreign Policy Association headed by James S. McDonald, who was to serve as High Commissioner on Refugees in 1933-1935 and later, in 1948, as first American ambassador to Israel. Prominent Jewish members such as Felix Warburg and Frank Altschul ranked high among the contributors to that international-minded liberal organization.²³

Morris Waldman, for his part, started assembling material on anti-Semitism in Germany and elsewhere. The Committee also established a special department which dealt with German-sponsored anti-Semitic propaganda in the United States. This department was replaced after two years by attorney Wolfgang Schwabacher's Information and Service Associates and later on by the Survey Committee, which in the late thirties overshadowed the Committee itself.²⁴

III

A Number of Opinions

In the twenties, Jacob Landau, the managing director of the J.T.A., had undertaken surveys of anti-Semitism in Germany, Poland, and other countries, and had often visited various European capitals.²⁵ In 1931 he was preparing for an enlarged J.T.A.

²² Minutes of the executive committee, December 14, 1930; January 11, 1931; February 15, 1931; March 22, 1931; American Jewish Committee Archives.

²³ Minutes of the executive committee, *id.*, *ibid.*; "Recent Books on Hitlerism," paper read before "The Judeans," New York, December 18, 1932, by Morris D. Waldman, Waldman Papers, Box 664.

²⁴ Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-97.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

coverage of the events in Germany. In May he revisited Berlin and met with representatives of the various Jewish groups and of the government in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the situation and views of all parties concerned.

As Landau recorded in his memorandum to the American Jewish Committee,²⁶ the leaders of the C.V. told him that

any intervention of foreign committees in the German Jewish situation was undesirable. It would add fuel to the contention of the Hitlerites that the Jews in Germany are a foreign element and that their allegiance to the German nation and country was not undivided and would strengthen the belief that the Jews are an international entity.

The C.V. representatives claimed that Jewish protests abroad would make it much easier for the Nazis, should they ever come to power, "to take drastic measures against the Jews, by arousing the belief . . . that the Jews are the enemies of Germany."

The most outspoken among the C.V. leadership group was Dr. Bruno Weil. In his view, financial assistance from abroad was advisable only if a large sum, such as a million dollars, were to be offered. In general, "the Jews in Germany . . . should fight their own battles themselves." Germany should in no way

be compared to Poland, Roumania and other countries where Jewish committees, among them German Jewish committees, had intervened from time to time. These countries are semi-colonial states and Germany could not be placed on one plane with them.

Weil also doubted whether Jews in other countries were a "sufficiently important factor to bring about effective intervention." The Jews of Germany, he feared, might thus suffer all the disadvantages of such an interference without obtaining any benefits. American Jews should learn from the experience of German Jews, and American Jewry's fight against Nazism in the U.S. would have desirable repercussions in Germany. The C.V. leaders renewed

²⁶ Antisemitism in Germany, Memorandum by Jacob Landau, 1931, American Jewish Committee Archives. Also Landau (Berlin) to American Jewish Committee, May 19, 1931. Landau met with Dr. Julius Brodnitz, Dr. Alfred Wiener, Dr. Bruno Weil, and Ernst Wallach of the C.V.; Dr. Mark Wischnitzer of the Hilfsverein; Rabbi Leo Baeck of B'nai B'rith; Dr. Heinrich Stern of the Association of Liberal Jews; and Kurt Blumenfeld of the Zionist Federation.

their proposal for the creation of a scientific institute against anti-Semitism. If possible, an American institution such as the Carnegie Foundation should be induced to establish a department dealing with that subject though it might be financed by Jews. And while Landau's visit took place during a temporary lull in the crisis, C.V. leaders definitely opposed any public demonstrations abroad in case of an emergency. Forecasting their position after Hitler's accession to power early in 1933, they predicted that should such meetings occur they might be forced to protest against them.

According to Landau, not all the leaders of the C.V. and of other groups shared these anti-interventionist views, and it seems that he himself was sympathetic to this minority. There were those who believed that German Jews, if they shared Weil's views, would merely isolate themselves and weaken the chances of effectively countering the anti-Semitic peril. In a confrontation with an international anti-Semitic front, Jews should not hesitate to come out openly in favor of internationalism and oppose narrow nationalistic tendencies. Dr. Heinrich Stern, chairman of the Association of Liberal Jews, expressed his regret that, while there existed an international Jewish body like the Jewish Agency concentrating on Palestine, there was no agency dealing with the Jewish situation as a whole, particularly with the catastrophic conditions in Eastern and Central Europe. Similar opinions were voiced by Georg Bernhard, the former editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, and by Leo Simon, a prominent industrialist. They felt that European Jews were suffering all the disadvantages because they were considered to be bound by international solidarity, yet they were "deprived of all the advantages which the existence of such an international Jewish body would offer." The Jews, it was felt should follow the example of the Catholics who met at international conventions and did not hesitate to take the most definite interest in Catholic problems wherever they arose. Dr. Stern and Simon even endorsed the summoning of an international Jewish conference in which all organizations and leaders would participate.

The Zionists, of course, were diametrically opposed to the *Centralverein*, which they did not recognize as representative of German Jewry. Landau quoted an editorial in the *Juedische Rund-*

schau, the Zionists' official organ, which bluntly warned the German government that the Jews in New York "would come out in hundreds of thousands on the streets in order to protest against the occurrences in Germany." Unfortunately, these numbers were never reached, not even at the peak of the persecution in the Holocaust years.

Officials of the German Foreign Ministry whom Landau met in Berlin, such as Dr. Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff (later Hitler's ambassador to Washington), Egon Zechlin, and Dr. Moritz Sobernheim, the ministry's Jewish adviser on Jewish affairs, were anxious to minimize the importance of the National Socialist movement and particularly the extent to which anti-Semitism played a role in it. Even if the Nazis would rise to power, they "would hardly make an attempt to carry out their threats of placing the Jew in an inferior status of citizenship," these officials assured Landau. They stressed their interest in retaining Jewish goodwill, especially in the U.S., because of the political and financial influence of Jews abroad and the cultural ties between them and the German people. As a result of Landau's talk with Dieckhoff, the minister of the interior issued a statement against the desecration of Jewish cemeteries but, in keeping with the political climate in Germany, the J.T.A. was asked not to publicize that statement. Chancellor Bruening, who headed a coalition of conservative nationalists and members of the Catholic Center party, also did not find it advisable to grant an interview to the J.T.A. on the Jewish situation. In the same way, he rebuffed repeated requests of the Zionist Federation as well as of the C.V. to include a paragraph concerning the Jews and the anti-Semitic riots in one of his political addresses, or at least to make such a statement to a Jewish delegation. Members of the C.V. were finally received by General Wilhelm Groener, who had replaced Wirth as minister of the interior. But that meeting was not equal, in its political impact, to an interview with the chancellor.²⁷

In contrast to the assurances of the government officials, Landau was warned of the growing dangers of Nazi anti-Semitism by others that he met in Berlin. Dr. von Prittwitz und Gaffron, brother of the German ambassador to Washington, drew Lan-

²⁷ Paucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-33.

dau's attention to the expanding support for the Nazis within the Protestant church in Germany. From others he heard about the increase of the anti-Jewish sentiment among the *Auslandsdeutsche* (Germans living abroad). Hitler's burgeoning movement was also watched with concern by many of the American correspondents in Berlin, all of whom, except one, were non-Jews. A leading official of the Association of German Science who represented the Rockefeller Foundation in Germany told the visitor that a large part of the German intelligentsia was imbued with strong anti-Semitic sentiments.

Landau's conclusions, the wording of which was reminiscent of Waldman's pessimistic report to the American Jewish Committee half a year earlier, were no less alarmistic: "The Jews in Germany are on the brink of an abyss." Referring to the American Jewish public, which was hardly aware of the situation, Landau stated:

The effective combatting of anti-Semitism in Germany is a problem which concerns the American Jews no less than the European Jews. *Tua res agitur*. . . .
. . . If by aloofness and neglect the American Jew proves himself indifferent to this danger, the Jew in Germany is bound to lose this struggle against a menace which threatens all of Jewry.

But Landau's proposal with regard to the creation of a "Committee for the Protection of Human Rights" was in no way enough to contain the Nazi peril.²⁸

Although the Nazis failed in their efforts to bring about a change of government in 1931, rampant anti-Semitism persisted and anti-Jewish sentiment continued to pervade the German masses. On Saturday, September 12, the first day of Rosh Hashanah, scores of Jews returning from worship in the Berlin synagogues were assaulted in the Kurfuerstendamm neighborhood by hundreds of Nazi storm-troopers commanded by the head of the S.A. in Berlin, Count Helldorf. Only a miscalculation in the timing prevented a greater number of victims. Major English newspapers such as the London *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* termed these events the most anti-Semitic excesses in modern German history. The American public learned about the riot through the J.T.A., whose report was broadcast by the Associated Press. The C.V., in an open appeal, urged German Jews to coun-

²⁸ Landau memorandum, *ibid.*

teract the growing Nazi threat and protested the incitement to an anti-Jewish boycott. But the increased defense efforts by that organization were of no avail. Nazi influence in the winter of 1931/32 was on the rise, and Nazi students would soon launch a major attack on Jewish fellow students at Berlin University, where they had gained control of the student organization.²⁹

Upon his return from another sojourn in Europe in July-September, 1931, Waldman fully reaffirmed the findings of Jacob Landau, who had been considered by leading members of the Committee as too "gloomy a prophet."³⁰ The leadership of the AJJDC was told by its executive director, J.C. Hyman, of the deteriorating economic situation of the Jewish community in Berlin and its request for a loan of \$50,000 for constructive assistance to Jews in Germany.³¹ Yet no such funds were available. One should not forget that in 1931-1932 the contributions to the Joint had declined drastically. Suggestions had even been made of closing it down and maintaining only a skeleton office in New York.³² In the Committee, Waldman tried to revive his inconclusive efforts to involve a small number of rich and influential Jews in the fight against anti-Semitism. While objecting to the American Jewish Congress' campaign for a World Jewish Congress, he criticized the "laissez faire attitude" that characterized all the Jewish organizations engaged in protecting Jewish rights, including the American Jewish Committee. Landau expounded the importance of influencing the American press because of Germany's continuing great interest in U.S. financial and political assistance.³³ Moreover, at that time, American-German relations, which had reached their peak during Gustav Stresemann's stewardship of the Reich's foreign policy, displayed renewed strains.³⁴

²⁹ Memorandum of the subcommittee on Germany, meeting of October 8, 1931, Warburg Papers, Box 287; *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, September 15, 1931; December 13, 1931; December 27, 1931; *Juedische Rundschau*, September 15, 1931.

³⁰ Waldman, memorandum on visit to Europe, June 27-September 20, 1931, Warburg Papers, Box 287.

³¹ Memorandum by J.C. Hyman to the officers of the AJJDC, August 21, 1931, *ibid.*

³² Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

³³ Memorandum of the subcommittee on Germany, October 8, 1931, *ibid.*

³⁴ Arnold A. Offner, *American Appeasement: United States Foreign Policy and Germany, 1933-1938* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 2-9.

Dr. Herbert Feis, the State Department official later to become a prominent historian,

IV

Preparations for the Worst

In the winter of 1931-1932 Dr. Nahum Goldmann, who took an active part in the preparations for the World Jewish Congress, visited the United States, and, after talks with him and others, Stephen Wise proposed that the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee hold a conference on the situation in Germany. In addition, he suggested that prominent Americans should be asked to help in arousing public opinion against the Nazi agitation.³⁵ The representatives of both organizations met on January 28, 1932, in New York and decided to approach leading German Jews, whose names were to be agreed upon by the Congress and the Committee, with regard "to the best and most effective manner in which assistance might be rendered to them" by American Jewry.³⁶

Because of the long-standing differences of attitude and mentality between the ethnocentric activist Congress (favoring public action) and the cautious, elitist Committee (attuned to quiet backstage diplomacy), the drawing up of the communication to the German Jewish leadership encountered great difficulties. Some leading members of the Congress were unhappy with the time-consuming process after the initiative had been delayed so long and insisted upon immediate action. One of them called for the establishment of a committee "to feed the starving Jews in Germany"; only such a gimmick would arouse the American Jewish public and make it rally to the aid of German Jewry. Baruch Zuckerman of the Labor Zionists advised using influence and organizing mass meetings and protest parades before Hitler came to power, and urged the Congress not to be afraid of the charge of "international

predicted the Nazi takeover as early as December, 1931. Memo for Stimson, December 8, 1931, D.S. 862.00/2645A. Feis was at that time one of the very few Jews in the department. The German ambassador, Friedrich Wilhelm von Prittwitz und Saffron, tried to calm U.S. fears in a talk with Under Secretary of State William R. Castle. February 18, 1932, D.S. 862/2685.

³⁵ American Jewish Congress, minutes of the administrative committee, January 5, 1932, American Jewish Congress Papers, Box 2.

³⁶ Minutes of the executive committee, February 14, 1932, American Jewish Committee Archives.

Jewry." Only Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum counseled "infinite patience" in order to provide common action. In 1933 and later, he was to clash with the Committee because of his leading role in the anti-Nazi boycott movement.³⁷

The Committee leadership, on its part, demanded modification of the draft. Adler, though pessimistic with regard to the political situation in Germany, objected to any agitation by Jewish organizations and stressed the importance of fighting the Nazi propaganda in the U.S. He also opposed sending a delegation to Berlin. Adler did not want to leave the decision with regard to calling a conference of American and German Jews in the hands of the German representation, and upon his request the letter was rephrased. Others totally disapproved of sending a letter because they feared publicity. Felix Warburg, whose views carried much weight because of his central role in Jewish philanthropy, did not dismiss the impact abroad of American protests and utterances of senators but was convinced that a conference in Berlin or elsewhere in Germany could only cause harm. He warned against leading German Jews "to expect more from us in the way of cooperation than we are ready and able to give them." Despite the "inflamed brains" of millions of Hitler's supporters, he still believed that "if the Hitlerites should get into power . . . they will sober down, just as much as the Communists have in Russia and the Laborites have in England." Judge Horace Stern of Philadelphia inquired whether Mussolini could perhaps use his influence. Warburg was doubtful but suggested that Adler, through his contacts, should explore the Italian possibilities.³⁸ The more activist James N. Rosenberg already thought of threatening, in case of an emergency, a boycott of the North German Lloyd and the Hamburg-America line by Jewish passengers, who accounted for 40 percent of the customers of these lines.³⁹

³⁷ American Jewish Congress, minutes of the administrative committee, January 5, 1932, and February 16, 1932, *ibid.* Memorandum of conference of January 28, 1932, Adler Papers.

³⁸ Minutes of the executive committee, February 14, 1932, *ibid.* Adler to Sylvain Levi, February 18, 1932; Felix Warburg to Adler, February 18, 1932; Adler to Felix Warburg, February 19, 1932, Adler Papers; Adler to Warburg, February 18, 1932; Adler to Judge Julian W. Mack, February 25, 1932, Warburg Papers, Box 295.

³⁹ Jacob N. Rosenberg to Ludwig Vogelstein, February 24, 1932, Warburg Papers, Box 295.

The final draft of the communication approved by the Committee and by the Congress stressed that the undersigned did "under no circumstances think of taking sides with respect to an internal political problem in Germany or in any other country than our own." Even though the Bruening cabinet was still in power, it was assumed that mail addressed to Jews in responsible positions was being opened. Therefore the letter addressed to Dr. Ludwig Hollaender, the C.V.'s executive director, was dispatched through Louis Oungre of the Jewish Colonization Association (J.C.A.) in Paris. Hollaender was asked to consult leading members of all parts of the community regarding the action of American Jewry. The recipients acknowledged the arrival of the message and promised to bear the offer of assistance in mind if the situation should require action.⁴⁰

Early in 1932, the administrative committee of the American Jewish Congress called upon its leaders to approach prominent American public figures with regard to the Nazi anti-Jewish threat in Germany. Albert Einstein, who was visiting the U.S., told James Waterman Wise, Rabbi Wise's son and editor of *Opinion*, that statements by President Hoover, Secretary of State Henry Stimson or Senator William E. Borah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, maintaining that Germans were not "capable of medievalism" might be helpful in preventing Hitler's accession to power. Einstein added that, at the same time, Germany should be flattered as having been "the country of human liberation," advice that was soon followed by Stephen Wise and other Jewish leaders even after Hitler had become chancellor in January, 1933.⁴¹

Although Wise did not like Borah's recent statements about

Calls for an economic boycott of Germany by Jews in America and elsewhere, in case of a Nazi takeover, were voiced during the year in the Jewish press, for instance by the *Chicago Daily Jewish Courier*, edited by Dr. S. Melamed. See *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, August 4, 1932.

⁴⁰ Harry Schneiderman to Abraham H. Cohen, February 25, 1932, Adler Papers; Adler to Schneiderman, February 18, 1932, Warburg Papers, Box 295; Brodnitz, Hollaender, Baeck (C.V.) to American Jewish Congress and American Jewish Committee, May 6, 1932, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Memorandum from letter of James Waterman Wise to Stephen Wise, Wise Papers, Box 108.

developments in Germany, he met the senator in Washington in March, 1932, and asked him to issue a statement against Hitler's anti-Semitic program. The influential Republican was not at all excited about it and told Wise it might be much more effective if the President himself could be persuaded to make such a statement; he was ready to accompany Wise and Cyrus Adler to the White House. Adler objected and felt President Hoover should not be put in the embarrassing position of being obliged to refuse the request. Adolph S. Ochs of the *New York Times* also did not want to get involved, nor did another suggestion to take up the matter informally at the Geneva Disarmament Conference materialize. A leak by Scripps Howard's foreign editor concerning Adler's part in the solicitation of Borah caused an immediate crisis between the competing American Jewish Congress and the Committee. Jealous Congress leaders were upset that the president of the American Jewish Committee had gained publicity in the general press. Only an unequivocal denial by Adler prevented the collapse of their cooperation.⁴²

Whereas most of the Jewish leaders in Berlin opposed protests by Jewish organizations, they did not object to gentile expressions of support. Confidentially, they favored an appeal to the American administration and to senators in Washington.⁴³ Similarly, German Jewish leaders told representatives of British Jewry that the Bruening government attached great importance especially to Conservative public opinion:

... If a hint could be dropped in certain quarters that any outrages against Jews, or any violent anti-Jewish propaganda, would be regarded by English Conservatives with grave dismay, and would discredit the Hitler party in the eyes of leading British statesmen, such a hint would not be without its effect.

⁴² Minutes of the executive committee, March 13, 1932, American Jewish Committee Archives; American Jewish Congress, minutes of the administrative committee, March 29, 1932, American Jewish Congress Papers, Box 2.

⁴³ According to the minutes of the American Jewish Committee's executive committee, the J.T.A. received via London a confidential telegram requesting the Committee and the American Jewish Congress to approach President Hoover, Senator Borah and others. But it seems this was a reply to a question put to Ludwig Hollaender of the C.V. by J.T.A. correspondent Boris Smolar. Minutes of the executive committee, March 13, 1932; Auswaertiges Amt, Nachlass Sobernheim, 203/8, L 350087-91; quoted in Paucker, *op. cit.*, note 6, p. 282.

Chaim Weizmann, who visited Germany several times in the early thirties, was very much worried about the Jewish situation there. Before proceeding again to Germany, he contacted Robert Boothby, an anti-Nazi Conservative M.P. sympathetic to Weizmann. He soon concluded that emigration was the only hope for the survival of German Jews.⁴⁴ But most of the British Conservatives were more afraid of the—often exaggerated—Communist danger in Germany than of the Nazis. And although a few experienced American diplomats such as George Strausser Messersmith, the consul general in Berlin, watched Hitler's movement with growing concern despite assurances by Hermann Goering that the Nazis would not hurt U.S. business interests and warned German bankers and industrialists "that in bringing Hitler in they were destroying themselves,"⁴⁵ there was no hope of involving the isolationist administration, in the grip of a grave economic depression, in a problem which was regarded as a domestic German issue. This position was reinforced by the even more isolationist public opinion which was opposed to becoming embroiled in European affairs and by restrictionist fears of a flow of unwanted immigrants. Thus, despite the growing Nazi threat to the Jews in Germany, the chances for meaningful intercession on their behalf were indeed minimal, and the chances for any planned emergency emigration were not much better.

In February, 1932, Professor Sylvain Levi, president of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, suggested a meeting of the American Jewish Committee, the British Joint Foreign Committee, and the Alliance for "considering possible steps for the protection of alien Jews in Germany, in the event of the coming into power of the Hitlerites." His British counterpart, while calling for preparations for an urgent emigration of 100,000 Jews from Germany, preferred postponing the conference until summer. The Committee was represented at the Paris deliberations by Roger W. Straus. Again the importance of engaging Protestant spokesmen to condemn

⁴⁴ Chaim Weizmann to O.E. d'Avigdor Goldsmid, January 15, 1932, Chaim Weizmann Papers, Rehovot, Israel.

⁴⁵ Messersmith to Frankfurter, May 31, 1940, Felix Frankfurter Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Box 27; Sackett to Stimson on Alexander K. Wiley's talk with Goering, December 11, 1931, D.S. 862.00/2656.

“the intrinsic antireligious and anticultural nature of the Nazi attitude toward Jews” was stressed, as well as influencing statesmen and public opinion in the Western democracies.⁴⁶

When the possibility of convening a Jewish conference dealing with an emergency had been brought up earlier in the year in a meeting with Dr. Bernhard Kahn, the European director of the Joint who until 1933 directed its activities from Berlin, he did not regard it as helpful:

It is not considered advisable and proper that Jewish organizations should now come together to discuss the fate of the German Jews. It cannot be assumed that such conferences will remain secret and the dangers that would ensue to the Jews in Germany from the fact that outside Jewry is now meddling in the German internal affairs will be greater than any possible help that those conferences may momentarily bring.

Like many others, Kahn emphasized the importance of calling attention to the Nazi danger—not only to Jews but to the entire European cultural heritage—by the international press and prominent non-Jews. On the Jewish aid scene he preferred a small meeting of influential people from the U.S., Britain, and France, in case money was needed for a large emergency and an international action was to be initiated. Yet despite his pessimism with regard to the stateless and foreign Jews and his forecast that a great many German Jews might also flee due to Nazi repression and pogrom-like excesses, he asserted that no meaningful preparation for the rescue of Jews from Germany could be made because it would only incite passion and encourage the Nazis. It was impossible to approach neighboring countries with regard to asylum. If persecution started, they would not be able to push the refugees back, but no states would guarantee in advance the right of asylum.⁴⁷

The differing views of American Jewish leaders with reference to the approaching German Jewish crisis were voiced in Anglo-

⁴⁶ Minutes of the executive committee, March 13, 1932, American Jewish Committee Archives; D'Avigdor Goldsmid to Adler, February 29, 1932; Adler to Paul Baerwald, March 14, 1932; Adler to d'Avigdor Goldsmid, April 14, 1932; Adler Papers. Paris Conference of Allied Associations, June 27, 1932, Joint Foreign Committee Papers, Board of Deputies Archives, Woburn House, London.

⁴⁷ Bernhard Kahn's memorandum on the situation in Germany, February 2, 1933, Warburg Papers, Box 289. English version in Waldman Papers, Box 639 (A-L).

Jewish and Yiddish newspapers, in sermons to congregations, and in public meetings. In March, 1932, *Opinion* published a symposium on that subject. Bernard S. Deutsch, who in 1932–1933 served as president of the American Jewish Congress, called upon enlightened public opinion to mobilize against Hitlerism, warning that “any impairment of the legal status of the Jews in Germany would sadly affect the struggle for equality and justice in other European lands.” Israel N. Thurman and Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum joined the call for action and expressed their belief that the Jewish organizations would rise to the occasion. Rabbi Louis I. Newman decried the hush-hush and “pianissimo tactics.” On the other hand, Roger Straus advised relying on the American Jewish Committee, William W. Cohen recommended following the counsel of German Jewish leaders, and Estelle M. Sternberger suggested the drafting of a bill of human rights. Louis L. Mann mentioned the importance of challenging “the mob psychology of Hitlerite hysteria.” Samuel Dickstein, the Democratic congressman from New York who in 1934–1935 was to conduct the anti-Nazi hearings in the House committee headed by Representative John McCormack, sided with the activists and argued that American Jews must take a definite stand. Editorially, *Opinion* urged “vigorous and fearless execution” of preventive action.⁴⁸ In the months before Germany’s presidential election, the growing menace of Hitlerism caused much concern even to the anti-interventionist and integrationist *American Hebrew*. Yet after Hindenburg’s Pyrrhic victory, it again recovered its faith in the “stability and practicality of the German people.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The symposium appeared on March 7, 1932. Editorial on “American Jews and the German Crisis,” February 22, 1932. See also Stephen Wise, “German Jewry at the Crossroads,” *Opinion*, February 8, 1932.

Abba Hillel Silver told his congregants at The Temple that he was sure Hitler would disenfranchise the Jews and deny them their legitimate political and economic opportunities, because in his eyes the Jews were responsible for the revolution and the establishment of the Republic. The Cleveland rabbi, who at that point did not play any major role on the national Jewish scene, called Hitler a menace to the peace and stability of the world and predicted his power would increase if the present situation in Germany was to continue, yet his party would “go to pieces as soon as Germany assumes her normal life.”

Abstract of the address “Haman-Hitler,” March 20, 1932, Abba Hillel Silver Papers, Sermon 379.

⁴⁹ “The Growing Menace of Hitlerism,” *The American Hebrew*, November 20, 1931; “The German Elections,” *ibid.*, March 18, 1932.

A major bone of contention between the Committee and the Congress remained the latter's insistence on convening a World Jewish Conference in Geneva as a preparatory step for a World Jewish Congress. The gap dividing both organizations on that issue also made cooperation on the German issue much more difficult. The Committee repeatedly warned the Congress leadership that "any action on the part of international Jewry, or of Jews outside of Germany, would singularly rebound to the advantage of Hitler." But Wise and his colleagues were resolved to proceed in their endeavor. In contrast to the acculturated and socially more prominent group close to the Committee who were afraid of ethnocentric emphasis and of the charge of dual loyalties, the American Jewish Congress supported the creation of a World Jewish Congress to bridge the gap between assimilated Jews in the West and the nationally conscious ones in the East, in the same way as it urged unification of the community at home.⁵⁰

In addition to the American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Conference was sponsored by the Comité des Délégations Juives headed by Leo Motzkin. It was supported by the Zionist organizations; though important Zionist leaders such as Chaim Weizmann, Abba Hillel Silver, and Kurt Blumenfeld had some doubts about the idea and preferred to concentrate all efforts on Palestine.⁵¹ Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum had voiced alarm with regard to the deteriorating situation of the Jews in Germany and all over Europe at the preceding annual session of the American Jewish Congress in Washington:

An avalanche of disaster and dismay has swept over the Jewish settlements. Anti-Semitism has become an almost universal creed, the purgatory of all sins

⁵⁰ See, for instance, the exchange of letters between Felix M. Warburg and Abraham H. Cohen. Warburg to Cohen, July 29, 1932, and Cohen to Warburg, August 2, 1932, Warburg Papers, Box 295. As a matter of fact, Dr. Nahum Goldmann had recommended from the beginning that only organizations and personalities with a clear national program and no assimilationists should be invited. American Jewish Congress, minutes of a meeting of the Committee on Problems in Foreign Lands, May 31, 1932, Wise Papers, Box 87.

⁵¹ American Jewish Congress, minutes of a meeting of the Committee on Problems in Foreign Lands, *ibid.*; Blumenfeld to Weizmann, January 5, 1932; Weizmann to N. Torczyner, August 1, 1932; Weizmann Papers.

While Weizmann thought the idea of a World Jewish Congress might "assume a real importance in view of the present situation in world Jewry," he had "no confidence at all in any enterprise managed by Wise," and in the manner this particular affair had been managed.

and the panaceas for all ills of the world—a true mass psychosis. . . . Germany will be Nazi-ruled . . . the stage is gradually set for the greatest spectacle since Nero set fire to Rome—the fire test of Jewish endurance under the Nazi regime scheduled to come into power.

Unlike Stephen Wise, the farsighted Tenenbaum strongly opposed international disarmament:

The United States, which has a vital interest in the recovery of the world, must lend its powerful influence for the suppression of international crime and racial war.⁵²

At the conference in Geneva, representatives of German Jewry tried to dissuade Dr. Tenenbaum from delivering a similar paper on the Nazi menace. The conference opened two weeks after the Nazis had scored their biggest success and emerged as the largest party of the collapsing republic (230 out of 608 seats, and 13.7 million votes) and was attended by delegates of the German Zionists and related groups, but not by the C.V. Leo Motzkin described the position of the German Jews as much worse and more alarming than they had portrayed it. Stephen Wise's opening address was the target of vicious attacks by the *Voelkischer Beobachter* and other Nazi papers.⁵³

In 1932, the last year before Hitler's accession to power in Germany, American Jewish organizations intensified their efforts to engage Christian support in the fight against Nazism and anti-Semitism. At a goodwill seminar in Washington sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a direct condemnation of Hitlerism as suggested by James Waterman Wise was not adopted. Instead a statement by Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, the secretary general of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, was passed and sent to the Lutheran Church in Germany. A similar statement was made by Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, one of the most eminent clergymen in America. The Washington

⁵² American Jewish Congress, press release, annual session, June 25-27, 1932, Washington, D.C., Board of Deputies Archives, Woburn House, London, Box 142.

⁵³ Moshe Gottlieb, "The Anti-Nazi Boycott Movement in the American Jewish Community" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1967), pp. 4-5; A. Leon Kubowitzki, *Unity in Dispersion* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 1948), p. 32; *Juedische Rundschau*, July 26, 1932; August 16, 1932; August 19, 1932; Warburg to Abraham Cohen, September 9, 1932, Warburg Papers, Box 295.

seminar was also attended by Michael Williams, the editor of the liberal Catholic *Commonweal*, who in 1933 was to call for the immediate emigration of 200–300 thousand Jews from Germany. The American Jewish Committee tried to expand the activities of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, co-chaired by Newton D. Baker, President Wilson's Secretary of War, and by Catholic historian Carlton J.H. Hayes and Roger Straus. Dr. Everett R. Clinchy, the Conference's executive director, had been stirred by assaults on Jewish students at Berlin University. There were, of course, many Protestant churchmen who hesitated to identify with the Jewish cause. Rev. Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, for instance, was impressed by the overwhelming German quest for national unity and regarded the Jewish fight for liberalism, rationalism, and internationalism as "ridiculing the things most sacred to the Lutheran and the evangelical."⁵⁴

Both because of their immediate concern and because of the possible impact on Nazism in Germany, American Jewish organizations and individuals paid more attention to Nazi activities in the U.S. itself. Most of the Nazi members and supporters came from the half million post-war immigrants from Germany, many of whom had fought in the Kaiser's army and never made peace with the Weimar Republic. Teutonia, one of the first National Socialist organizations in the United States, had been set up in Detroit as early as 1924; branches soon sprang up in Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and New York. In 1931 the Teutonia federation was superseded by the New York *Gau* of the Nazi party, and the Nazis increased their activities especially in the New York and New Jersey area where more than two million Jews lived. The J.T.A. and some of the Jewish newspapers exposed Nazi activities; they also were denounced by the Congress and Committee. Most of the general American press regarded the German immigrant Nazi groups as unimportant and took a tolerant attitude towards them. Occa-

⁵⁴ Minutes of the executive committee, March 13, 1932, American Jewish Committee Archives; Wise to Martin Rosenbaum, May 12, 1932; Wise to Michael Williams, March 16, 1932, Wise Papers, Box 82; Clinchy to Roger Straus, July 1, 1932, Adler Papers; Henry Smith Leiper, "Antisemitism in Germany," *The American Hebrew*, December 23, 1932. Williams' appeal on mass emigration quoted in Luther to Foreign Ministry, June 23, 1933, German Embassy Records, AHA I, 19/679-85, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

sionally they were condemned as an un-American growth by the New York *World Telegram* and even by Victor Ridder's *New Yorker Staatszeitung*, one of the main newspapers of German-America.⁵⁵

In December, 1931, the Jewish newspaperman Julius Klein of Chicago—promoted in World War II to the rank of a U.S. general and later in the fifties the chief lobbyist for the West German Adenauer government in Washington—complained to the Department of Justice about the actions of the Hitlerites “who besides being against the present German government [of Chancellor Bruening] are conducting a vicious campaign against the Jewish race.” At that point, a number of Jews of German origin still participated in German American societies and contributed to their foundations. Members of the American Jewish Committee kept in touch with the Carl Schurz Foundation, headed by Jacob G. Schurman, the former ambassador to Berlin, and efforts were also being made to induce the Steuben Society, dedicated to the Americanization of German immigrants, to cooperate in getting American public opinion to express itself against Hitler.⁵⁶

V

A Response Too Little and Too Late

The last Reichstag elections before Hitler's accession to power, in which his party lost 34 seats and two million votes, at first were regarded as inconclusive. Several weeks before the vote of November 6, Sidney Matz conducted another inquiry among Berlin's leading Jews on behalf of the American Jewish Congress and was again told that Hitler would not take over the government and that any intervention was unwarranted.⁵⁷ Early in January,

⁵⁵ Minutes of the American Jewish Committee's executive committee and the American Jewish Congress' administrative committee, *passim*; 26th annual report of the American Jewish Committee, *AJYB*, XXXV, pp. 257-300. For the Nazi movement in the U.S. before 1933 see Sander A. Diamond, “The Years of Waiting: N.S. in the U.S., 1922-1933,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LIX (March, 1970), pp. 256-71.

⁵⁶ Julius Klein to Department of Justice, December 8, 1931, Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 5-1-9; minutes of the executive committee, February 14, 1932, American Jewish Committee Archives.

⁵⁷ Stephen S. Wise, *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1949), pp. 234-35.

1933, Dr. Alfred Hirschberg of the C.V. stated that Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher's program indicated a more hopeful outlook for German Jewry:

A government program that seeks to moderate the political conflicts, and to alleviate the economic distress, must result in lessening the load that is pressing down heavily on the spirit of our people, and easing the sense of gloom and bitterness that is fertile soil for the agitators of prejudice and boycott.⁵⁸

Yet these forecasts proved wrong, and the intrigues of the dismissed Chancellor Franz von Papen together with President Hindenburg's camarilla against Schleicher's short-lived cabinet prepared the way for Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30.

A more important election took place on November 8 in the United States where, in the midst of the great depression, the incumbent Republican president was voted out of office and a new era began in American and American Jewish history with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. From the beginning, Roosevelt appealed to a broad cross-section of the American Jewish community; the Jewish support for him was destined to increase from year to year, from election to election. The New Deal administration was soon to help the Jewish masses which, like many other Americans, had been severely hit by the depression and to open up new vistas for many individuals. But as regards the German Jewish crisis and, subsequently, the Jewish catastrophe in Europe, the administration would definitely disappoint them, in the same way that it refrained from satisfying Jewish demands for the full implementation of the national home in Palestine. President Hoover's public charge order of September, 1930, which had drastically reduced immigration, even in the framework of the quota system, would remain valid for a number of years. Roosevelt himself had endorsed restrictionist policies favored by the American Federation of Labor. He had not taken issue with Hoover's cynical conclusion (in October, 1932!) that

with the growth of democracy in foreign countries, political persecution has largely ceased. There is no longer a necessity for the U.S. to provide an asylum for those persecuted because of conscience.

⁵⁸ *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, January 10, 1933.

Nor did he wish to change his position after his victory at the polls.⁵⁹ Moreover, because of the priority of the big domestic issues, he would refrain from antagonizing the new German government in spite of his hatred for Hitler and the Nazis. Thus there was not much room for American governmental intercession except the protection of the rights, life, and property of American citizens.⁶⁰

When, in January, 1933, Adler discussed with Judge Irving Lehman, a vice-president of the American Jewish Committee and a brother of the newly elected Governor Herbert H. Lehman, the possibility of requesting a meeting with the President-elect and with Cordell Hull, the Secretary-of-State-designate, Lehman, a friend of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, reminded his colleague of the "limitations which all nations must accept in regard even to humanitarian diplomacy." He conceded that the definition of American interests had become narrower since the World War and expressed doubts whether

... the State Department can make any representations to foreign governments on behalf of any group of oppressed subjects of such governments unless American interests, however widely defined, are directly or indirectly infringed by such oppression or the foreign government has been guilty of conduct so outrageous that if continued the foreign nation may properly be regarded as removed from the community of civilized states.

Lehman warned that if the Committee would ask for a more resolute approach it would not meet with a sympathetic reception and suggested postponement of the high-level conference till May or June.⁶¹ Adler and other leaders of the Committee were still discussing at that late date the difficulties American Jewish students were having in being admitted to German universities. Early in February, they received another request from Max Warburg and the

⁵⁹ Hoover quoted in Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: Official U.S. Policy toward European Jewish Refugees* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), p. 22; Willard Range, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's World Order* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1959), pp. 190-91.

⁶⁰ Herbert Feis, *1933: Characters in Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1966), pp. 159-60.

⁶¹ Irving Lehman to Adler, January 20, 1933 (in response to Adler's letter of January 12, 1933), Adler Papers.

C.V. for financial aid for wider distribution of defense literature against the anti-Jewish agitation.⁶²

Supreme Court Justice Louis Dembitz Brandeis, Roosevelt's "old Isaiah," talked in the same terms as would Irving Lehman, six weeks after Hitler had become chancellor: an immediate appeal, in the midst of his overwhelming responsibilities, would make a bad impression on Roosevelt.⁶³ When Stephen Wise, who had not supported Roosevelt in the election campaign, regarding him as "utterly untrustworthy," changed his mind about Roosevelt after the Nazi anti-Jewish boycott, he was rebuffed; no acknowledgment came from the White House.⁶⁴ Abba Hillel Silver, Wise's future rival for the American Zionist leadership, tried in vain to obtain an interview concerning the Jewish situation with Dr. Ernst ("Putzi") Hanfstaengl, the Harvard-educated chief of the Nazi party's foreign press section. The evening of the *Machtergreifung* [seizure of power], the Cleveland Reform rabbi was in Berlin and attended a program sponsored by the *Juedisch-Liberale Zeitung* at which the Jewish place in both German and general liberalism was hailed.⁶⁵

During these first days, even Wise questioned for a moment "whether things are going to be as bad as we dreaded." The only thing he feared was that if Hitler could not "do the things he promised his people to do in other directions, he may finally decide that he must yield to his fellow Nazis in the matter of anti-Semitism."⁶⁶ And whereas Congress activists openly advocated that American Jews employ all means in the face of the emergency, the editorialist of the *American Hebrew* thought that the con-

⁶² Minutes of the executive committee, February 12, 1933, American Jewish Committee Archives; "Jewish Students from America Have Difficulty in Germany," translation from *Forverts*, January 13, 1933, *ibid.*

⁶³ Wise to Mack, March 8, 1933, Wise Papers, Box 115.

⁶⁴ Wise to Frankfurter, September 8, 1932, *ibid.*, Box 108. Wise to his wife, May, 1933; *The Personal Letters of Stephen Wise*, eds. Justine Wise Polier and James Waterman Wise (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1956), p. 221; Wise to Roosevelt, May 2, 1933, D.S. 862.4016/1001; McIntyre to Hull, May 19, 1933, and memo of the State Department's West European Division, May 31, 1933, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Silver to Hanfstaengl, February 1, 1933, Abba Hillel Silver Papers, Correspondence, Sabbatical; program of the meeting sponsored by the *Juedisch-liberale Zeitung*, January 30, 1933, *ibid.*, 12-3-6.

⁶⁶ Wise to Kohnstamm, February 1, 1933, Wise Papers, Box 82.

servatives Hindenburg and Papen had taken "a leaf out of the book of Abraham Lincoln, brought their enemies into the camp where they can watch them, possibly bend them into the twig that shall make the newer German tree." He endorsed the C.V.'s short-sighted and false slogan: "We calmly wait," and pleaded that there be no mass meetings, no protest, no irresponsible speech-making.⁶⁷

To sum up, Hitler's momentous rise to power on January 30, 1933, found American Jewish leaders—as well as other Jewish leaders of communities in the Western democracies—divided and unprepared to deal with the major challenge to Jewish existence in Germany and on a global scale. There was neither hope for meaningful diplomatic intercessions and for rapid mobilization of world public opinion, nor for any practical plans for emigration and rescue. A number of American Jewish leaders were well informed about the threatening nature of the National Socialist movement and Hitler's anti-Semitic doctrine, as were leaders of the German Jewish community. They became involved in the American-German-Jewish triangle from the very beginning, long before Hitler's appointment as chancellor. But despite the somber warnings and dire forebodings, many still cherished the hope that the worst would not come true, that the Nazis perhaps would "sober down," and that their policies would not be implemented.

American Jews in general, people from different walks of life, were affected by the economic crisis and not very aware of the full dimensions of the Nazi threat. Their organizational disunity, the decline in philanthropy after the crash of the stock market, made any response in case of an emergency more difficult, and the hostility towards Jews and other immigrants of "inferior races" caused a further strengthening of restrictionist practices. But in the circumstances of the late twenties and early thirties even a more united and better organized American Jewish community enlisting more Jewish talent, money and influence would have encountered insurmountable difficulties in securing preventive steps to protect German Jews from a dangerous enemy not yet in power. Much of the support America had extended to defending human dignity in

⁶⁷ "Jews Calmly Await Hitler's Policies," *The American Hebrew*, February 3, 1933. See also "German Jews Must Not Surrender," *ibid.*, March 3, 1933.

earlier times had been weakened due to the post-Versailles disillusionment, and the interpretation of U.S. interests had become narrower. Indeed, the deepening depression, affecting millions of Americans, only added more hurdles to immigration under the quota system, and news from abroad made little impact on American consciousness.

Despite Roosevelt's Wilsonian origins, the Democratic victory at the polls in November, 1932, did not change this basic condition. Though American-German relations had become less friendly after the death of Stresemann, the revolutionary and terrorist character of the Nazi party and the full implications of its anti-Jewish campaign were not understood except by a few diplomats, churchmen, intellectuals, and journalists. Even after Hitler's accession to power, Washington's concern with the Nazi racial policies was marginal, though the doctrine and its practices were condemned by American officials informally and were viewed with disgust by a major part of liberal public opinion. The isolationist conservatism and the conflicting views and interests of different social and ethnic groups were to inhibit Jewish efforts to arouse a broad spectrum of the public to the Nazi danger. After 1937, direct American diplomatic engagement on behalf of the refugees fitted the general trend of a more active anti-Nazi foreign policy. But despite the mounting terror in Germany, the initiatives of the Roosevelt administration in aiding persecuted Jews were very disappointing, and no realistic proposals for a mass rescue were made.

This is not to excuse the shortcomings of the Jewish communal response in the thirties. One hopes, however, that today's ethnic groups have learned that the success of their influence on the shaping of American foreign policy must be dependent on the cooperation and support of the entire range of organizations within that group. Furthermore, the appeal must be taken successfully to the broader American community, and must appear to complement American national interests. It is unfortunate that American Jewry, today so successful in applying these lessons of history to a number of situations, has had to learn them at the expense of millions of Jewish lives.

The Jewish Community of Hartford, Connecticut, 1880–1929

SANDRA HARTWELL BECKER
RALPH L. PEARSON

The image of the thrifty, God-fearing New England Yankee¹ has long obscured the fact that in the nineteenth century and first three decades of the twentieth, New England cities and towns became home for tens of thousands of immigrants from Ireland² and later from southern and eastern Europe.³ Their destination was usually one of the towns or cities with opportunities for employment in local industries or factories, and that meant concentration in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In fact, Samuel Koenig concluded in his late 1930's study of Connecticut immigrants that "with the exception of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, Connecticut has a larger proportion of foreign stock in its population than any State of the Union."⁴

¹ See, for example, John Darnton, "Charges of Racism Tarnish Waterbury's Yankee Image," *New York Times*, March 24, 1969, p. 47.

² A pioneer in remedying this neglect has been Oscar Handlin. See, for example, Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790–1880: A Study in Acculturation* (rev. ed., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959).

³ Stephan Thernstrom documented clearly the immigrant's socio-economic adjustment to Boston in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in his book *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880–1970* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973).

⁴ Samuel Koenig, *Immigrant Settlements in Connecticut: Their Growth and Character-*

Sandra Hartwell Becker is employed at Wamogo Regional High School in Litchfield, Connecticut. Her research interests include women's and urban history.

Ralph L. Pearson is Dean of Community Research and Services and a professor of history at Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Kentucky.

With the exception of Oscar Handlin's pioneering study of the Irish in Boston, historians are only now beginning to examine the important role of immigrant groups in the life of New England towns and cities over the past century and one-half. That interest reflects new methodological tools being used to understand the emergence of urban America, as well as the recognition that immigrant groups have had a significant impact upon the continuing evolution of American culture.

Our paper responds to the awareness that America's cultural mainstream is created by many small rivulets, and that each is altered by interaction with others. We feel, too, that our understanding of America in general, and New England in particular, will increase as we understand the life of the individual groups who have contributed their culture to the total community. We chose, therefore, to study carefully one ethnic group, in one particular New England city, in one particular time period: the Jewish community of Hartford, Connecticut, from 1880-1929.⁵

Most studies of urban New England and its immigrant popula-

istics, Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers' Project for the State of Connecticut (Hartford, Connecticut, 1938), p. 12.

⁵ Of all the urban Jewish communities, New York City Jews have been studied most extensively. See, for example, Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962); Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976); and Arthur Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922* (New York, 1970). Among the studies of New England Jewish communities are S. Broches, *Jews in New England: Historical Study of Jews in Massachusetts, 1650-1750* (New York, 1942); S. Broches, *Jews in New England: Jewish Merchants in Colonial Rhode Island* (New York, 1942); Leon Hühner, *The Jews of New England (Other Than Rhode Island) Prior to 1800*, reprint of 1903 publication of the American Jewish Historical Society (West Cornwall, Connecticut, 1973); Morris Axelrod, et al., *A Community Survey for Long Range Planning: A Study of the Jewish Population of Greater Boston* (Boston, 1967); Sidney Goldstein, *The Greater Providence Jewish Community: A Population Survey* (Providence, Rhode Island, 1964); Albert H. Belsky, *The Jewish Community of Holyoke, Massachusetts, 1920-1940*, Senior thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1968; Benjamin Band, *Portland Jewry: Its Growth and Development* (Portland, Maine, 1955); Myron Samuelson, *The Story of the Jewish Community of Burlington, Vermont* (Burlington, Vermont, 1976); Esther Sulman and Leonard J. Goldstein, *A Goodly Heritage: The Story of the Jewish Community in New London, 1860-1955* (New London, 1955).

Rudolf Glanz wrote an interesting essay in the 1940's which examined changing perceptions of the characteristics of Yankees and Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries. Rudolf Glanz, "Jew and Yankee: A Historic Comparison," *Jewish Social Studies*, 6 (1944), 3-30.

tion have focused upon Massachusetts, with particular emphasis upon Boston. We shift attention to a Connecticut city which, though not as large or as renowned nationally as Boston, is, perhaps, historically a more accurate paradigm of other New England cities than is Boston. This is certainly true of the Connecticut cities of Bridgeport, New Haven and Waterbury, all of which share a similar demographic profile with Hartford during the past century.⁶ All experienced large in-migrations from southern and eastern Europe during the decades between 1880 and 1929. With few exceptions, the four Connecticut cities received their largest share of immigrants from the same countries. The 1920 census provides the following picture:

Country of Birth of Foreign Stock

<i>Bridgeport</i>	<i>Hartford</i>
Italy, 17,586	Ireland, 20,930
Ireland, 16,124	Russia, 20,776
Hungary, 15,875	Italy, 14,307
Russia, 14,630	
<i>New Haven</i>	<i>Waterbury</i>
Italy, 34,558	Italy, 18,756
Ireland, 24,862	Ireland, 16,522
Russia, 20,470	Russia, 13,496

Of the four cities, Hartford had the largest Jewish community during the four decades of the most intense European immigration to the United States, 1880–1929. Beginning with about 1,000 in 1890, the Jewish population grew to over 16,000 by the 1920's. It is difficult to provide exact decennial demographic data for the Hartford Jewish community during this period because, as Samuel Koenig observed, “. . . they are not classified separately in the United States Censuses.” As a result, “in recording their growth,

⁶ Note, for example, the similar growth patterns of the four cities between 1880 and 1920:

	<i>Bridgeport</i>	<i>Hartford</i>	<i>New Haven</i>	<i>Waterbury</i>
1880	27,643	42,015	62,883	17,806
1890	48,866	53,520	86,045	28,646
1900	70,996	79,850	108,027	45,859
1910	102,054	98,815	133,605	73,146
1920	143,555	138,036	162,537	91,715

we are forced to rely on unofficial estimates in which the figures given include all those who profess to belong to that people, regardless of nativity and country of origin."⁷ With that problem in mind, we studied a number of sources and developed the following profile for the five-decade period:

1880 ⁸	800
1890 ⁹	1,158
1900 ¹⁰	2,000
1910 ¹¹	6,687
1920 ¹²	16,000
1930 ¹³	27,000

By 1970 the Jewish population of Greater Hartford reached 30,000, retaining its position as the largest Jewish community in Connecticut and the fifteenth largest in the nation.¹⁴ Why Eastern European Jews selected Hartford, and their adjustment to their new home are the questions which provide the framework of our inquiry. Of special interest is the way immigrant Jews responded to the tensions created by the impulse both to assimilate and to retain their cultural identity.

⁷ Koenig, p. 20.

⁸ This is an estimate based upon data given by Silverman, p. 97, and our own analysis of the 1880 census reports.

⁹ "A Religious Census: Hartford Churches and Denominations and Their Work," *New York Times*, February 2, 1890, p. 12.

¹⁰ Koenig, p. 34.

¹¹ This is probably a conservative estimate, based upon data reported under the classification "Russia and Finland" for "Foreign-born Population By Country of Birth in Cities Having from 25,000 to 250,000 inhabitants." Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: Abstract of the Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 211.

¹² *Eleventh Annual Report of the United Jewish Charities of Hartford, 1923* (Hartford, 1923), p. 17.

¹³ A figure based upon the 1927 report in Harry Schneiderman, ed., *The American Jewish Yearbook, September 23, 1930, to September 11, 1931* (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 223.

¹⁴ Rabbi Morris Silverman, *Hartford Jews, 1659-1970* (Hartford, Connecticut, 1970), pp. 9, 31, 100. Rabbi Silverman's book is the most complete study we have of the 300 years of Jewish life in Hartford. Our essay not only supplements the information he provides about the period 1880-1929, but also suggests interpretations of the Jewish experience in Hartford which Rabbi Silverman does not include in his work. See also Rabbi Morris Silverman, "The History of the Jews in Hartford," *Hartford Courant*, January 2, 1955, Section 1.

We believe our study reveals a successful response by Hartford Jews to the pull of assimilation and separatism. On a more general level, it provides further evidence that the recent cultural life of New England, far from being the product only of Yankee ingenuity, reflects the pluralistic influences characteristic of much of the cultural life of the rest of the nation.

Early Hartford Jewry

Although the records of colonial Connecticut document the presence of Jews in Hartford as early as 1659, the Jewish community did not establish continuously functioning institutions in the city until the 1840's. In 1843, Beth Israel was founded as the first Jewish congregation in Hartford.¹⁵ Meeting in a private home, the handful of members of Beth Israel underscored their commitment to the congregation by assessing themselves for support of a rabbi and a "shocket" or Kosher butcher. By 1851 the congregation had grown to fifty members, with twenty-five pupils in its religious school. In 1856 the former First Baptist Church, located at 400 Main Street, was purchased, renamed Touro Hall, and became the center of Jewish civic, religious and cultural life in mid-nineteenth century Hartford.¹⁶

Two suggestions, in addition to the growth of the American Jewish community as a result of the German immigration, can be put forth to explain why the Hartford Jewish community began not only to increase in population in the 1840's, but also to establish permanent institutions. Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman, author of a history of Congregation Beth Israel, argues that Central European Jewish farmers who settled in Connecticut sent not only their eggs and chickens to the city for marketing, but also their sons for an education. The sons, he theorizes, subsequently established homes in Hartford.¹⁷

¹⁵ Abraham J. Feldman, *Remember the Days of Old: The Centennial Volume of Congregation Beth Israel, Hartford, Connecticut* (Hartford, 1943), p. 49. Silverman argues that a more accurate date for the founding of Congregation Beth Israel is 1847. Silverman, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ Feldman, p. 49. See also Albert E. Van Dusen, *Connecticut* (New York, 1961), p. 345.

¹⁷ Interview with Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman, Congregation Beth Israel, West Hartford, Connecticut, n.d., quoted in Robert Pawloski and the Northwest Catholic Urban Studies

Another hypothesis is that the primary impetus to permanent Jewish settlement in Hartford was a special act of the Connecticut Legislature which gave Jews the religious freedom extended previously to all Christians by the 1818 Constitution. The 1843 law provided "That Jews who may desire to unite and form religious societies, shall have the same rights, powers, and privileges which are given Christians of every denomination by the Act to which this is in addition. . . ." ¹⁸

These two explanations of the origins of a permanent Jewish community are not contradictory. Indeed, the passage of the 1843 law may have convinced Jews living in rural Connecticut and other states that the state and city now welcomed their participation in the community. Certainly the law made Connecticut and Hartford a more attractive place to reside for those German Jews who, upon entering the United States through the New York port, either chose or felt compelled to settle in communities other than Manhattan. ¹⁹

This is not to argue that all traces of ethnic or religious preference were eradicated by the passage of the 1843 law. Responding to a letter which complained that Governor Buckingham had invited only Christians to give thanks on Thanksgiving Day, an editorial in the November 2, 1860, *Courant* observed, "We are confident that Governor Buckingham did not intend to wound the religious susceptibilities of our Jewish fellow citizens, whose equal rights to the full and perfect practice of their religion we cheerfully concede." But then the editor admonished Hartford's Jews,

Our Jewish friends should remember, that while the constitution of our State recognized the rights of all men to worship in the mode most consistent with the dictates of their conscience, it also specially recognizes the rights of Christians, and makes no special provision for the Pagans of China, the Brahminists of Hindostan, the Mohammedans, or the Israelites. ²⁰

Class, *How the Other Half Lived: An Ethnic History of the Old East Side and South End of Hartford* (Hartford, 1973), p. 61.

¹⁸ *Public Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut* (May session, 1843), p. 41.

¹⁹ The question of motivation for settlement in Hartford is considered in further detail below.

²⁰ *Hartford Courant*, November 2, 1860. For another instance when Jewish citizens felt the lash of bigotry in later nineteenth-century Hartford see a letter written by Rabbi Isaac Mayer of Beth Israel Congregation to the *Courant* on July 19, 1865.

Indeed, until the adoption of a new State Constitution in 1965, special references were made in Article First, Section 4, and Article Seventh, Sections 1 and 2, to relationships between the State and the Christian religion (Article First, Section 4, "No preference shall be given by law to any Christian sect or mode of worship.") and state citizens and "the society or denomination of Christians to which he may belong" (Article Seventh, Sections 1 and 2).²¹ Article First, Section 3, of the 1965 Constitution simply states that "The exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, shall forever be free to all persons in the state"; while Article Seventh states, "No preference shall be given by law to any religious society or denomination in the state."²²

As was characteristic of so many ethnic enclaves in American cities, Hartford Jews quickly established organizations to meet the social and economic needs of their small, but growing, community. Ararat Lodge of B'nai B'rith, established in 1851 as a social and benevolent association for men, offered loans to meet expenses of illness, death benefits, and was, Rabbi Morris Silverman wrote, "the prototype of later Blue Cross, unemployment compensation, sick benefits and life insurance companies in the United States."²³ We find in the minutes of Ararat Lodge that it responded not only to the wants of Hartford Jews, but also to those of fellow Jews in other parts of the United States and Europe:

The Jewish women of Hartford confronted the needs of their ethnic community by organizing in 1852 the Deborah Society. While providing sickness and death benefits for its members, the women of the Deborah Society engaged in work which led Rabbi Feldman to characterize them as "the original case workers of the Jewish Community."²⁴

This small Jewish community quickly assumed a role in the city's commercial life far beyond what might be expected of a community its size. Drawing upon their experiences in the German *Dorf*, German Jews offered their services to Hartford citizens as

²¹ "The Constitution of Connecticut," adopted 1818; as amended on June 22, 1953, reprinted in Van Dusen, pp. 403, 409-10.

²² "Constitution of the State of Connecticut," adopted 1965, in State of Connecticut, *Register and Manual, 1977* (Hartford, 1977), pp. 30, 41.

²³ Silverman, p. 19.

²⁴ Feldman, p. 78.

grocers, butchers, merchants, jewelers, tailors, tobacconists, opticians, horse dealers and boarding house owners. By 1855 Jews owned thirteen of the twenty-seven retail clothing stores in Hartford and all eight of the fancy goods stores.²⁵ In 1874, Gerson Fox opened a fancy goods store which was to grow into one of Connecticut's leading department stores in the twentieth century.²⁶

Entrepreneurial activities provided opportunities for Hartford Jews and Gentiles to interact not only as seller and buyer, but also as partners in business. Rabbi Silverman compiled the following list of Jews in partnership with non-Jews in the late nineteenth century: Essman and Haas, tobacco; Ballenstein and Hydel (later Ballenstein and Dillon), millinery; Cohen and Spear, jewelry manufacturing; Rothschild and Horsfall, manufacturers of hats and dealers in clothing; Moses and Fogarty, spectacles; Leavitt and Ford, auctioneers.²⁷

Not surprisingly, the recent arrivals established their homes and businesses within a relatively confined geographical area. Most Jewish businesses were located on Main and Front Streets, while most Jews lived on Congress, Buckingham, Governor, and Kilbourn streets, Wethersfield, Charter Oak and Retreat avenues, streets generally contiguous with one another in and near downtown Hartford.²⁸ This concentration did not inhibit Jewish participation in certain activities of the larger community beyond its borders, for even the earliest settlers felt the impulse for limited assimilation. In addition to joining such patriotic activities as marching in an Independence Day parade as early as 1852,²⁹ two Jews, Alexander Rothschild and Marcus Herlitchcheck, were elected to city council in 1860.³⁰ Reflecting upon the relationship of the German Jews and their neighbors, Rabbi Silverman argues that

²⁵ Silverman, p. 26.

²⁶ In his 1961 history of Connecticut, Albert Van Dusen observed about Fox's offspring, "Descendants have further expanded the store until today G. Fox and Company is the largest independently owned department store in the world" (p. 345). Beatrice Fox Auerbach sold the family store to the May Company in 1965 for 40 million dollars. After the sale she remained president of the Fox store and became a director of the May Company.

²⁷ Silverman, p. 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30. Copies of maps of 1859, 1896, 1902, 1917 and 1927 identifying Jewish neighborhoods in Hartford and thus the mobility of the Jewish Community are available from Ralph Pearson.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁰ Pawloski, p. 61.

Far from being 'a separate' people these early Jewish immigrants and settlers soon demonstrated that, although they remained true to their heritage and displayed a vigor and ability to care for their own, they rapidly became adjusted to their new environment, and as citizens were soon contributing to the general life of Hartford.³¹

One reflection of the adjustment of the small Jewish community and the rest of the city was the response to invitations to join members of the Beth Israel synagogue at the cornerstone laying ceremony for the new temple on Charter Oak Avenue. Whether motivated by curiosity, politics or genuine interest, a front page story in the September 28, 1875, *Hartford Courant* tells us that ten to twelve thousand people attended, including Mayor Sprague, the lieutenant governor, several judges and ministers, the police chief with a platoon of patrolmen, three bands and an array of local benevolent societies.³² Ten to twelve thousand people celebrated the achievements of a particular group which, while taking care of its own through mutual aid societies and preserving a sense of cultural identity, was making significant contributions to the larger community, particularly to that community's economic life. Whether that relationship could continue as the Jewish community grew from 1,000 in 1890 to 16,000 in 1920, an increase not only of numbers but also of ethnic diversity, challenged both the established Jewish community and the community at large.

A Pattern Not Unlike Others

From interviews conducted by the West Hartford Jewish Historical Society with Eastern European immigrants who arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries one learns that persecution at home, as well as lack of economic and educational opportunities convinced them to leave Europe.³³ Dr. Alex Perlstein, twelve years old when he arrived in Hartford in 1906, recalled hiding from the Cossacks with his family in an Odessa, Russia, base-

³¹ Silverman, p. 28.

³² *Hartford Courant*, September 28, 1875, p. 1.

³³ Scholars of the immigrant experience have more than amply documented these reasons as the primary factors in the large East European migration to the United States between 1880 and 1929. See, for example, Howe, pp. 5-25.



Courtesy of "Jewish Historical Society, Hartford"
Hirshberg Family and Grocery, Windward St.
Hartford, Conn. (1910)

ment for two days before their departure for America.³⁴ A Russian immigrant described for a *Courant* reporter how his people had been denied political rights, barred from professions, forced to serve in the military, condemned to live in poverty and, suddenly, notified that they had to get out of the country. With hundreds of others, he walked for four weeks until reaching Vienna where agents for the Baron de Hirsch Fund gave them food, money and boat tickets to America.³⁵ Jews from the Russian provinces of Lithuania, the Ukraine and Galicia told of similar experiences, as did those from the Austro-Hungarian empire.

The majority who disembarked at New York City remained there, frequently unable to move because of a lack of funds, but also attracted by potential educational, economic and communal opportunities.³⁶ Indeed, as Thomas Kessner found in his study of Italian and Jewish immigrant mobility in New York City, "The downtown slums met many of the immigrants needs so directly that many felt little urge to go beyond their ethnic enclaves for anything. . . . This village-mindedness grew out of many antecedents but in part reflected the wide range of functions served by the community."³⁷

There are several reasons why immigrants who landed in New York City might eventually move to communities such as Hartford. A few might be attracted by the "presence of relatives or former townsmen," as was the case in Portland, Maine,³⁸ while others were helped to move elsewhere by Jewish philanthropic organizations such as the Baron de Hirsch Foundation.³⁹ Some were undoubtedly part of that unskilled, blue-collar group which historians Stephan Thernstrom, Clyde Griffin and Thomas Kessner identified as the "floating proletariat" which "roamed American cities in search of jobs."⁴⁰ Evidence that work opportunities at-

³⁴ Transcript of interview with Dr. Alex Perlstein, Jewish Historical Society, West Hartford, Connecticut, June 10, 1969, p. 10.

³⁵ *Hartford Courant*, August 30, 1900, p. 4.

³⁶ See, for example, Rischin, p. 54.

³⁷ Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915* (N.Y., 1977), pp. 138-139.

³⁸ Band, p. 16.

³⁹ Samuelson, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Kessner, p. 158. Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a*

tracted some recent arrivals to the Connecticut city comes from Mrs. Nettie Goldman who recalled that "We came here because my folks at that time heard about Hartford, that it was a good place to make a living. So we decided to try it out."⁴¹

Traveling by steamboat up the Connecticut River to Hartford, many arrived in their new home penniless, with neither a job nor a home, and with little knowledge of English. Recollections of both press and participants reveal a willingness on the part of the resident Jewish community to help the newcomers. Miss Gertrude Levy recalled that a Mrs. Litwack of Deerfield Avenue took in unfortunates and "taught them to read, to sew, and to make things."⁴² The August 30, 1900, *Hartford Courant* reported that Jacob Divinsky, a grocer, gave five Rumanian refugees food, and that Mrs. Ekstein secured the use of a vacant tenement as temporary quarters for newly arrived men. Even those who were emotionally scarred by the migration to America received care from the Jewish community:

On Monday, a Hebrew, also an exile from Rumania, came in from New Britain and found the Hebrew Locale in this city. He appeared a little 'ratty' for he asked for a certain street in Rumania where he had lived. . . . He is being taken care of by the community.⁴³

As with the German Jews, the newcomers quickly formed community organizations to help one another adjust to the new environment. Among the most important associations were the *landsmanschaften*, the *Arbeiterringe*, the *Gemilles Hesed* and the *Actztes*. *Landsmanschaften*, organized along hometown, village, city and provincial lines, sought to provide aid for friends and relatives in Europe, as well as loans, life and health insurance, and cemetery rights for local members. The *Arbeiterringe* offered similar bene-

Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge, 1964), 85, 198-99; Clyde Griffin, "Workers Divided: Craft and Ethnic Differences in Poughkeepsie," in Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennet, eds., *Nineteenth Century Cities* (New Haven, 1969), 59-61.

⁴¹ Transcript of interview with Mrs. Nettie Goldman, Jewish Historical Society, July 15, 1971, p. 14.

⁴² Transcript of interview with Miss Gertrude Levy, Jewish Historical Society, August 28, 1968, p. 2.

⁴³ *Hartford Courant*, August 30, 1900, p. 4.

fits, but were formed on the basis of occupation, not geographical identification.⁴⁴

Organized in 1892 as a branch of the Hebrew Free Loan Association of America, the *Gemilles Hesed*, upon the recommendation of an established merchant, made interest free loans to immigrants who wanted to start a business,⁴⁵ while the *Act-tzes* served the community as a unique form of savings and loan association that evolved in the twentieth century into what we know as the credit union.⁴⁶ This pattern of association building not only provided the immigrant with a sense of security, but also facilitated development of a sense of community among the recent arrivals.

To the larger community the association could be both reassuring and disquieting. Reassuring because the newcomers were meeting their own needs and not becoming burdens for the community; disquieting because the total community was fragmented further into smaller units by the new arrivals. As the newcomers settled in, both they and the established community felt the tensions created by the pull of, and desire for, integration, and the impulse to retain cultural identity.

If the proliferation of social and charitable organizations was one sign of the growth of the Jewish community between 1880 and 1929, another was the precipitous growth of Jewish congregations in the city. Each national group sought to establish its own synagogue, where its members could worship and enjoy fellowship with those of similar background. Most began in private homes, later rented a hall or store, and, finally, when finances permitted, they purchased and remodeled a Christian church.⁴⁷ A check of the Hartford city directories during the period 1880-1929 revealed fifteen different organized congregations, 13 Orthodox, 1 Reform and 1 Conservative. We are sure those listed do not represent all the congregations in the city during the period, many being too small to list. In fact, when Rabbi Silverman surveyed Jewish cemeteries in the early 1960's, he located forty-seven congrega-

⁴⁴ Silverman, pp. 31, 33-34.

⁴⁵ Transcript of interview with Mrs. Nettie Goldman, p. 10.

⁴⁶ WTIC, "About People," April 19, 1968. Laura Vlock, "The Jews of Hartford, 1900-1925." Silverman, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Silverman, pp. 9-17.

tional cemeteries, the majority dating from the period of heaviest Eastern European immigration.⁴⁸ Our effort to understand the growth and adaptation of the Hartford Jewish community by measuring the proliferation of its congregations is best summarized by Oscar Handlin's remark about the herculean task of calculating the number of congregations in New York City: "Who could count them, tucked away as they were in unexpected corners. . .?"⁴⁹

Crowding into Hartford's East Side, recently arrived Eastern European Jews settled with their countrymen on Front, Windsor, Morgan, Pleasant, Market, State, Temple, Bellevue, Wooster and Barbour streets.⁵⁰ One resident of the area in the early twentieth century, Attorney Samuel Hoffenburg, estimated that in 1900 about 2,000 Jewish families lived on those streets.⁵¹ As the original settlers achieved economic success in small businesses such as drugstores, hardware stores, kosher and non-kosher meat markets, tailoring and dry goods stores, they moved to the northern and western sections of the city,⁵² some maintaining their shops in the East Side, others moving them to the South End.⁵³ Another reason for the move from the East side was the influx of Black

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁹ Oscar Handlin, *Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (New York, 1954), p. 114.

⁵⁰ Tape recordings of interview with Attorney Samuel Hoffenburg, September 9, 1968, and interview with Dr. Morris Cohen, September 15, 1973, Jewish Historical Society.

⁵¹ Interview with Attorney Samuel Hoffenburg.

⁵² Silverman, p. 30.

⁵³ Pawloski, p. 62. Robert Dahl's analysis of how New Haven immigrant groups such as the Irish, Italian and Russian Jews achieved social and economic mobility parallels the experiences of Hartford's immigrants. He wrote, "Irish domination of government jobs made it difficult . . . for later immigrants, particularly Italians and East Europeans, to climb the socio-economic ladder by pulling themselves up with the help of white collar patronage. In addition to this, however, distinctive cultural backgrounds probably promoted a stronger tendency among Jews and Italians to go into small business. The Irish had brought with them no tradition of business enterprise or the learned professions. By contrast, immigrants of Russian origin were mainly Jews . . .; they were more accustomed to the world of business, particularly as small shopkeepers. The Italians, too, were evidently more inclined than the Irish to become peddlers and shopkeepers. In fact, the Russians and Italians together made up almost two-thirds of the shopkeepers in the 1933 family survey. Where the Irish used politics to surmount obstacles to their advance in the socio-economic world, Italians and Jews more frequently used gains in the socioeconomic world to attain elective positions in politics." Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven, 1961), p. 42.

workers responding to the need of Hartford industries for employees during World War I.⁵⁴ Former residents of the East Side recalled that as its ethnic composition changed, as crowding and poverty increased, Jews left the area as quickly as possible.⁵⁵

As Peter I. Rose has described so well, this movement from the downtown ghetto environment to the suburbs did not mean the dispersal and disappearance of the Jewish community, merely its relocation to the newer northwestern part of the city:

As individuals became more successful they moved farther and farther away from the old ghetto area; but, as they went out from the Lower East Side of New York or the South Side of Chicago and moved uptown. . . , they settled in what came to be labeled 'Jewish neighborhoods.' This pattern of sticking together continued right out into the suburbs where homogeneous ethnic enclaves became countrified versions of the American ghetto—now adorned with million dollar synagogues.⁵⁶

Residents of the East Side remember vividly life there in the early twentieth century. Rows of two and three story tenement houses, packed tightly together, provided homes for the newly arrived. Many used the front of the first floor as a place of business. Windsor Street, Dr. Morris Cohen remembered, was alive with people coming and going from these businesses in their homes. The street reverberated, too, with the voices of peddlers hawking their wares from pushcarts and wagons.⁵⁷

As in the immigrant quarters of other American cities, crowded living conditions were the norm in many Hartford tenement buildings. Most tenements had five or six apartments, with some plumbing, including closets converted to bathrooms, and no electricity. One small coal stove provided the heat for each family, with coin operated meters regulating the supply of cooking gas. Every few days the children were sent to freight cars on North Front Street to purchase ice for preserving food.⁵⁸

Not surprisingly, remembrances of the East Side differ as former

⁵⁴ In 1910 the black population was 1,745 or 1.8 percent of the population; by 1920 that population had more than doubled to 4,199 or 3 per cent of the city's residents.

⁵⁵ Pawloski, p. 64.

⁵⁶ Peter I. Rose, "The Ghetto and Beyond," in Peter I. Rose, *The Ghetto and Beyond: Essays on Jewish Life in America* (New York, 1969), p. 9.

⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Morris Cohen.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

residents recalled their impressions of life there. "We were happy," Dr. Cohen recalled, "[because] we didn't know how the rest of the people lived." There were many good times for an East Side boy during those years. He could play baseball or football on the side streets, ride down Windsor Street in a boat every Spring during the annual floods, roast potatoes in the back yard in the Fall, enjoy a salami on rye sandwich with mustard for five cents, and go to the Goodwill recreation club on Winthrop Street in the evening. Summer brought pleasures that came with trips to Riverside Park for a band concert, fireworks displays or just sitting among grass and trees.⁵⁹

Other immigrants recalled much less happy times. Judge Joseph Klau remembered the grinding poverty of many East side residents and a mother debilitated by tuberculosis.⁶⁰ In the home of Dr. Alex Perlstein twelve boarders slept all over the apartment floor because their support was needed to pay the monthly rent.⁶¹ Agudas Achim Congregation reported in 1906 that of its eighty-seven members, eighty were *blut orem*, extremely poor.⁶² Reports of Jewish charity organizations describing living conditions refer frequently to the filth, squalor and disease which caused moral and intellectual deterioration.

The sustaining hope of the East Side immigrant was that he or his children would achieve the economic success required to improve their quality of life. Parents impressed upon their children the need to do well in school, as well as to contribute to the financial support of the family. Financial exigencies occasionally required, however reluctantly, a young man to leave school.⁶³ If one completed high school, dreams of college were frustrated frequently by high tuition charges. Nevertheless, a surprisingly large number of doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants and other professionals came from the East side during the 1880-1929 period.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Tape recording of interview with Judge Joseph Klau, April 17, 1974, Jewish Historical Society.

⁶¹ Interview with Dr. Alex Perlstein, p. 12.

⁶² Silverman, p. 35.

⁶³ Transcript of interview with Samuel Goldman, Jewish Historical Society, July 15, 1971, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Interview with Dr. Morris Cohen; interview with Attorney Samuel Hoffenburg; and Silverman, pp. 85-87.



Courtesy of "Jewish Historical Society, Hartford, Conn."

Good Will Club for immigrant boys, Hartford, Conn. (ca. 1900)

Stephan Thernstrom contends that the disproportionately large number, in comparison with Irish and Italians, of second-generation Jews who entered professions reflects the emphasis upon education which characterized most Jewish communities:

The educational and occupational achievement of second-generation Jews and the lack of achievement of Catholics . . . cannot be explained away by holding the educational and occupational attainments of their parents roughly constant. There were very large group differences in the characteristics of the immigrating generation, to be sure, and these left a clear imprint upon the record of their children in school and at work. But a residue of unexplained variation remains when this is taken into account, a residue which suggests that Jews placed an especially high value on education and the careers it was the key to, whereas Catholics were somewhat less dedicated to educational and occupational achievement of their sons than Protestants from the same class and educational background.⁶⁵

A dilemma which East Side Jews shared with most immigrant groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was how to preserve their religious and cultural identity while becoming part of American society. One response of the Hartford Jewish community was the establishment in 1901 of the Hebrew Institute, or Talmud Torah, to provide religious instruction to its sons and daughters after public school hours. The Institute was located in the home of Herman Goldschmidt until 1910, when a three story building was rented on Pleasant Street.⁶⁶ In addition to two hour classes in Hebrew and Scripture each weekday, the Institute taught English to many, and assisted them in locating their first jobs.⁶⁷ By 1915 enrollment had grown to over three hundred students, an increase made possible by the offering of free tuition to those who could not pay.⁶⁸

Three other Talmud Torahs were established in other sections of Hartford to serve immigrant children who could not get to the Pleasant Street school: one on Garden Street, one on Nelson Street and another in the South End. In the early twentieth century these Talmud Torahs, particularly the one on Pleasant Street, became "veritable centers of the educational, philanthropic, and social life

⁶⁵ Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*, p. 174.

⁶⁶ Silverman, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁷ Pawloski, p. 64.

⁶⁸ Silverman, p. 36.

of the Eastern European Jews of Hartford.”⁶⁹ The Talmud Torahs served the community not only as education centers, but also as social centers where youths gathered for recreation, merchants met to discuss business problems and the entire community gathered to react to proposals such as those being considered by Congress to restrict immigration.⁷⁰

Successful adjustment to the total Hartford community included relating to other immigrant groups who settled there in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Living in or near the East Side ghetto were large numbers of Irish and Italians. In fact, in both the 1910 and 1920 censuses, Ireland ranked first as the chief country of origin of Hartford's foreign stock, Russia was second and Italy third. The testimony of Jews who lived with Irish and Italian immigrants reveals occasional conflicts among the children, but no insurmountable ethnic animosity. Mr. Perlstein recalled getting along well with Irish lads, until he made a mistake in English, when they would “clobber him.” “It helped me improve though,” he concluded.⁷¹ Mr. Allan Mellamed remembered some gang fights between Italian and Jewish boys, but nothing serious.⁷² As a teacher in the East side Chauncey Harris Primary School between 1912 and 1915, Miss Gertrude Levy was impressed by the way Jewish children were accepted by others in her school. They played and spoke together and “seemed to have companionship.”⁷³

Relations with Hartford police, many of whom were Irish, required the development of “understandings,” too, particularly over the issues of Sunday store openings and the hawking of wares by Jewish peddlers. Apparently some non-Jewish East Side residents complained about Jewish merchants keeping their stores open on a Sunday, with the result that patrolmen began enforcing Connecticut's Blue Laws by closing down Jewish businesses on the Christian sabbath.⁷⁴ Enforcement of the Blue Laws posed a real threat to the economic survival of the Eastside Jewish mer-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Interview with Dr. Alex Perlstein, p. 3.

⁷² Pawloski, p. 62.

⁷³ Interview with Miss Gertrude Levy, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Interview with Mr. Allan Mellamed, quoted in Pawloski, p. 63.

chant who already closed on Saturday, the Hebrew sabbath. Economic survival was threatened not only by the loss of another business day, but also by the loss of Sunday business in particular, since business was usually quite brisk on this day when most other Hartford stores were closed. Eventually the police and merchants negotiated an agreement under which the patrolmen agreed to look the other way.⁷⁵ Agreements of this sort between interest groups and law enforcement officers have been quite useful urban peace-keeping tactics. Nevertheless, Connecticut Blue Laws prohibiting the opening of businesses remained as statutes during this period, and so reminded Jewish merchants that they were both a cultural and ethnic minority in the community.

The livelihood of Jewish peddlers was endangered when police began arresting them for making excessive noise as they went up and down the streets advertising their wares. Peddling provided an immediate occupation for many immigrants, as well as the first step to a successful business career for some.⁷⁶ An immigrant with no commercial training, little English and little money could become a peddler. He picked up merchandise in the morning from a wholesaler, sold it throughout the city, suburban neighborhood and East Side, paid the wholesaler and pocketed the profits. If he worked hard and was thrifty he might save enough to purchase a horse and wagon, or even a store. Consequently, peddling was an important avenue of economic mobility.

Yet, Irving Howe reminds us, be wary of the

tendency among American Jews to endow peddling with a certain glamour. Sometimes, perhaps, with reason: as in the stories that have come down to us of Jews wandering into small southern towns and being treated as if they had just stepped out of the Old Testament. But in the cities of the North, during the years of industrial expansion, peddling was back-breaking and soul-searching work. There was only one reason to become a peddler: you had no skill and wanted to stay out of the shops.⁷⁷

In response to this threat to their livelihood, Hartford Jewish peddlers organized in 1909 the Hebrew Peddlers Association for the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ See Rudolf Glanz, "Notes on Early Jewish Peddling in America," *Jewish Social Studies*, 7 (1945).

⁷⁷ Howe, p. 78.

purpose of testing in court the legality of arresting peddlers for hawking their wares. The name of the Association was changed later to the Hebrew Merchants Association. Peddlers were eventually able to convince police that hawking did not disturb the peace unduly and it should be permitted to continue.⁷⁸

Perhaps one reason accommodations were reached relatively easily between East Side Jews and the police on controversial issues was the early entry of Jewish citizens into active political life. Rabbi Silverman cites an 1890 editorial as evidence that as Hartford Jews increased in numbers in a geographically contiguous area so that they formed a bloc of voters in the city's political structure, they entered the political arena:

Religious bigotry does not play much of a part at Hartford, capital of Connecticut. The handful of Israelites who live there are held in high esteem by their Christian neighbors. This was proven by the last municipal election, when four co-religionists were successful candidates for representation in the City Council. . . . Resident Israelites hope some day to see one of these popular Gentlemen, Mayor of the city, or even Governor of the State.⁷⁹

As we shall document below, there are numerous examples to support the contention that religious bigotry did not preclude Jewish participation in the city's political life. Of course, as with most first and second generation ethnic politicians, Jewish politicians built a base of support in their home district which elected them to the city council. In turn, they used that base and office to secure positions in a much broader political arena.

Robert Dahl's analysis of the process of ethnic integration into New Haven politics helps us understand the process Hartford Jews went through to become an effective force in the city's political life. For practically the entire five decade period, 1880-1929, Jewish political activity is accurately described by Dahl's "First Stage" on the way to political assimilation. During this stage ethnic

⁷⁸ WTIC, "The Jews of Hartford"; and "Hebrew Peddlers United," *Hartford Courant*, May 28, 1909, p. 10. Yet, the following letter, signed by "Old Hartford Resident," appeared in the September 25, 1915, edition of the *New York Times*: "I would like to know in what part of Connecticut the peddlers whistle. I have lived most of my life in Hartford, and if 'Anti-Noise' could hear the bedlam in our streets from early morning until late at night, he never would call it a pleasant little whistle. We do have a law regarding noise, but no one pays any attention to the law. We would like the whistle; it would be a pleasant change."

⁷⁹ Silverman, pp. 29-30.

groups tend to be politically homogeneous, and that homogeneity is a function of socio-economic homogeneity. What is especially important for us at this point is how political leadership begins to develop in the new immigrant group. "Members of the new group serve sometimes as intermediaries between the group and older leaders," Dahl argues, "acquiring in the process moderate influence and experience as sub-leaders. Some of the ethnic sub-leaders eventually received nominations for minor offices, such as alderman, where the constituency is drawn predominately from the sub-leader's ethnic group."⁸⁰

An examination of Hartford city councilmen between 1860 and 1929 reveals that 59 Jewish citizens served varying terms on the city's Common Council, until it was dissolved in 1915, and the Board of Aldermen. During the 1860's and 1870's representatives came only from Wards 5 and 6. As both the city and its Jewish population grew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish representation in city governing councils not only increased numerically, but also came from more wards. Since electoral victory for a minority group candidate at this stage of political integration depended in most cases upon an ethnic base, the pattern of ward representation reveals the residential mobility of the Jewish population, which, as noted previously, was particularly strong to the city's north, with a noticeable movement to the west, as well.⁸¹

During this fifty-year period, Hartford Jews tended to favor Democrats, although Republicans such as Isidore Wise (Ward 7, Common Council, 1894-1895, and Alderman, Ward 3, 1896), Nathan A. Schatz (Ward 2, Alderman, 1919-1921) and Jacob Schwolsky (Ward 3, Alderman, 1916-1918) and Maxwell Lerner (Ward 12, Alderman, 1927-1930) were able to overcome party label and secure voter support. Nathan Schatz, in fact, is representative of the ethnic leaders who built political power upon an ethnic base and from it moved into citywide office. Elected alderman in 1919, he went on to become prosecutor of the Hartford Police Court and later a probate judge.⁸²

⁸⁰ Dahl, pp. 34-35.

⁸¹ A decade by decade analysis of representatives per ward and the years during which each served is available from Ralph Pearson.

⁸² Silverman, p. 258.

The prototype for all Hartford Jewish politicians who aspired to move from the local neighborhood political arena to citywide, and indeed national, office was Democrat Herman P. Kopplemann. Kopplemann served the East Side so well during his eight years (1904-1912, President, 1910) as an Alderman from the Second Ward that he was acclaimed the "Father of the East Side." Elected to the State House of Representatives in 1912 and the State Senate in 1919, he went to the U.S. House in 1933 as the Congressman from the First District, the first Jewish Congressman from Hartford. Re-elected to additional terms in 1935, 1937, 1941 and 1945, Kopplemann was such a persistent supporter of the New Deal that he became known as a "Roosevelt Democrat."⁸³

Each of these men represented the interests of the Jewish community in the city's political life. They helped resolve conflicts between particular cultural or ethnic practices, such as Sunday sales, and the norms of the community's majority. By serving the community in positions which transcended the boundaries of the ethnic village, of course, they forged a link which brought together the ethnic enclave and other interest groups in the city.

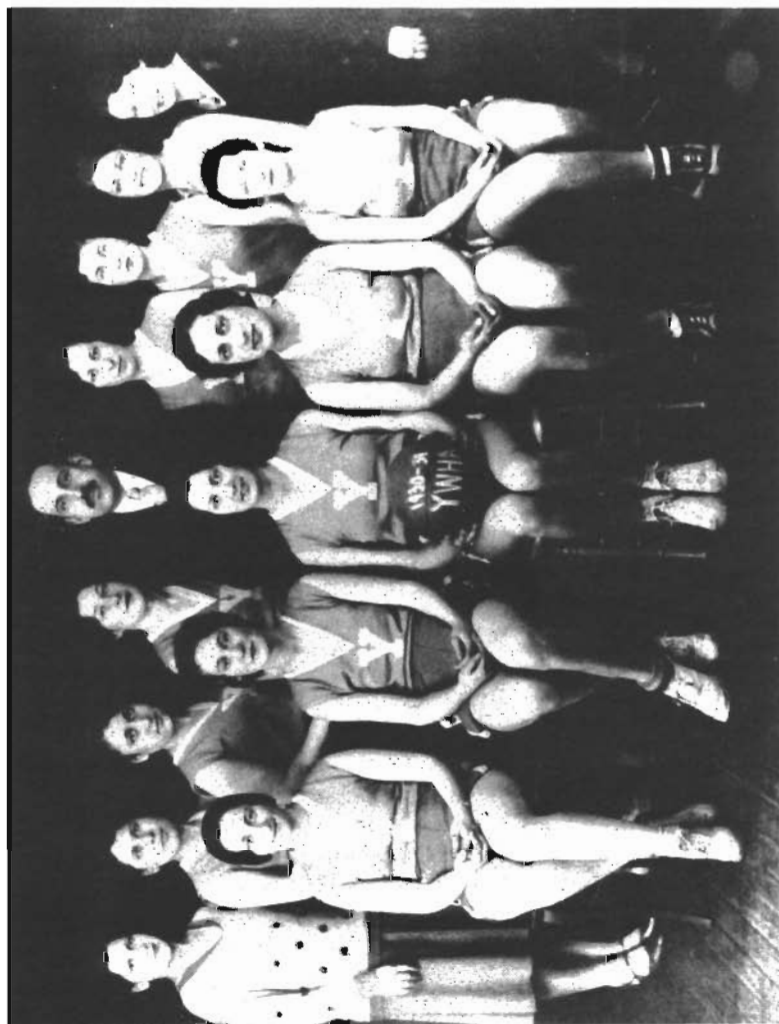
By 1910, East European Jews in Hartford outnumbered German Jews by five to one. As in other cities where the pattern held, German Jews resented the newcomers and looked down upon them. They tried to keep the new arrivals out of their synagogues, clubs, schools and, above all, from marrying their sons and daughters.⁸⁴ For example, membership in the Touro Club, founded in 1901, was restricted initially to Jews of German background.

In reaction, newcomers accused the Germans of becoming too much like Christians in their worship and life styles. The Reform Judaism of Congregation Beth Israel, for example, seemed to many newcomers an abandonment of thousands of years of Jewish tradition. The new residents responded to the exclusiveness of the German Jews by organizing their own social clubs, such as the Hartford Hebrew Association (1891), which operated until 1906, when it disbanded and most of its members joined the John Hay Lodge, Knights of Pythias, and the Aaron Club (1910).

This conflict with the established Jewish community did not

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁸⁴ Silverman, p. 37. See also Rischin, pp. 95-96.



Courtesy of "Jewish Historical Society, Hartford"
YWHA Basketball Team, Hartford, Conn (1930-31)

mean that the recent arrivals welcomed one another. Quite the opposite was true as the Russians frowned upon the Lithuanians, the Lithuanians upon the Rumanians and all of them upon the Galicians.⁸⁵ Thus each group established its own synagogues and benevolent societies, and each opposed intermarriage with other national groups as fervently as Germans opposed intermarriage with them.

Gradually the hostility between the old and new members of Hartford's Jewish community broke down. As the newcomers became more educated, achieved economic success and appeared to be more American, they found acceptance as members of Ararat Lodge, where once they were excluded, or at the YMHA and YWHA which opened in 1915. Important, too, in shattering the barriers which divided old and new was the emergence in most communities of a sense of obligation to help all Jews, regardless of national origin.⁸⁶ This acceptance of one another involved, Moses Rischin wrote of New York City Jews, ". . . a complex transformation wrought on both groups [German and Russians] by the American and world experience over more than half a century. . . ."⁸⁷

Hartford Jews were brought together, too, by the need to join hands with fellow Jews in Europe who were being persecuted for their religious and ethnic heritage. We know, for example, that the John Hay Lodge, Knights of Pythias, was named after the American Secretary of State because of his vigorous protests against the discrimination and persecution of Jews in Rumania. Responses to the call for aid to the victims of the Kishineff pogrom came in the form of financial assistance, as well as protest meetings, and it served to create a sense of identity across the nationality divisions which Europe's boundaries had created.

Another international movement which promoted the cohesiveness of the city's Jewish community in the twentieth century has been widespread support for a Jewish state in Palestine. Soon after the 1897 meeting of the first Jewish Congress in Basel, Switzerland, a group of Hartford Jews organized the B'nai Zion Society

⁸⁵ Silverman, p. 37.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Rischin, p. 111.

to work for the cause of Zionism. Another Zionist group formed at the turn of the century to attract young people was the Zion Guard, a military group whose program included social and athletic activities. In 1903, as well, the Sisters of Zion brought together the cause of Zionism with protests against the Kishineff pogrom by leading protest meetings and soliciting funds for Russian Jewish relief. Perhaps the highpoint of the Zionist movement in Hartford during the 1880-1929 period was the May, 1921, mass meeting attended by Albert Einstein and Chaim Weizmann at which \$75,000 was raised.⁸⁸

The sense of obligation felt by the established Jewish community to assist newcomers in their city expressed itself most visibly, as with earlier immigrants, in the formation of charitable associations which responded to the needs of recent arrivals. Two Hartford groups which played a notable role in aiding immigrant adjustment were the Hartford chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and the United Jewish Charities.

Organized in February, 1910, the Hartford chapter of NCJW worked closely with the New York branch to protect those young women and children who, upon debarkation in New York, identified Hartford as their destiny.⁸⁹ The New York chapter forwarded the names and "salient facts" about those bound for the city to the local chapter which, in turn, sent its Immigrant Aid Committee to visit the recent arrivals. This Committee "offered friendly aid and advice and put them in touch with social, recreational and religious opportunities."⁹⁰ Nettie Goldman recalled the organization's special concern for immigrant women: "In those days, white slavery was very imminent in this city and we wanted to make sure that none of them got into it. So we used to follow them up and ask them to report to us."⁹¹

The Chapter served, too, as an employment agency for immigrants. In November, 1912, the chairman of the Immigrant Aid Committee reported that "twenty-eight cases had been investi-

⁸⁸ Silverman, pp. 40-44; Van Dusen, p. 346.

⁸⁹ Hartford Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, "Proceedings, February 18, 1910, to January 1, 1914" (Hartford, 1914), p. 1.

⁹⁰ Florina Lasker and Etta Laske Rosensohn, *Report of Immigrant Aid by the National Council of Jewish Women* (New York, 1922), p. 19.

⁹¹ Interview with Mrs. Nettie Goldman, p. 9.

gated in the last six months and all found jobs."⁹² Gradually the role of the employment agency became onerous, as the following entry in the 1924-1925 *Yearbook* laments:

We have been called upon to act as an employment agency and this is one of our most difficult duties. That there is a place for everyone in this world, we know, but we have been faced with the difficult problem of finding places for many unfortunates who have appealed to us.⁹³

Of particular concern, the *Yearbook* noted, was the absence of a vocational school where the mentally and physically handicapped could be trained for useful activities.

Americanization classes were an important part of the chapter's program. Beginning in April, 1913, with an enrollment of 30 women, the classes in English and American history grew to 98 by 1924-1925.⁹⁴ To encourage widespread participation by immigrant women, classes were held in the evening, and a baby sitting service was provided. It is important to remember that the goal for which the chapter and the immigrants worked was full participation in the political and economic life of their adopted homeland, without the loss of cultural identity.⁹⁵ Americanization did not have to involve the destruction of self-respect, nor of cultural and family ties, results not uncommon for immigrants who went through the process of becoming one hundred percent Americans.

Concern with the physical and social health of the immigrants compelled the Hartford chapter to sponsor a number of special projects to improve the living environment. For example, in November, 1912, a special "Visiting Committee" was formed

. . . to go into the homes and tenements . . . and establish personal relations with the families living in congested quarters with a view to bringing them more wholesome influence and suggestions for improvement in individual and household conditions. . . . All efforts in this regard shall [,] however, be directed toward promoting and preserving the self respect of the poor and protecting them from undesirable and unnecessary intrusions.⁹⁶

⁹² Hartford Chapter, "Proceedings," p. 115.

⁹³ Hartford Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, *Yearbook: 1924-1925* (Hartford, 1925), p. 37.

⁹⁴ Hartford Chapter, "Proceedings," p. 116; and *Yearbook*, p. 37.

⁹⁵ Interview with Mrs. Nettie Goldman, pp. 18-19.

⁹⁶ Hartford Chapter, "Proceedings," p. 115.

Infants and children of all faiths were of concern to the Hartford chapter. In 1911 it established the Babies' Milk Station on Wooster Street. Babies brought to the station were weighed and examined by a nurse.⁹⁷ In 1913 the chapter began a campaign to get newsgirls off Hartford streets, fearing that they would be exposed to unhealthy influences. A report from the Child Labor Committee describes one strategy used to discourage newsgirls:

We visited Mrs. Wisemann and finding her a very worthy woman, provided her with proper shoes of a very special kind and if she agrees to keep her daughter from selling papers on the street, to provide her with one dollar a week for one year.

These tactics proved too expensive, and so the group lobbied City Council, which responded in 1914 with an ordinance banning newsgirls. By January, 1915, the chapter noted “. . . the absence of newsgirls from the center of the city. . . .”⁹⁸ The Hartford chapter provided numerous other services to the Jewish community, including the establishment of a home for Jewish working girls on Wooster Street, discontinued in 1912 because of the financial drain, and the distribution of clothing and household goods to the poor.

In 1912 a second very active group committed to serving the needs of the entire Jewish community was organized when thirty Hartford eleemosynary organizations merged to form the United Jewish Charities. Taking as its slogan the commitment to provide “The greatest good for the largest number with the least waste,”⁹⁹ United Jewish Charities sought to promote greater efficiency in the distribution of charity and services, as well as provide a focal point for increased fellowship within the Jewish community.

A careful reading of the *Annual Reports* convinces one that while the organization wanted to record its accomplishments of the past year, it also felt the need to convince the more affluent members of the Jewish community that the need was great. The 1919 *Annual Report* listed the causes of distress among poorer Jews in descending order of importance: illness—with tuberculosis posing the greatest threat; widowhood; orphaned children; old

⁹⁷ Interview with Mrs. Nettie Goldman, p. 10.

⁹⁸ Hartford Chapter, “Proceedings,” pp. 127, 190.

⁹⁹ United Jewish Charities of Hartford, *Eighth Annual Report: 1920* (Hartford, 1920), p. 1.

age; insufficient earning or temporary unemployment; desertion and non-support; juvenile delinquency; adult delinquency.¹⁰⁰ Nineteen-twenty brought no change in the catalogue of causes of distress: "Our greatest single cause of dependence and distress is sickness . . ."; and again, ". . . Hard times are here, and are here to stay for a while, new cases of distress on account of unemployment are coming more frequently with each day that passes. . . ."¹⁰¹

Hartford's immigrant community shared the urban ills of those immigrants who came with them but remained in larger cities. United Jewish Charities challenged the apparent indifference of prosperous Jews to the sickness, poverty and unemployment among recent arrivals with the reminder that "As long as there are Slums in Your City, We will need your Help!"¹⁰² And that help was apparently forthcoming. Analyses of services rendered in 1924 and 1927 document the involvement of United Jewish Charities in all phases of urban life, the physical and emotional, as well as the economic. Assistance in the form of milk, glasses, coal and shoes, loans, scholarships and transportation funds was funneled by United Jewish Charities from the successful Jewish citizens to those who had come to America to escape persecution and/or to achieve similar success.¹⁰³

Who Leads and Why?

When we began our portrait of the Hartford Jewish community, 1880-1929, our intent was to provide insight into both the adjustment of Jewish immigrants to their new city and the cultural pluralism of New England society. Aside from the Irish, Italians and to a lesser extent the French Canadians, little attention had been given to other ethnic and cultural groups which settled in the factory towns and larger cities of New England.

Scholarly studies of a number of Jewish communities provide us with several models for interpreting the experiences of the Jewish community in Hartford, 1880-1929. Particularly helpful is an es-

¹⁰⁰ United Jewish Charities, *Seventh Annual Report: 1919*, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ United Jewish Charities, *Eighth Annual Report: 1920*, pp. 2, 17.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ United Jewish Charities, *Twelfth Annual Report: 1924*, pp. 12-13; and *Fifteenth Annual Report: 1927*, pp. 15-16.

say written in 1969 by Rabbi Kenneth D. Roseman, "Power in a Midwestern Jewish Community," in which, early in the essay, he wrestles with the problem of defining "'Jewish community' in terms of any agreed-upon or shared values," and concludes that "there are two generally-shared convictions which form the basis for a concept of the 'Jewish community' in any ideological sense."

On these two points there exists, as it were, a consensus. In the first place, nearly all Jews share the conviction that Jews must survive as a distinct group. Some may place greater emphasis on the religious aspects of Jewish survival; others may stress cultural forms; still others may hold that the philanthropic aspects of Judaism are important. Regardless of their differences, however, they will, with few exceptions, agree that Jews must survive. A second area of wide, if not quite unanimous, agreement relates to the need for communal survival—that, given the necessity of Jewish survival, Jews must be provided with certain social, health, recreational, and religious services by their own 'sectarian' organizations.¹⁰⁴

From the initial settlement of German Jews in Hartford in the mid-nineteenth century there has been no question about the commitment to survival of a distinctive ethnic identity, even as Jews became a part of the political and economic structure of Hartford. As in Roseman's model, that survival of identity has been defined in terms of specific sectarian organizations such as synagogues, Mt. Sinai Hospital, YMHA, and YWHA, the Tumble Brook Country Club, and United Jewish Charities.

Leadership of the Jewish community during the five decades was provided largely by politicians, who built a power base upon

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth D. Roseman, "Power in a Midwestern Jewish Community," *American Jewish Archives*, 21 (April, 1969), 58. Studies of the Jewish communities in large cities, as noted above, are numerous. In his essay, "Strangers in Their Midst: Small-Town Jews and Their Neighbors," in Rose, *The Ghetto and Beyond*, pp. 335-56, Peter I. Rose analyzes the experiences of Jews in small towns and concludes that they may be more in touch with their own and the "alien" culture than Jews in cities with larger Jewish populations, such as Hartford. Rose writes, "Yet, rather than being on the periphery of two cultures, the ex-urban Jew seems to have internalized the best of each. He is more a part of his community than he is apart from it. He is far more assimilated to the Gentile milieu than his urban cousin. But . . . he remains a Jew.

"While he strongly identifies with fellow Jews . . . and in many ways expresses a feeling of kinship with his people, he has adapted himself to the folkways of the small town in a variety of ways. He enjoys the advantages of sharing two 'ways of life' and, in a word, is bicultural" (p. 346).

the ethnic enclave, religious leaders, for recent immigrants continued to find security and identity in the synagogues, professionals such as lawyers, and successful businessmen. The latter exercised power not only by virtue of their economic success, which resulted largely because they were able to work with and sell to the larger Gentile community, but also because that success opened opportunities for leadership in the sectarian organizations which were so essential to the continued separate identity of Hartford Jews.

If one takes a random sample of individuals active in sectarian Jewish organizations at selected dates during the fifty-year period, one finds not only an overlap from organization to organization of individuals who are active as leaders, but also an obvious dependence upon the merchant-small manufacturer for that leadership. Associates of large firms such as G. Fox and Company were part of most important Jewish organizations, but the preponderance of support came from the smaller merchant-manufacturing group.¹⁰⁵ At least for the period 1880-1929, then, it appears as though one secured a leadership role in the Hartford Jewish community via what Roseman calls "vertical mobility" rather than "horizontal mobility." That is, admission at the top of the community leadership structure occurred only on rare occasions for "high prestige persons who can be used for publicity." The usual pattern of access to community leadership was built upon economic success, either as a small merchant-manufacturer or attorney, as the result of which one participated in fund raising, assumed some assignment on a board or committee and eventually might move to the presidency of an agency.¹⁰⁶

This leadership profile, and the path of accessibility to leadership, is not surprising since many of the sectarian organizations created from 1880-1929 were founded initially to meet the needs of the new arrivals from Eastern Europe. In many cases, the merchants responding to the needs of recent arrivals had been born in Eastern Europe and were themselves relatively new to the United

¹⁰⁵ Our conclusion is based upon analysis of the officers and board members of the following organizations: Mt. Sinai Hospital, 1924; Hebrew Ladies Old Peoples' Home Association, 1911; United Hebrew Charities, 1913; YMHA, 1895 and 1896; YMHA and YWHA, 1928; Tumble Brook Country Club, 1922-1923.

¹⁰⁶ Roseman, pp. 64-68.

States. As tobacco, fruit and produce merchants, grocers and barbers, they had established a foothold in the American economy and were responding to the needs of their community, the Jewish community, by serving as officers and board members of social, health and recreational organizations.

The analysis of individuals active in Jewish community organizations provides a significant clue, too, to a characteristic of Jewish economic activity in Hartford and Connecticut not only in the 50 years of this study but also in subsequent decades. In a study published in 1943, Samuel Koenig argued that while British Americans represented only 14 per cent of Connecticut's population, that group controlled the State's large factories and powerful commercial houses.¹⁰⁷ Jewish economic activity dominated the clothing and dry goods business, "constituting over 64 per cent of the individuals of all groups" in the State, and with Italians played a leading role "in firms employing less than ten workers."¹⁰⁸ The foundation for this economic profile was laid in the period we have studied, and Rabbi Silverman found in 1969 that it continued to hold in contemporary Hartford.¹⁰⁹

The most accurate analysis of the Jewish experience in Hartford, 1880-1929, occurs within a framework which juxtaposes the impulse to integrate into the community's institutional and cultural life with the equally strong commitment to retain a separate identity. The resolution of that tension during the five decades, complicated by the ambivalent attitudes of the larger community towards the Jews themselves, was cautious integration of economic and political activities where possible with the non-Jewish community, and continued separation of social, charitable, and educational/religious institutions.

Because they provided needed goods and services, and at times when other merchants were frequently closed, Jewish merchants assumed a dominant role in Hartford's clothing and dry goods business, as well as in the food trade. Their businesses, however, were small, usually employing fewer than ten employees, the larger factories and manufacturing firms remaining in the hands of

¹⁰⁷ Samuel Koenig, "Ethnic Factors in the Economic Life of Urban Connecticut," *American Sociological Review*, 8 (April, 1943), p. 193.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 197.

¹⁰⁹ Silverman, pp. 83, 105-6.

earlier settlers in the city and state. Similarly, Jews played a minor role in the city's banking establishment, control of which remained primarily with the British-Americans.¹¹⁰

Economic success determined who became leaders in the Jewish community internally and in its relations with the rest of Hartford. Many of the successful politicians were initially successful small businessmen. Because Jews represented an important bloc of voters, Hartford's political organizations recognized the need to include them in their slate of candidates, and so another avenue of integration was opened, though cautiously, for in our five-decade period only a few Jewish politicians achieved positions not dependent primarily upon the ethnic voting bloc. Nevertheless, by the end of the period individuals like Congressman Kopplemann demonstrated that politicians with an ethnic base could attract enough support from the rest of the community to win elections.

If economic and political success were avenues of interaction with and assimilation into non-Jewish society, they provided access, too, to leadership of the Jewish community's commitment to retain a separate cultural identity. That commitment was articulated most clearly in the organization of separate social, charitable and educational/religious institutions. Separate social/recreational organizations such as the YMHA and Tumble Brook Country Club; separate charitable agencies such as the Hebrew Home for the Aged, the Hebrew Sheltering Home and Mt. Sinai Hospital; separate educational and religious institutions, as well as

¹¹⁰ See Koenig, "Ethnic Factors . . .," 193. In his study of Hartford Jews, Rabbi Silverman makes the following comments on Jews in banking:

"One of the most shopworn stereotypes of sensational journalism and racist propaganda is that of the 'wealthy Jewish banker' who 'controls the finances of the nation.' Sheer ignorance and superstition have kept this myth alive. All the facts and statistics of the actual financial structure, banking system and economy of this country eloquently refute this fallacy. For instance, a 1967 survey of Connecticut banks completely contradicts this impression. In Hartford there was, for a brief period in the early 1920's, one Jewish banking institution, the Merchants Bank and Trust Co., founded by some Jewish businessmen, among whom were Ellik Nirenstein, George B. Schwartz, and Barney Rapaport. But this short-lived small bank was absorbed by the non-Jewish Riverside Trust Co.

"According to this survey in 1967, out of a total of 307 officers of the six large commercial banks in Hartford, only four were Jews. Out of 112 directors, 18 were Jews. In 1967, four of the six banks had no Jewish officers. Excluding the Constitution National Bank, whose officers and directors are almost 50 per cent Jewish, we find that only 7/10th of one per cent of Hartford bank officers are Jews" (pp. 85-86).

extremely strong support of the Zionist movement, kept Hartford Jews a group apart.

There is no doubt that the decision to form separate ethnic organizations reflects a conscious decision of the group itself. At least for our five-decade period, the correctness of that decision was underscored by the willingness of the non-Jewish community to retain exclusiveness in some of its institutions. Hartford Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in addition to the conflict of national loyalties among themselves, confronted not only the tension of integration and separatism within their own community, but also that of the larger society which demanded Americanization while it accepted them only reluctantly, if at all, as equal members of the community.

The American Jewish Archives is making a comprehensive search for correspondence and other papers of Isaac Mayer Wise, pioneer of Reform Judaism and founder of Hebrew Union College, to be included in a microfilm edition of his writings. Persons or repositories holding original items or copies are requested to contact Doris C. Sturzenberger, Project Coordinator, Papers of Isaac Mayer Wise, Microfilm Edition, American Jewish Archives, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220.

Book Review

Hertzberg, Steven. *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978. 352 pp. \$12.00.

At long last community histories are no longer a stepchild in the field of American Jewish studies. In the last few years a number of articles have appeared in which scholars have applied the quantitative techniques of the "new urban history" to the writing of histories of American Jewish communities. Steven Hertzberg's *Strangers Within The Gate City* is the first such book-length study to be published. Hertzberg's well-researched and methodologically innovative work gives us insight into the social history of a prominent Southern Jewish community. But the shortcomings of previous community histories, so perceptively discussed in Hertzberg's introduction, are only partially transcended in the body of his book.

Hertzberg's methodological innovation is his use of primary sources generally ignored in the past in the writing of American Jewish history. These include tax digests, census schedules, and city directories, as well as birth, marriage, naturalization, and death certificates. Such sources provided Hertzberg with information about the demographic, social, and economic life of nearly 2,000 Jews of Atlanta. He subsequently processed this data by computer. His study thus includes extensive discussion of demography, and economic and geographic mobility.

The major weakness of Hertzberg's book lies in his sometimes faulty interpretation of the quantified and historical data he presents. This is especially true of his attempts to place the Atlanta Jewish experience within the larger context of American Jewish social history. His conclusions are too often characterized by generalization and subjectivity.

Hertzberg chose to focus on post-bellum Atlanta because "no section of the United States has received less attention from students of American Jewry" than the Deep South. He rightly feels

that for the half-century stretching from Reconstruction to the outbreak of the First World War, the neglect is particularly acute. By his own admission, however, Atlanta's growth into an urban center was in certain basic respects atypical of the Deep South—which raises the question of Atlanta Jewry's representativeness among the Jewish communities of the post-bellum South.

Unlike such cities as Charleston and Mobile, Atlanta was a city without roots in a slavery-based economy. Atlanta, Hertzberg informs us, was rather “a creation of the railroads,” growing “from a railroad terminus to a railroad junction to a railroad center.” Founded as Marthasville in 1843, and renamed in 1845, Atlanta was a trading-post of fewer than 10,000 people on the eve of the Civil War. The city's population doubled during the war, and, of necessity, Atlanta became a manufacturing center. The city was largely destroyed by General Sherman's army, but was rapidly rebuilt, and within a decade had established itself as the major trading center of the eastern cotton belt. In a period during which older cities in the region were economically and demographically depressed, Atlanta experienced prosperity and growth more characteristic of the industrializing North. By 1910, the city's population had swelled to over 150,000. Unlike the cities of the industrial North, however, Atlanta's newcomers were not predominantly foreign-born. Rather, over ninety percent were native-born southerners, many of them blacks.

During the half-century Hertzberg writes about, Atlanta's Jewish community was never a large one. From a handful of families in 1860, the community grew to number 600 persons by 1880, and 4,000 by 1910. Through the 1880s, some seventy percent of the city's Jews were of German and Austrian origin. Occupationally, an equally high percentage were either merchants or traders. Between 1890 and 1910 over 2,000 Eastern European Jews moved into the community. In contrast to the pattern in the large Northern cities, where many Eastern European Jews became blue-collar workers, in Atlanta these later-arriving immigrants were as highly concentrated in the commercial trades as the earlier-arriving German Jews had been. Nonetheless, the Eastern European Jews of Atlanta constituted a distinct religious and cultural subgroup, and in the following decades the Jewish community experienced the usual tensions between acculturated German and newly-

arrived Eastern European Jews. The two largest congregations were the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (the Temple) controlled by the German Jews, and Ahavath Achim controlled by the Eastern Europeans.

Hertzberg's study includes the extensive tabular analysis of many variables for the years 1870, 1880, 1896, and 1911. Besides place of birth and occupation, other factors he analyzes include: age, sex, marital status, wealth, and patterns of residence. The problem confronting historians using a quantitative approach has been how to integrate the facts and figures flowing out of the computer with more conventional sources and observations. Hertzberg's wise solution is to place his thirty-nine tables at the back of his book, thereby leaving the narrative unencumbered. But even the most diligent reader will find the tables difficult to get through, as a number of them are excessively complicated.

Hertzberg's impressive marshalling of historical and statistical data is marred by questionable interpretations. For example, Hertzberg's claim that "in their economic performance, the Jews of Atlanta surpassed not only their northern cousins but also their gentile neighbors" is based on his evaluation of the Jews' occupational status rather than their accumulation of wealth. The problem with his discussion of "skidders" and "climbers" is that he assumes that all merchants were of higher status than clerical workers or skilled artisans. It is apparently true that Atlanta's Jews were more likely than Jews elsewhere in the country to be merchants, but they were not therefore necessarily wealthier. In fact, in his data on wealth, one finds that among Russian Jewish men who arrived in Atlanta before 1896 and remained in 1911, over one-third had declared assets of less than \$50, and only one-fifth claimed to be worth more than \$5,000.

As far as the Jews' being accepted socially and politically, Hertzberg is convinced that "without forsaking their religious identity, the Jews of Atlanta participated extensively in the affairs of the general community and achieved a level of integration that their northern cousins could well envy." He repeatedly attributes this acceptance in large part to his claim that "the overriding preoccupation [of Southerners] with maintaining white supremacy tended to blur distinctions between different kinds of white men." The facts he presents simply do not support this contention. He

documents the fact that between 1890 and 1930 only one Jew was elected to local political office—and he was a fifth-generation southerner whose Jewishness was a well-kept secret. Moreover, elsewhere he notes that “only members of the [Jewish] elite had much contact with gentiles, and even these relationships tended to be formal and goal directed.” Furthermore, even for the most assimilated Jews, “club membership was a symbolic triumph that remained beyond their grasp.”

The channeling of anti-Semitism into hatred for blacks that Hertzberg supposes is belied by the Leo Frank case. The unpunished lynching in 1915 of this prominent Atlanta Jew, for a murder he did not commit, was more than a personal tragedy. It marked the climax of an anti-Semitic campaign severe enough to spur the founding of the Anti-Defamation League, and which, in Hertzberg's own words, “for several decades . . . hung like a threatening cloud over the [Atlanta] Jewish community, confirmation that economic success was no protection against bigotry.”

STEPHEN G. MOSTOV

Stephen G. Mostov is completing his doctoral dissertation, a social history of nineteenth-century Cincinnati Jewry, at Brandeis University.

Brief Notices

Bayor, Ronald H. *Neighbors in Conflict. The Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1978. xiv, 232 pp. \$14.00

An outstanding example of the integration of newer social historical methods with more traditional economic and political analyses, *Neighbors in Conflict* is a book replete with surprises. Everyone is familiar with the story of little Depression-era Jewish children who wandered out of their own ethnic neighborhoods only to be set upon by groups of other ethnics. That this type of struggle went on among adults, indeed whole ethnic groupings, is not surprising. What definitely is a surprise is the fact that in New York City, between the years 1929-1941, in the heyday of Hitler and Mussolini, and of the German American Bund, the major ethnic conflict occurred between the Jews and the Irish. Jews began, during the 1930's, to become numerous in two areas considered Irish avenues of upward mobility, namely teaching and the civil service. There was also tension between Irish Catholicism and a perceived Jewish socialism/communism. Finally, the Jewish community was outraged and frightened by the anti-Semitic Coughlinites and other right-wing groups. Despite its intermittent surprises, *Neighbors in Conflict* offers a constant flow of excellence in its narrative and methodology.

Belth, Nathan C. *A Promise to Keep. A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism.* New York: Times Books, 1979. xiv, 305 pp. \$11.95

Nathan C. Belth has really written two narratives. One is a general but effective history of anti-Semitism in American history and the other is an account of the actions taken by the Anti-Defamation League, the premier American Jewish defense organization, to counter the effects of that anti-Semitism. Belth's book is a useful introduction to an aspect of the American Jewish experience which demands further research and a fresh interpretation.

Berlin, William S. *On the Edge of Politics: The Roots of Jewish Political Thought in America.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978. 206 pp. \$18.95

Berlin is interested in the question of the political aspects of Jewish adaptation to America. He assumes that most Jewish immigrants to this country, whether they were Germans or Russians, came here with certain political opinions, however basic, among their cultural baggage. The author questions how those opinions fared against the prevailing ideas contained within American political thinking. He is especially interested in Jewish political thought within the context of "separation versus participation," the distinct antipodes of nineteenth and early twentieth century Jewish life in America.

Brauner, Ronald A., Edited by. *Jewish Civilization: Essays and Studies (Volume I).* Philadelphia: Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1979. 302 pp.

This volume of essays and studies is a response, according to the editor, to several

needs of the contemporary Jewish community, among them "to the hunger for meaningful . . . expositions of the varied facets of Jewish culture . . . and . . . to Mordecai Kaplan's challenging assertion that Judaism is best understood as an evolving religious civilization." Among articles of interest are those of Herbert Tobin on "New York's Jews and the Catskill Mountains, 1880-1930"; Richard L. Libowitz on "Some Reactions to *Der Judenstaat* Among English-Speaking Jews in the United States"; and Raphael Jospe on "Secularization and Religion in the American Jewish Community."

Chiel, Arthur A., Edited by. *Perspectives on Jews and Judaism. Essays in Honor of Wolfe Kelman*. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1978. 483 pp. \$25.00

This volume is a tribute to Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, the Executive Vice-President of the Rabbinic Assembly, for over twenty-five years of service to the rabbinic wing of the Conservative movement. Rabbi Kelman is described in this volume as being the "Conservative rabbinic statesman *par excellence*," and as a *talmid hakham*, phrases which indicate the measure of respect which he is accorded in the rabbinic world. Among the authors contributing to this *Festschrift* are Sefton D. Temkin, Elie Wiesel, Jacob B. Agus, Ben Zion Bokser, Chaim Grade, Abraham J. Karp, Jacob Neusner, and a *Personal Tribute* by Gerson D. Cohen.

———. *Day Book of Service at the Altar. As Lived by Samuel S. Cohon, 1888-1959*. Los Angeles: Distributed by Harellick and Roth/Booksellers. iii, 358 pp.

This volume is a factual record of the life and achievements of Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon. It is based upon his own correspondence, synagogue records and announcements, press clippings and the memoirs of friends. Rabbi Cohon was a tremendous figure in the world of American Jewish scholarship as well as a respected teacher. For more than thirty-five years he held the chair of Jewish Theology at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

Cordasco, Francesco, Edited by. *A Bibliography of American Immigration History*. Fairfield, New Jersey: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1977. xii, 475 pp. \$27.50

This is a reprinted version of a similar volume first published in 1956 but now updated by the author with several additions. There are numerous entries dealing with works on American Jewish immigration history. Most of the entries are annotated.

Dittmar, Kurt, *Assimilation und Dissimilation. Erscheinungsformen der Marginalitaetsthematik bei juedisch-amerikanischen Erzaehlern (1900-1970)*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978. 512 pp.

This book is a contribution to the Anglo-American Forum series, whose main purpose is to "promote the interdisciplinary interpretation and understanding of English . . . language, life and letters." Dittmar is interested in the varying themes of marginality and their place in the literary output of American Jewish writers. He attempts to analyze marginality against the backdrop of the Jewish role in American literature and society.

Dobkowski, Michael N. *The Tarnished Dream. The Basis of American Anti-Semitism*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979. x, 291 pp. \$22.50

In an important essay on the image of the Jew in German popular literature, the eminent historian of German anti-Semitism, George Mosse, urged his readers to "direct our

attention to cultural investigation." It was Mosse's contention that "only in this way will we be able to understand fully the continued influence of anti-Semitism which . . . seems to predate and to outlast its immediate political or social relevance."

Michael N. Dobkowski has taken Professor Mosse's advice to heart. In *The Tarnished Dream* he has undertaken a study of the image of the Jew in American popular literature. The reader of this important book is astonished at the depth and breadth of anti-Jewish attitudes among both the famous and unknowns of the American literary profession. As Dobkowski demonstrates, there was an anguish, an air of cultural despair, which not only was reflected by popular writers, but was expressed by such American Brahmins as the Lowells, Adamsons and Eliots. The object of that despair was the demise of the native born stock, the "great race" as Madison Grant termed it. The Jew, of course, was "instrumental" in its destruction. Perhaps most unsettling of all is the portrait that Dobkowski paints of the acute depersonalization of the American Jew, which the stereotypical literature helped achieve: "Jews became 'figures' merely, stripped of their uniqueness . . . to fit the stereotyped roles expected of them." This phenomenon corresponds closely to the situation in Germany during the Third Reich, where a movement such as National Socialism was able to incite hatred of the Jews by evoking a certain stereotypical image in the popular mind, devoid of real or human characteristics. That is why every German had a Jewish friend who was not like "those other Jews." Quite obviously, anti-Semitism in America during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries never evolved into the terrible endings engendered by its European counterparts. It is to Professor Dobkowski's credit, however, that he has shown us, at least in one respect, that we did not have far to go.

Hertzberg, Arthur. *Being Jewish in America. The Modern Experience.* New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1979. xxii, 287 pp. \$16.95

Arthur Hertzberg has always "told it like it is," in terms of American Jewry. He has never minced words, either as an accuser or defender of what is and was bad or good about the American Jewish community. To some Hertzberg conjures up images of H.L. Mencken, a kind of Jewish "bad boy of Baltimore," railing about an American Jewish "Boobocracy." But to hold such a view of Hertzberg is to misunderstand him, totally. This is amply demonstrated by the group of essays published in this book. Professor Hertzberg has created in these pages a kind of paradigmatic Jew beset by a number of American Jewish problems and dilemmas. Rather than simply berate us for our lack of concern, Hertzberg asks us to confront those issues which he deems central to our continued existence as American Jews.

Kranzler, David. *My Jewish Roots.* New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1979. 88 pp. \$7.95

Perhaps the outstanding feature of this "how-to" on Jewish genealogy is its relatively inexpensive price. It includes standard sections on tracing one's roots. It is a useful supplement to fuller, more developed texts on the subject.

Leonoff, Cyril Edel. *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls. The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon.* Victoria, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press, 1978. 255 pp. \$15.00.

The author of this book is the Archivist of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia. Many of the photographs in this volume have not previously been published.

Cyril Leonoff's contribution is to be commended for the unusual manner in which it presents the history of this remote portion of Canadian Jewry, far removed from the centers of Jewish life in Montreal and Toronto. From the photographs, the biographical sketches, and the flowing chronological and thematic narrative, all blended into a single format, one derives a feeling for the history of Canada's prairie Jews.

Miller, Wayne Charles. *A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities.* New York: New York University Press, 1976. (2 volumes) xix, 1,500 pp. \$95.00

The two volumes of this monumental reference work contain a total of 23, 300 entries, most of which are in an annotated form. A bibliographical essay that precedes each chapter highlights the most useful studies dealing with that particular ethnic group. The section on American Jewry is nearly seventy pages in length.

Mitchell, William E. *Mishpokhe. A Study of New York City Jewish Family Clubs.* The Hague, Paris, New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978. 262 pp.

In a time when even the Jewish nuclear family is no longer assured of an enduring cohesiveness, hardly anyone remembers the somewhat idealized extended family of the Old World. Jewish families in New York, coming as immigrants to an America which, because of urbanization and geographic mobility, threatened to destroy them, found refuge in the creation of family clubs, specifically the family circles of the older generations and the cousins' clubs of the newer ones. Both types of groups, as Professor Mitchell demonstrates, still exist today. As Professor Marshall Sklare points out in the *Foreword* of this book, "Jewish identity in the Diaspora is closely intertwined with the nature of the Jewish family." The existence of such family clubs may be an important key to the continuity and survival of the Jewish family in America at a crucial point in its history.

Norwood, Ella Feldman. *Not Bad for an Immigrant Boy.* New Haven: Oz Publications, 1979. 90 pp.

During his lifetime, Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman was a distinguished national figure in American religious circles. The senior rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, Hartford, Connecticut, from 1925 to 1968, Rabbi Feldman attained the presidency of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Synagogue Council of America, and was co-founder and first editor of the *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*. He attained many other honors during his long service to Reform Judaism, his nation, state and city. Ella Feldman Norwood has written a sensitive account of memorable episodes in the life of her father.

Orbach, William W. *The American Movement to Aid Soviet Jews.* Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979. x, 245 pp. \$15.00

Professor Orbach's work is an attempt to study the successes and failures associated with American efforts to aid Soviet Jewry, beginning with the post-World War II period. The author is sensitive to the question of internal tensions within the movement, especially between traditionalists and more modern activists. He is also aware of external factors important to such a movement, factors which reflect the actions of the oppressed as well as the oppressor and of world public opinion. Orbach also studies this movement in a comparative sense, analyzing previous American movements to help Armenians in World War I, victims of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel, among others.

Pratt, Norma Fain. *Morris Hillquit. A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1979. xi, 272 pp. \$18.50

At the outset of the First World War, one of the last leaders of the German Conservative Party, Cuno Graf Westarp, stood and shook hands with deputies from the German Social Democratic Party. This was an event which merited attention—Westarp had never before recognized, much less talked to a socialist representative of the German Reichstag. The occasion, too, was momentous—the Social Democrats had just voted yes in favor of German war credits, thereby completing the last stage in their absolute decline as the party of revolution within German politics.

Imagine, then, a figure such as Morris Hillquit, an urbane, successful attorney and a devotee of German *Kultur*, who was at home among the ranks of the educated and prosperous bourgeoisie. Imagine such a man as a major figure in American socialism and eventually as the acknowledged leader of the American Socialist Party.

It is this study in contradictions which serves as the strength of Professor Pratt's political history of Morris Hillquit. A believer in the non-violent transformation of American capitalist society, Hillquit was nevertheless an outspoken advocate of resistance to American involvement in World War I. An active civil rights lawyer and trade unionist, he nevertheless took an almost benignly authoritarian attitude toward workers, and often discouraged the need for a working-class base for socialist politics. An Eastern European Jew who, according to Professor Pratt, "transferred his allegiance from the Jewish *folk* to the American people," Hillquit ultimately became identified as an unhealthy foreign element within American socialist ranks.

The author passes no final judgement on Morris Hillquit. This seems to be a sensible thing to do. Because there is so little documentation on Hillquit the man, Professor Pratt is unable to evaluate him fully in terms of both the public and private records. We are thus unable to understand Hillquit as a Socialist, Jew, and American. Nevertheless, as political history, this is an outstanding work.

Rosen, Gladys. Edited by. *Jewish Life in America. Historical Perspectives.* New York: Institute of Human Relations Press of the American Jewish Committee and Ktav Publishing House, 1978. xv, 198 pp.

The essays in this volume were originally delivered under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee. They were given as part of the Bicentennial celebration in order to illuminate the American Jewish experience. Among the authors whose lectures have been published in this book are Marshall Sklare, Moses Rischin, Gerson D. Cohen, Irving Howe and Richard B. Morris.

Rosenberg, Ethel and David. *To 120 Years! A Social History of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (1856-1976).* Indianapolis: Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, 1979. x, 192 pp.

It is immediately noticeable to the trained eye that this volume is the creation of professionals. This is indeed a model for congregational histories, one which includes numerous important photographs. *To 120 Years!* is an objective examination of even the most controversial issues associated with the history of this outstanding Indiana congregation.

Rosenberg, Leon Joseph. *Sangers'. Pioneer Texas Merchants.* Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 1978. 135 pp.

The Sanger-Harris firm, which now has ten locations in the Dallas-Fort-Worth, Texas, area, is one of the finest department stores in the country. This volume chronicles the history of the original store, Sanger Brothers, which opened in the middle of the nineteenth century. It analyzes the successes and failures of this well-known Texas business concern.

Rosenbloom, Joseph R. *Conversion to Judaism. From the Biblical Period to the Present.* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1978. xiii, 178 pp.

For almost as long as they have been a people, Jews have been the targets of attempts to convert them. Often these efforts were accompanied by physical intimidation, in which the choices were either to convert or face the penalty of death. In modern times, the methods of conversion have become more subtle, to the point where there are active missions to the Jews which are composed of former Jews.

It thus seems incomprehensible that Jews should want to convert others to their faith. In fact, conversion to Judaism has been largely a choice of non-Jews. In America, Orthodox and Conservative rabbis remain firm in their efforts to dissuade potential converts, and Reform rabbis, while hardly as firm, normally do not take the initiative in approaching potential converts. And so the popular myth has developed that Jews have never actively sought to convert.

Dr. Rosenbloom's book dispels this myth and demonstrates that until three or four centuries ago Jews had been active in conversion efforts and that in certain periods of Jewish history almost aggressive. This book brings the historical question of conversion to Judaism into its proper perspective. In light of increasing Jewish intermarriage, of Jewish reluctance to have children, of our inability to replace the six million lost in the Holocaust, this book is as timely as it is both scholarly and readable.

Sarna, Jonathan D., Edited by. *Jews in New Haven.* New Haven: Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1978. iv, 148 pp.

This is the first publication of what is hoped are many put out by the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, Connecticut. It contains listings of archival and bibliographical materials relating to New Haven Jewry as well as articles by Arthur Chiel, Jonathan Sarna, Dan Oren, Roberta Friedman, and Werner S. Hirsch among others.

Speisman, Stephen A. *The Jews of Toronto. A History to 1937.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979. 380 pp. \$19.95.

With the publication of this book, there now is added another name to the small group of major historians, among them B.G. Sack and David Rome, of the Canadian Jewish experience. Dr. Speisman's history of Toronto Jewry to 1937 is well-written and based upon an impressive number of sources, including numerous oral interviews. One hopes that Speisman will continue to research the history of Toronto Jewry beyond 1937 in a subsequent volume.

Stein, Kenneth W. *A History of the Ahavath Achim Congregation, 1887-1977.* Atlanta: Standard Press, Inc., 1978. 89 pp.

Atlanta's Ahavath Achim synagogue, known to its congregants as the "Big Shule" or more recently as "AA," was founded in 1887, the year in which eighteen Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe petitioned the Superior Court of Fulton County for permission to

charter the institution. Since that time, more than ninety years ago, Ahavath Achim has developed into a Conservative congregation of more than eighteen hundred members and contains one of the most extensive religious school programs in the country.

Stern, Paula. *Water's Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979. xix, 265 pp. \$19.95

It is to the German historian Eckart Kehr that we owe the phrase "the primacy of domestic politics." It was Kehr's contention that the machinations of Wilhelmine Germany's political groups ultimately shaped the evolution of its foreign political policies. This concept of "linkage" is widely accepted, except for those few who still see foreign policy as the main determinant of domestic politics or those that seek a synthesis.

It is also Paula Stern's contention that domestic politics in America shaped this nation's foreign political dealings with the Soviet Union, both in the area of human rights (notably the question of Soviet Jewry) and U.S.-Soviet trade, each of which eventually became linked to the other. Dr. Stern concludes that one man—Senator Henry Jackson—was responsible for this linkage and that American pressure groups such as Jewish and labor organizations were able to help shape international dealings between the Russians and the United States.

Treloar, Wilbert H. *Cohodas. The Story of a Family.* Marquette, Michigan: The Northern Michigan University Press, 1977. 256 pp. \$6.95

In the Upper Great Lakes region of Michigan and Wisconsin, the family name Cohodas has become synonymous with large-scale banking corporations and produce distribution. Immigrant Jews from Poland, the Cohodas family, and especially the family patriarch, Sam, have earned national recognition, not only for their financial successes, but also for their integrity and generosity.

Urofsky, Melvin I., Edited by. *Essays in American Zionism, 1917-1948.* (Herzl Year Book, Volume VIII). New York: Herzl Press, 1978. 311 pp. \$12.50

After an absence of several years, the Herzl Year Book has once again appeared as a welcome addition to the historiography of American Zionism. This volume, edited by Melvin I. Urofsky, includes essays by, among others, Sarah Schmidt, Naomi Cohen, Carl Hermann Voss, Melvin I. Urofsky and Selig Adler.

Weisbrot, Robert. *The Jews of Argentina. From the Inquisition to Perón.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979. xiii, 348 pp. \$12.50

Robert Weisbrot's important study of Argentinian Jewry begins and ends on a similarly sad note, namely the suffering and pain of being a Jew, either in the form of a New Christian in the seventeenth century or a modern Argentinian citizen of the twentieth, in this Latin American nation. Sandwiched between this disheartening element of continuity is an extremely useful (although unscholarly) and well-written account of the world's fifth largest Jewish community.

The history of Argentinian Jewry parallels, in many ways, the establishment and growth of Jewish communities after 1880 in major parts of the Western Hemisphere: emigration as a result of anti-Jewish feeling in the old homeland; the desire for a new and better way of life; the emergence of a benevolent and idealistic benefactor such as Baron de Hirsch; and, finally, the encounter with a much larger and mostly Christian society.

Yet to speak of the parallel stages of development among Jewish communities in the Western Hemisphere today is no longer valid. Some of these communities are enjoying a veritable "golden age." Others, and especially Argentina, are experiencing a continuation of anti-Jewish hostility and physical violence. There is a combined onslaught against one's Jewishness in these latter communities by both the political left and right, the whims of the current *caudillo* dictator, his ministers and military, as well as the illogical rhetoric of minority fringes within the Roman Catholic church.

What then of the young Jews in Argentina? What of those that may well feel a new pride in being Jewish in a world where a Jewish state continues to survive against disastrous odds, where the ghetto mentality is practically extinct? What of this Jewish pride, this successful synthesis of a Jewish and Argentinian consciousness?

Such a paradigm of Jewish existence may well have its roots in any number of diaspora communities—but not in Argentina. "In Argentina," predicts the editor of a well-known Jewish journal in Buenos Aires, "Jewish life will disappear within fifty years."

Vincent, Sidney Z. and Judah Rubinstein. *Merging Traditions. Jewish Life in Cleveland.* Cleveland: The Western Reserve Historical Society and the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1978. 283 pp. \$10.00

With the publication of this volume, which includes an impressionistic narrative account of Jewish life in Cleveland from 1945 to 1975 and a pictorial record from 1839 to 1975, the Jewish community of Cleveland has made a genuine contribution to American Jewish communal history. This is especially true when seen in the light of Lloyd Gartner's *History of the Jews of Cleveland (AJA, April, 1979)*, an outstanding scholarly study of the community to 1945.

The Jewish community of Cleveland, accurately described as "one of the most creative and productive Jewish communities on the continent," has now extended the challenge to other Jewish communities throughout the Western Hemisphere to match or surpass this first-rate publishing achievement.

Index

A

- A Bibliography of American Immigration History* (Cordasco), 220
A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities (Miller), 222
A. Cressy Morrison Award in Natural Sciences of the New York Academy of Sciences, 45
A Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History (Kaganoff), 109
A History of the Ahavath Achim Congregation, 1887-1977 (Stein), 224-25
"A Message from Dr. Korn," 48-50
A Promise to Keep. A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism (Belth), 219
"A Tragic Voyage" (Lena Pearlstein Berkman), 69-71
Aaron Club, Hartford, Conn., 204
AARONSOHN, AARON, 122;
JONATHAN BURRELL, 121
Abortion, 35-36
Acculturation, 131-32, 136, 216
Act-izes, 194-95
Adath Israel Congregation, Madison, Ind., 118
ADENAUER, KONRAD, 178
ADLER, CYRUS, facing page 154, 154-56, 169-71, 173, 180; LIEBMAN, 121
Agudas Achim Congregation, Hartford, Conn., 198
Ahavath Achim Congregation, Atlanta, Ga., 217
Alabama; *see* Claiborne, Mobile
Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award, 45
Allach (concentration camp), 51-52
Alliance Israélite Universelle, 172
Allied Armies (Second World War), 53, 57, 61
ALPERT, REBECCA TRACHTENBERG, 126
ALSCHULER, ROSE HAAS, 46-47
ALTAMOUNT, HENRY, 68
ALTSCHUL, FRANK, 162
American College of Physicians Award, 45
American Council for Judaism, 72, 110
American Federation of Labor, 179
American Friends of German Jews, 162
American Hebrew, 158, 174, 181
American Hebrew Benevolent Society, Cleveland, Ohio, 120
American Jewish Archives, 137, 151
American Jewish Committee, 110-11, 151, 153, 155-56, 158-63, 166-68, 170-72, 174-75, 177-78, 180
American Jewish Congress, 110-11, 151-52, 158-59, 167-71, 174-78
American Jewish Historical Society, 151
American Jewish Historical Quarterly, 137-38
American Jewish History, 137
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 127, 156, 160, 167, 173
"American Jewish Leaders and the Emerging Nazi Threat (1928-January, 1933)" (Shafir), 150-83
American Jewish Press Association, 120
American Jewish Year Book, 153
American Jews, American Jewry, 1, 51, 58-59, 63, 65, 76, 105, 111, 132, 134, 138, 142, 150-54, 157-60, 163, 166, 168-70, 173-74, 176-77, 179-83, 188, 201, 205, 215
American Medical Association, 45
American Movement to Aid Soviet Jews, The (Orbach), 222
American Zionists, 181
Americanization, 104, 178, 207, 214
AMMERMAN, B., 157
Anglo-Jewish Association, 151
Anglo-Jewish press, 104, 150, 173-74
Anti-Catholicism, 110
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'irth, 122, 218
Anti-Jewish boycott, 167, 181
Anti-Jewishness; *see* Anti-Semitism
Anti-Nazi boycott, 169-70

Anti-Nazis, 158, 172, 174, 183
 Anti-Semitism, 105-7, 109-11, 122, 129,
 150-52, 165-67, 171, 175-76, 182, 218
 Anti-Zionism, anti-Zionists, 106, 110
 Arabs, 136, 140
 Ararat Lodge, B'nai B'rith, Hartford,
 Conn., 190, 205
Arbeiterringe, 194-95
 Argentina, 118
 Army (United States), 10, 18, 23, 42
 ARVEY, JACOB, 122
As I See Him (Lazaron), 72; "As I See
 Him" (Lazaron), 72-74
 Assimilation, 105, 131-32, 135-36, 140,
 175, 187-88, 191, 202, 210, 213, 218
*Assimilation und Dissimilation. Erschei-
 nungsformen der
 Marginalitaetsthematik bei jüdisch-
 amerikanischen Erzählern* (Dittmar),
 220
 Association of German Science, 166
 Association of Liberal Jews, 163-64
 Atlanta, Ga., 215-18
 ATLAS, SAMUEL, 127
 Attorneys; see Lawyers and law
 AUERBACH, BEATRICE FOX, 191
 Auschwitz, 51
 Australia, 61
 Austria-Hungary, 193
 Austrian Jews, 216
 Autobiographies, 35-45, 124-25
 AXELROD, MORRIS, 185

B

Babylon, 65
 BAECK, LEO, 163, 170
 BAERWALD, PAUL, 173
 BAKER, NEWTON D., 177
 BALLENSTEIN & DILLON, 191
 BALLENSTEIN & HYDEL, 191
 Baltimore, Md., 127, 142, 145-46
 Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Balti-
 more, Md., 72
 BAMBERGER (family), 124
 BAND, BENJAMIN, 185
 Bankers and banking, 213
 Bar Mitzvah, 147
 Baron de Hirsch Foundation, 193
 Baron de Hirsch Fund, 193
 BAROWAY, SOLOMON, 124
 BARUCH, BERNARD M., 160
 Basel, Switzerland, 205
 Basic School, 14
 BAUM, ALBERT G., 122
 Bavaria, 151, 157
 BAYOR, RONALD H., 219
 BECKER, SANDRA HARTWELL, 184-
 214
*Being Jewish in America. The Modern
 Experience* (Hertzberg), 221
 BELSKY, ALBERT H., 185
 BELTH, NATHAN C., 219
 BENJAMIN, JUDAH P., 122
 BENNATHAN, ESRA, 153
 BERGSON, HENRI, 64
 BERGER, GRAENUM, 112
 BERKMAN, LENA PEARLSTEIN, 69
 Berlin, Germany, 69-70, 150-51, 153,
 157, 163, 165-66, 169, 171-73, 178
 Berlin University, 167, 177
 BERLIN, WILLIAM S., 219
 BERNHARD, GEORG, 164
 BERSON, SOLOMON A., 39, 43-44
 Beth Elohim Congregation, Charleston,
 S.C., 118
 Beth Israel Congregation, Hartford,
 Conn., 188-89, 192, 204
 Beth Israel Congregation, Meridian,
 Miss., 119
 Beth Shalom Congregation, Richmond,
 Va., 142
 Bible, 65, 132, 199
Biblical Archeologist, 137
Biblical Archeology Review, 137
 Bigotry; see Anti-Semitism, Prejudice
 Biographies, 124-25
 Biro-Bidjan, 60
 Birth control, 35
Bits and Pieces of Family Lore
 (Alschuler), 46
Black Jews in America (Berger), 112
 Blacks, 104-8, 196-97, 216, 218
 BLANK, SHELDON H., 127
 BLASE, DR. (of Cincinnati, Ohio), 96
 BLATT, SOLOMON, 124
 BLOCH, DAVID JUDAH, 148;
 HERBERT (HERBIE), 82-83, 86-87,
 90, 95, 97; JANE MEINRATH,
 80-103; PETER, 80-103
 BLOCK (family), 145-46; ABIGAIL,
 144, 146, 148-49; ELEANOR, 147;
 ELEAZER, 142-49; HERMAN, 147;
 HERMAN MENDELSON, 148;

- JACOB, 142; JOSEPHINE, 147;
 REHINE DAVID, 147-48; ROSALIE,
 144, 147; SALLY, 148; SARAH, 147;
 SIMON, SR., 143, 145; SIMON, JR.,
 143-44
- Blood libel, 109-11
- Blue Laws (Connecticut), 200-201
- BLUMENFELD, KURT, 163, 175
- BLUMENTHAL, GEORGE, 160
- B'nai B'irth, 120-21, 163, 190
- B'nai Zion Society, Hartford, Conn.,
 205-6
- Board of Aldermen, Hartford, Conn., 203
- BOGEN, BORIS D., 127
- Bohemian Jews, 142
- BOOTHBY, ROBERT, 172
- BORAH, WILLIAM E., 170-71
- Boston, Mass., 185-86
- BRANDEIS, LOUIS DEMBITZ, 160, 181
- Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, 120
- BRAUNER, RONALD A., 219-20
- BRIDGE, HERBERT MARVIN, 125
- Bridgeport, Conn., 186
- Britain, British government, 15, 60, 151,
 173; *see also* England
- British Americans, 212-213
- British, the, 15, 171-72
- British Jews, British Jewry, 171
- British Joint Foreign Committee, 161, 172
- BROCHES, S., 185
- BRODNITZ, JULIUS, 163, 170
- Bronx, The New York City, 42
- Brookhaven National Laboratories, 42-43
- BROWN & ROOT, 23
- BROWNE, EDWARD B. M., 122
- BRUENING, HEINRICH, 158, 165, 170-
 71, 178
- Buchenwald, 58
- BUCKINGHAM, GOVERNOR (Con-
 necticut), 189
- BURNS, ARTHUR F., 122
- BUTZEL, FRED M., 124
- C
- CADMAN, S. PARKES, 176
- California, 115, 147; *see also* Sacramento,
 San Francisco, Stockton
- Camp Hanson, 9
- CALISCH, EDWARD N., 122
- Canada, 120, 127; *see also* Brandon,
 French Canadians, Manitoba, Mon-
 treal, Toronto, Winnipeg
- Cape Girardeau, Mo., 143-44
- CARDOZO, BENJAMIN, 160
- CARE, 27-28
- Carl Schurz Foundation, 178
- Carnegie Foundation, 164
- CASEY, COLONEL, 26
- CASTLE, WILLIAM R., 168
- Catholic Center, 165
- Catholics, 164, 177, 199
- CAVERT, SAMUEL MCCREA, 176
- Cemeteries, 119-20, 142, 165, 194-96
- Censuses, 186-87, 215
- Central Conference of American Rabbis
 (C. C. A. R.), 110, 133-37, 139-40
- Central Europe, 52, 60, 164, 188
- Centralverein (C. V.), Germany, 153-58,
 161, 163-66, 170-71, 176, 179, 181-82
- Champaign-Urbana, Ill., 41
- Charleston, S. C., 67, 118, 144, 147, 216
- Chauncey Harris Primary School, Hart-
 ford, Conn., 200
- Chebra Achim Rachmonim, San Fran-
 cisco, Cal., 121
- Chicago, Ill., 46, 75, 77, 118, 120,
 177-78, 197; South Side, 197
- Chicago Woman's Aid, 75
- CHIEL, ARTHUR A., 220
- Children, 197-200, 206, 208
- Chinese, 32
- Christians, 72, 109-10, 176, 189-90,
 195, 200, 202, 204
- CHYET, STANLEY F., 122
- Cincinnati, Ohio, 62, 66, 80, 144-45, 177
- City College, New York, 41
- City Council, Hartford, Conn., 202-3,
 208
- City University of New York, 40
- Civil War, 20, 148, 216
- Claiborne, Ala., 120
- CLARK, KENNETH, 97
- Cleveland, Ohio, 113-14, 158, 174, 181
- CLINCHY, EVERETT R., 177
- COHEN (family), 125; ABRAHAM H.,
 170-76; COHEN & SPEAR, 191;
 E. ALEX, 124; EMMA, 126; JACOB,
 Jr., 67; MORRIS, 196-98; REBECCA,
 67-68; MRS. S. J., 124; WILLIAM
 W., 174
- Cohodas: The Story of a Family*
 (Treloar),
 225

- COLEMAN (family), 127
 College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., 143
 Colleges, 39-42, 64, 143; City College of New York, 41; College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., 143; Dropsie College, Philadelphia, 156; Hunter College, New York, 40-42; Vassar College, 46, 80
 Columbia University, New York, 40
 Comité des Délégations Juives, 175
Command Decision, 20
Commentary, 139
 Committee on Problems in Foreign Lands, 175
 Common Council, Hartford, Conn., 203
Commonweal, 177
 Communal life, Jewish; Community, Jewish, 67, 75, 110, 131, 175, 179, 186, 189-92, 194-95, 197, 199-200, 204-6, 208, 210, 212-15
 Communism, Communists, Communist Party, 15, 29, 32, 60, 169, 172
 Community, Jewish, 131-32, 151, 187; *see also* Communal life, Jewish
 Concentration camps, 51, 56-57, 60
 Confederate States of America; *see* Civil War
 Congregation Tree of Life, Uniontown, Pa., 119
 Congregations; *see* Synagogue activities
 Congress, Congressmen (United States), 174, 200, 204
 Connecticut, 101, 184, 186-91, 194, 200-201; Blue Laws, 200-202, 212-13; *see also* Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Waterbury
 Conservative Jews, 63, 131-132, 134-38, 140, 195
 Constitution National Bank, Hartford, Conn., 213
Conversion to Judaism. From the Biblical Period to the Present (Rosenbloom), 224
 COPPA, FRANK J., 112
 CORDASCO, FRANCESCO, 220
 Cotton trade, 216
Courant (Hartford, Conn.); *see* *Hartford Courant*
 Courts and court records, 202-3
 CUMMING, JOHN, 112-13
- CURIE, EVE, 40; MARIE, 40
 CURRAN, THOMAS J., 112
 CURZON, LORD, 40; MARIE, 40
- D
- Dachau, 51-52, 58
 DAHL, ROBERT, 196, 202-3
Daily Jewish Courier (Chicago), 170
 Danzig, 70
 Daughters of Zion, Columbus, Ohio, 120
 DAVIS, CELIA, 122
Day Book of Service at the Altar. As Lived by Samuel S. Cohon (Chiel), 220
 De GAULLE, CHARLES, 22
Dearborn Independent, 111
 Deborah Society, Hartford, Conn., 190
 Decatur, Ill., 148
 DEES, SERGEANT, 33
 DELGADO (family), 125
 Democratic Party, Democrats, 148, 174, 183, 203-4
 Denver, Colo., 120
 Denver Lodge No. 171, B'nai B'rith, 120
 Department of Justice (United States), 178
 Department of State (United States); *see* State Department (United States)
 DePASS, ABIGAIL, 144
 DePASS, RALPH, 144
 Depression, Great (1929-1939), 179, 183
 Detroit, Mich., 177
 DEUTSCH, BERNARD S., 174
Devil and the Jew, The (Trachtenberg), 111
 Diaries, 124-25
 DIAMOND, SANDER A., 178
 DICKSTEIN, SAMUEL, 174
 DIECKHOFF, HANS HEINRICH, 165
 Dietary laws, 188, 196
 DIMONT, MAX, 113
 DINER, HASIA, 104-8
 DITTMAR, KURT, 220
 DIVINSKY, JACOB, 194
 DOBKOWSKI, MICHAEL N., 220-21
 "Documents and Charts Relating to Certain Jewish Families . . . In Particular Grynspan, Kmietek, Melcer, Mycenmacher, Pyszka, Rozen, and Wejntrop, in the Towns of Przasnysz, and Ciechanow, Warsaw, Poland (Walters), 117
Dor Ledor, 137

DRAUDE, T. V., 14
 Dropsie College, Philadelphia, Pa., 156
 Duke University, 7
 Düsseldorf, Germany, 21

E

East European Jews, 196, 200, 204,
 216-17
 East Side, Hartford, Conn., 196-202, 204
 East, the, 10, 175; *see also* Far East
 Eastern Europe, 39, 53, 151, 159, 164,
 184, 186-87, 192, 196, 211; *see also*
 Europe, Southern Europe
 Economic life, 154-55, 159, 167, 172, 179
 182, 190-92, 196, 198, 200-201, 205,
 207, 209-13, 215, 217-218
Ecumenical Review, 137
 Education, 137, 143, 146, 188, 199, 205,
 212-13
 EHRlich, RAE, 126
 EICHHORN, DAVID MAX, 113
 EINSTEIN, ALBERT, 122-23, 157, 170,
 206
 EISEMAN, SIMON, 121
 EISENBERG, AZRIEL, 113
 EISENKRAEMER, MAX, 154
 EKSTEIN, MRS. (of Hartford, Conn.),
 194
 ELBOGEN, ISMAR, 151
 "Eleazer Block— His Family and Career"
 (Rosenwaiké), 142-49
 Eli Lilly Award of the American
 Diabetes Association, 45
 Elkins Park, Pa., 48
 ENGLANDER, GERTRUDE, 123
 EPSTEIN, ELIAS, 66
 Eretz Yisrael, 65; *see also* Israel
Essays in American Zionism, 1917-1948
 (Urofsky), 225
 ESSMAN & HAAS, 191
Ethical in the Jewish and American
Heritage, The (Greenberg), 114
 Ethnicity, 202-5, 210-11, 213-14
 Ethnocentrism, 151, 175
 Etzyon Geber, Israel, 65
 Europe, 22, 28, 46, 56, 61, 110, 150
 153, 159-60, 162, 167, 172, 174-75,
 179, 186, 190, 192, 194, 205; *see also*
 Central Europe, Eastern Europe
 European Jews, 61, 154, 164, 166, 196

Evangelizing the American Jew (Eich-
 horn), 113
 Exeter, England, 147
Eyewitnesses to American Jewish History.
Part II: The German Immigration
 (Eisenberg and Goodman), 113
 EZEKIEL, ANNIE, 147; MOSES J., 123

F

FABRY, PHILIPP W., 157
 FACKENHEIM, EMIL, 51
 FAIGIE (anonymous), 51
 FAILLA, G., 42
 Far East, 21; *see also* East, the
 Fascism, 159
 Federal Council of the Churches of Christ
 in America, 161, 176
 Federal Telecommunications Laboratory,
 42
 FEIS, HERBERT, 167-68, 180
 FELDMAN, ABRAHAM J., 188, 190
 Female Benevolent Society, Philadelphia,
 Pa., 121
 Feminism, 75
 FERMI, ENRICO, 40
 Festivals, Jewish, 109-10; *see also*
 Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur
 FIDANQUE (family), 125-26
Finding Our Fathers (Rottenberg), 109
First Generation. In the Words of
Twentieth-Century Immigrants
 (Namias), 117
 First World War; *see* World War I
 First Zionist Congress, 205
 Foods and cooking, 212; *see also*
 Dietary laws
 FORD, HENRY, 111, 154
 Foreign Ministry, Germany, 165
 Foreign Policy Association, 162
 Fort Clarke, Tex., 148
 FOX, G., and Company, 191, 211
 FOX, GERSON, 191
 FRAENKEL, JACOB, 124-25
 FRANCES (sister-in-law of Rebecca
 Phillips Cohen) (Mrs. Jacob Cohen,
 Jr.), 68
 FRANK, LEO, 104, 218
 FRANK, MRS. MORRIS J., 69
 FRANKFURTER, FELIX, 160, 172
 FRANKLIN, STEPHEN D., 49

FREEHOF, SOLOMON B., 123
 FRICK, WILHELM, 155
 FRIEDMAN, SAUL S., 109-11, 180

G

Gairdner Foundation International Award, 45
 Galicia, Galician Jews, 193, 205
 Galveston, Tex., 7, 22, 148
 GARTNER, LLOYD P., 113-14
Gemillas Hesed, 194-95
 Genealogy, 125-26
 General Hospital, Cincinnati, Ohio, 82-83
 Geneva, Switzerland, 175-76
 Geneva Disarmament Conference, 171
 Gentiles, 171, 191, 210, 217-18; *see also* Non-Jews
 Georgia; *see* Atlanta, Marthasville
 German Americans, 178
 German Jews, 59, 65, 129, 150-53, 156-64, 167-72, 174-80, 182, 188-91, 194, 204-5, 210, 216-17
 German language, 70, 146
 German National Socialists; *see* Nazism
 Germany, Germans, 15, 20, 39, 56, 58-61, 65, 70, 110, 150-63, 165-70, 172-78, 180-83
 GERSTLEY, HENRY, 76-78; MRS. HENRY (Jennie Rosenfeld Gerstley), 75-79; PAUL, 75
 Ghettos, 54
 GLANZ, RUDOLF, 185
 GLUECK, NELSON, 65
 GOERING, HERMANN, 172
 GOLDBAUM, MESHULAM FAITEL, 123
 GOLDHABER, GERTRUDE, 42; MAURICE, 42
 GOLDMAN, EDWARD A., 114; MRS. NETTIE, 194, 206-8; ROBERT PHILIP, 127; SAMUEL, 198
 GOLDMANN, NAHUM, 168, 175
 GOLDSCHMIDT, HERMAN, 199
 GOLDSMID, O. E. d'AVIGDOR, 172-73
 GOLDSTEIN, LEONARD J., 185; SIDNEY, 185
 GOODMAN, HANNAH GRAD, 113
 Goodwill recreation club, Hartford, Conn., 198
 GORDIS, ROBERT, 114
 GOTTLIEB, MOSHE, 176

GOTTSCHALK, ALFRED, 123
 GREEN, GENERAL, 10
 GREENBERG, SIMON, 114
 GREENEBAUM, GARY T., 126
 Greenville, Miss., 118
 GRIFFIN, CLYDE, 193
 GROENER, WILHELM, 165
 Gryeevy, Russia, 69
Guardian (Manchester, England), 166
 GUGGENHEIM, (family), 160
 GUROCK, JEFFREY S., 104-8
 GUTTMANN, ALEXANDER, 66

H

HACKER, LOUIS, M., 114-15
 Hadassah, Stockton, Cal., 121
Hadoar, 134
 Hamburg-American Line, 169
 HANDLIN, OSCAR, 184-85, 196
 HANFSTAENGL, ERNST, 181
 Hanover, Germany, 153
 HARBY, ISAAC, 123
 Harlem Riots, New York City, 104
 Hartford, Conn., 130, 184-214; facing page 191, facing page 198, facing page 205; Babies' Milk Station, 208; Board of Aldermen, 203; Child Labor Committee, 208; City Council, 202-3, 208; Common Council, 203; East Side, 196-202, 204; South End, 196, 199; United Jewish Charities, 206
Hartford Courant, 189, 192-94, 202
 Hartford Hebrew Association, Hartford, Conn., 204
 Harvard University, 181
 Hassidism, 64
 HAY, JOHN, 205
 HAYES, CARLTON J. H., 177
 HAYNES, ROMA, 23
 Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, Atlanta, Ga., 217
 Hebrew Free Loan Association of America, 195
 Hebrew Home for the Aged, Hartford, Conn., 213
 Hebrew Institute, Hartford, Conn., 199
 Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society, Birmingham, Ala., 120
 Hebrew language, 65, 108, 132-33, 140, 146, 199
 Hebrew Merchants Association, Hartford,

- Conn., 202
 Hebrew Peddlers Association, Hartford, Conn., 201-2
 Hebrew Sabbath School Union, 127
 Hebrew Sheltering Home, Hartford, Conn., 213
 Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio, 62, 65-66, 134, 137-38
 Hebrew Union Congregation, Greenville, Miss., 118
 Hebrews; *see* Jews
 HEIDENREICH (family), 121-22
 Helena, Mont., 120
 HELLDORF, COUNT, 166
 Henderson, Ky., 118
 HERLITCHECK, MARCUS, 191
 HERTZBERG, ARTHUR, 221;
 STEVEN, 215-18
 HESS, SEYMOUR L., 127
 HILD, WALTHER, 21
 Hilfsverein [der deutschen Juden], 160, 163
 HILL, AMY, 126
 Hill School, Pottstown, Pa., 7
 HILTON, HENRY, 127
 Hilton-Seligman affair, 111
 HINDENBURG, PAUL von, 174, 179, 182
 HIRSCH, MARK D., 114-15
 HIRSCHBERG, ALFRED, 179
 HIRSHBERG (family), facing page 191
 History, historians, 1, 21, 65-66, 107, 131, 138, 177, 179, 185, 192, 207, 215, 217
History of the Jews of Cleveland (Gartner), 113-14
 HITLER, ADOLF, 51, 150-51, 155, 160-61, 165-66, 168-71, 174-76, 180-83
 Hitlerites, Hitlerism, 158, 162-63, 169, 171-72, 174, 176, 178
 HOFFENBURG, SAMUEL, 196
 Holidays, Holy Days, Jewish; *see* Festivals, Jewish
 HOLLAENDER, LUDWIG, 170-71
 Holocaust, 51, 106, 111, 165
 Homiletics and sermons, 137
 HOOVER, HERBERT C., 157, 170-71, 179
 Hope Lodge No. 126, B'nai B'rith, Stockton, Cal., 121
 Hospitals, 8, 20, 27, 30, 35, 42-43, 45, 75, 79, 82-83, 98, 101
 HOUDINI, 27
 House of Representatives (United States), 174, 204
 Houston, Tex., 23
 Houtzdale, Pa., 118
 HOWE, IRVING, 201
 HUGHES, CHARLES EVANS, 151-52
 HÜHNER, LEON, 185
 HULL, CORDELL, 180
 Hungarian Jews, 66, 154
 Hunter College, New York, 40-42
 HYMAN, J. C., 167
- I
- "I Believe—Today" (Alschuler), 46-47
 Illinois, 148; *see also* Champaign-Urbana, Chicago, Decatur, Quincy
 Illustrations, Cyrus Adler, facing page 154; Dr. Bertram Wallace Korn, distinguished American Jewish historian and senior rabbi of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, facing page 49; Felix M. Warburg, facing page 156; Good Will Club for Immigrant Boys, Hartford, Conn., facing page 198; Hirshberg family and grocery, Hartford, Conn., facing page 191; Isaac Bashevis Singer, Nobel Prize laureate in the field of Yiddish literature, facing page 63; Lt. Marion Lee "Sandy" Kempner (April 16, 1942—November 2, 1966), facing page 8; Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron, distinguished rabbi emeritus of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and pioneer in the field of American Christian-Jewish relations, facing page 73; YMHA basketball team, Hartford, Conn., facing page 205
 Immigrant Aid Committee, 206
Immigrant Experience in America, The (Coppa and Curran), 112
 Immigrants and immigration, 39, 60, 65, 104, 109, 179, 184-88; 192-96, 198-201, 203, 206-8, 211, 216
Immigrants and Religion in Urban America (Miller and Marzik), 116
In the Almost Promised Land (Diner), 104-8
Incident at Massena, The: Anti-Semitic Hysteria in a Typical American Town

(Friedman), 109-11
 Indiana; *see* Indianapolis, Madison
 Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, Indianapolis, Ind., 118
 Indo-China War, 30
 Information and Service Associates, 162
 Inquisition, 127-28
 Insulin, 43-44
 Integration, 213-14, 217
 Inter marriage, 128, 205
 International Jewry, 175
 Internationalism, 16
 Interpreters, 13, 23
 Israel (state), Israelis, 63, 106, 133-34, 136, 140, 162
Israel Exploration Journal, 137
 Israelites, 64; *see also* Jews
 Italy, Italians, 169, 186, 196, 199-200, 209, 212
 ITT, 42
 Iwo Jima, 17

J

Jackson County, OR, 121
 JACOBS (uncle of Lena Pearlstein Berkman), 69-70
 Japan, 9, 20
 JASTROW, MARCUS, 123
 Jeshurun Lodge No. 59, B'nai B'rith, Philadelphia, Pa., 121
 Jewish Agency, 155, 164
Jewish and Hebrew Onomastics: A Bibliography, 108-9
 Jewish Board of Deputies, 151
Jewish Book Annual, Volume 36 (1978-79), 115
Jewish Chronicle (London), 156
Jewish Civilization: Essays and Studies (Brauner), 219-20
 Jewish Colonization Association (J. C. A.), 170
 Jewish communal life; *see* Communal life, Jewish
 Jewish Community Center, Stockton, Cal., 121
 "Jewish Community of Hartford, Connecticut, The, 1880-1929," (Becker and Pearson), 184-214
Jewish Daily Bulletin, 170
 Jewish Hospital Association, Philadelphia,

Pa., 121
 Jewish Hospital Association, St. Louis, Mo., 121
Jewish Landmarks of New York. A Travel Guide and History (Postal and Koppman), 117
Jewish Life in America. Historical Perspectives (Rosen), 223
 Jewish press, 177
Jewish Quarterly Review, 137
Jewish Social Studies, 137
Jewish Spectator, 139
 Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), 153, 158, 162, 165-66, 171, 177,
 Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York City, 138, 156
 "Jewish Woman, The, The Jewish Home, The Ideal Achievement" (Jennie R. Gerstley), 75-79
 Jewishness, 139, 141
 Jews, Jewry, 35, 51-61, 64-65, 72, 75-79, 104-7, 109, 136, 139, 142, 146, 151, 159-60, 164-66, 169, 172-75, 179, 182-83, 186-92, 196, 199, 202-3, 205, 209-14, 216-18
Jews in a Free Society: Challenges and Opportunities (Goldman), 114
Jews in America, The (Dimont), 113
Jews in New Haven (Sarna), 224
Jews in the California Gold Rush, The (Levinson), 115-16
Jews of Argentina, The. From the Inquisition to Perón (Weisbrot), 225-26
Jews of Toronto, The. A History to 1937 (Speisman), 224
 John Hay Lodge, Knights of Pythias, Hartford, Conn., 204-5
 JOHNSON, KENNETH W., 30-32
 JONAS (brothers and family), 147-48; ABRAHAM, 147; BENJAMIN, 147; CHARLES, 147-48; BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 147-49; MRS. JOSEPHINE (Mrs. Benjamin F. Jonas), 148; ROSALIE (Mrs. George Jonas), 148; SARAH De PASS, 148
 Journalists and Journalism, 132-41, 143, 166-67, 178, 183
 JUDAH, DAVID, 144-45; HILLEL, 144; ISAAC H., 148; SARAH, 144
 Judaica, 65
 Judaism, 25, 51, 62, 64-66

Judaism, 139

Judaism and the American Idea (Konvitz), 115

Judaism, Reform, 66, 136, 138, 204

Juedisch-Liberale Zeitung, 181

Juedische Rundschau, 164-65

Juedische Volkspartei, Germany, 157

K

Kabbalah, 64

KAGANOFF, BENZION C., 109

KAHN, BERNHARD, 160-61, 173

KAISER (Germany) [Wilhelm II], 177

KALTER, BELLA BRIANSKY, 125

Kansas; *see* Wichita

Kansas City, Mo., 80

KAPLAN, JAN, 126

KARIEL, LOUIS, 119

KAROL, STEPHEN A., 126

Kashruth; *see* Dietary laws

KATZ, ROBERT, 66

KAUFMAN (family), 126

KEAN, JIM, 14

KEMPNER, MRS. D. W., 9; HARRIS, 7, 33; MRS. HARRIS, 7, 33; MARION, JR., 14, 18; MARION LEE (SANDY), 7-8, facing page 8, 9-34

Kentucky, 95, 118, 148; *see also* Henderson

KESSNER, THOMAS, 193

Kibbutz Yahel, Israel, 128

KIERKEGAARD, SOREN, 64

Kishineff, 205-6

KLAU, JOSEPH, 198

KLEIMAN, BERENICE ELKIN, 126

KLEIN, JULIUS, 178

Koch Award of the Endocrine Society, 45

KOENIG, SAMUEL, 184, 186, 212-13

Koenigsberg, Germany, 70

KOHLER, MAX, 161

KONVITZ, MILTON R., 115

KOPPLEMANN, HERMAN P., 204

KOPPMAN, LIONEL, 117

KORN, BERTRAM WALLACE, 48, facing page 49, 49-50

KOZLOWSKI, NATA, 66

KRAJCIGS, WILLIAM, 32

KRANZLER, DAVID, 221

Ku Klux Klan, 152, 154

KUBOWITZKI, A. LEON, 176

KUMAR, P. SHIV, 126

L

LABATT, ABRAHAM COHEN, 147; ELEANOR ELIZABETH, 148; HENRY J., 147

Labor Zionists, 168

LAMPSON, MILES W., 152

LANDAU, JACOB, 158, 162-67

Landsmanschaften, 194

LANGER, JEFFREY IRA, 126

LASKER, ALBERT, 160; FLORINA, 206

Lawyers and law, 67, 142-45, 147-48, 154, 196, 198

LAZARON, MORRIS S., 72, facing page 73, 73-74

League for Human Rights, 161

LEAVITT & FORD, 191

LEESER, ISAAC, 142, 145-46

LEHMAN, HERBERT H., 123, 161-62, 180; IRVING, 180-81

LEIPER, HENRY SMITH, 177

LEONOFF, CYRIL EDEL, 221-22

LERNER, MAXWELL, 203

LEVI, SYLVAIN, 169, 172

LEVIN, MORRIS G., 125

LEVINSON, ROBERT E., 115-16

LEVY, AARON J., 151; GERTRUDE, 194, 200; MARCUS H., 128

LEWIN-EPSTEIN, E. W., 151

LINCOLN, ABRAHAM, 147, 182

LIPPMANN, WALTER, 160

LIPSHUTZ, ROBERT J., 125

Lithuania, 60, 65, 193

Lithuanian Jews, 160, 205

"Little Jake" (Jacob Seligman), 112-13
Little Jake of Saginaw (Cumming), 112-13

LITWACK, CHARLOTTE, 126; LITWACK, MRS. (Hartford, Conn.), 194

Liverpool, England, 70

LIVINGSTON, AARON, 123

London, England, 70, 151, 171

Louisiana, 147-48; *see also* New Orleans

Lower East Side, New York City, 39, 197

"Lt. Marion Lee "Sandy" Kempner: Letters from Sandy," 7-34

LUCE, HENRY, 158

LURIA, ALBERT MOSES, 125;

MOSES, 125
LYON, LEWIS, 128

M

MAAS, SAMUEL, 123
Ma'ayan program, Oconomowoc, Wis., 121
Maccabee Lodge No. 22, Order Keshar Shel Barzel, 121
MACK, JULIAN W., 169, 181
MacLEAN, KEN, 33-34
Madison, Ind., 118
Magazines; *see* Journalists and Journalism
MAGNES, JUDAH LEON, 123
MAHLER, RAPHAEL, 66
Maine; *see* Portland
MALLER, ALLEN S., 131-41
Manhattan, New York, 42, 189
Manitoba, Canada, 127
MANN, LOUIS L., 174
MARCO POLO, 9
MARCUS, JACOB R., 66-67
Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography, 35
"Margaret Sanger: The Turbid Ebb and Flow of Misery" (Sanger), 35-38
MARGOLIS, MAX L., 123
Marine Corps; *see* United States Marine Corps
Marines, 8, 25, 28-33; *see also* United States Marine Corps
MARK, JULIUS, 123
MARSHALL, LOUIS, 111, 151, 154-55
Marshall, Tex., 119
Marthasville, Ga., 216; *see also* Atlanta
MARTIN, BERNARD, 116
Maryland; *see* Baltimore
MARZIK, THOMAS D., 116
Massachusetts, 157, 184, 186; *see also* Boston
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 40
Massena, N. Y., 109
MATZ, SIDNEY, 178
Maxwell Street Settlement, Chicago, Ill., 75
May Company, 191
MAYER, ISAAC, 189
McCORMACK, JOHN, 174
McDONALD, JAMES S., 162
MELAMED, S., 170
MELLAMED, ALLAN, 200
Melting pot, 39

Memoirs, 124-25
Merchants, 67, 142-45, 195, 200-201, 212, 216-17
Merchants Bank and Trust Co., Hartford, Conn., 213
Merging Traditions. Jewish Life in Cleveland (Vincent and Rubinstein), 226
Meridian, Miss., 119
MESSERSMITH, GEORGE STRAUSSER, 172
Michigan; *see* Detroit
Midrash, 65, 139
MIELZINER, MOSES, 128
MIHALY, EUGENE, 62-66, 128
Mikve Israel Congregation, Philadelphia, Pa., 146
MILLER, RANDALL M., 116
MILLER, WAYNE CHARLES, 222
Milton Steinberg: Portrait of a Rabbi (Noveck), 117
Milwaukee, Wis., 177
MIRSKY, NORMAN B., 116-17
Mishpokhe. A Study of New York City Jewish Family Clubs (Mitchell), 222
Mississippi, 148; *see also* Greenville, Meridan, Port Gibson
Mississippi River, 143
Missouri, 143-44; *see also* Cape Girardeau, Kansas City, St. Charles, St. Genevieve, St. Louis
MITCHELL, DAVID I., 49; WILLIAM E., 222
Mobile, Ala., 216
MODENA, LEO DE, 65
MOISE, PENINA, 125
Molad, 137
Moment, 139
Montana; *see* Helena
Montefiore Hospital, The Bronx, N. Y., 42
MORDECAI, MOSES COHEN, 124
Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 120
Morris Hillquit. A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist, 223
MOSES & FOGARTY, 191
MOSES, ELIZA M., 125
MOSSE, GEORGE L., 128
MOSTOV, STEPHEN G., 215-18
Mother Jones, 139-40
MOTZKIN, LEO, 175-76
Mount Nebo Cemetery, New York, N. Y., 120

Mount Sinai, 64
 Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York City, 44-45
Movements and Issues in American Judaism. An Analysis and Sourcebook of Developments Since 1945 (Martin), 116
Ms, 140
 Mt. Sinai Hospital, Hartford, Conn., 210, 213
 Munich, Germany, 51, 57, 151
 MUSSOLINI, BENITO, 169
My Jewish Roots (Kranzler), 221

N

NAMIAS, JUNE, 117
 National Academy of Sciences, 45
 National Conference of Christians and Jews, 176-77
 National Council of Jewish Women, 75, 206
 National Council of Jewish Women, Brooklyn, N. Y., 120
 National Socialism, National Socialist Party; *see* Nazism
 "Native American Masters of Judaism" (translated by Eugene Mihaly), 62-66
 Naturalization and Denization, 215
 "Nauseated by the Sights and Odors" (anonymous), 51-61
 Navy (United States), 20, 22, 27, 42, 48
 Nazism, Nazis, 53-57, 104, 129, 150-83; *see also* Third Reich
 Negev, Israel, 65
Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941 (Bayor), 219
 Neuman Memorial Publication Fund, 2, 130
 NEUSNER, JACOB, 124
 Nevada Association for Reform Judaism, Reno, Nev., 121; *see also* Reno
 New Britain, Conn., 194
 New Era Club, Inc., New York, N. Y., 120-21
 New Haven, Conn., 186, 196, 202
 New Orleans, La., 142, 147-49
 New York (City), 39, 42, 59, 107, 117, 120-21, 129, 144-47, 154, 161-62, 165, 167-68, 177, 185, 189, 193, 196, 205-6; Bronx, The, 42-43; Lower East Side,

39, 197; Manhattan, 42, 189; New York University, 41; Public Library, 40; Riverdale, 43; Upper Manhattan, 107; West Side Improvement Association, 107
 New York (State); *see* Massena, New York (City)
New York Staatszeitung, 178
New York Times, 171, 202
 New York University, 41
 NEWMAN, LOUIS I., 174
 Newport, R. I., 119, 144
Newsweek, 14
 NIEDERMAN, MORRIS, 122
 NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH WILHELM, 64
 NIRENSTEIN, ELLIK, 213
 Nobel Foundation, 39
 Nobel Prizes, 40, 43, 62; Nobel Prize for Medicine and Physiology, 39; Nobel Prize for Literature, 62
 Non-Jews, 35, 139-40, 159, 166, 191, 200, 213-14; *see also* Gentiles
 Non-kosher food, 63
 Nordhausen, 58
 North Carolina; *see* Wilmington
 North German Lloyd Line, 169
 NORWOOD, ELLA FELDMAN, 222
Not Bad for an Immigrant Boy (Norwood), 222
 NOVECK, SIMON, 117

O

Occident, The, 142, 146
 OCHS, ADOLPH S., 160
 Oconomowoc, Wis., 121
 Odessa, Russia, 192
 OFFNER, ARNOLD A., 167
 Ohio; *see* Cincinnati, Cleveland
On the Edge of Politics: The Roots of Jewish Political Thought in America (Berlin), 219
Opinion, 170, 174
 ORBACH, WILLIAM W., 222
 Oregon, 110; *see also* Jackson County, Portland
 Orthodox Jews, 63-64, 76, 120, 131, 138, 195
 OTIS, HERBERT N., 40
 OTTERBOURG, MARCUS, 124
 OUNGRE, LOUIS, 170

P

Palestine, 59-60, 175, 179, 205
 PAPPEN, FRANZ von, 179, 182
 Passover, 109
 PAUCKER, ARNOLD, 155, 157
 PAWLOSKI, ROBERT, 188, 196, 200
 PEARLROTH, NORBERT, 109
 PEARLSTEIN, BAILE LEAH; *see* Berkman, Lena Pearlstein; FAGAH ETTA, 69-71; LOUIS C., 69; MIRIAM ROSE, 69, 71; SAMUEL WOLFF, 69; SARAH HYAH, 69
 PEARSON, RALPH L., 184-214
 PECK, ABRAHAM J., 109-11
 Peddlers and peddling, 196-97, 200-202
 Pennsylvania; *see* Elkins Park, Houtzdale, Philadelphia, Pottstown, Uniontown
 Periodicals; *see* Journalists and Journalism
 PERLSTEIN, ALEX, 192-93, 198, 200
Perspectives on Jews and Judaism. Essays in Honor of Wolfe Kelman (Chiel), 220
 PETUCHOWSKI, JAKOB J., 124
 Philadelphia, Pa., 67, 77-78, 121, 143, 145-46, 155-56, 169
 Philanthropists and philanthropy, 169, 182, 193, 198, 206, 208-9, 212
 PHILIPSON BROTHERS, 143
 PHILLIPS, ELLEN, 68; EMILY, 68: JONAS, 67; NAPHTALI, 68; ZALEGMAN, 67-68
 Physicians, 20, 27, 35, 43-44, 49, 67, 82-85, 87-89, 91-93, 96-97, 100, 198
Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls. The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon (Leonoff), 221-22
 PLATO, 80
 PLAUT, ELIZABETH, 124
Playboy Magazine, 25-26, 139
 Pogroms, 52-53, 59-61, 159, 161, 205-6
 Poland, Poles, 52-53, 55, 60, 152, 162-63
 POLIER, JUSTINE WISE, 181
 Port Gibson, Miss., 119
 Portland, Me., 193
 Portland, Or., 110
 POSTAL, BERNARD, 117
 Pottstown, Pa., 7
 "Power in a Midwestern Jewish Community" (Roseman), 210
 PRATT, NORMA FAIN, 223
 Press, American, 167

Press, international, 173
 Press, Jewish, 153, 170
 PRITZWITZ und GAFFRON, FRIEDRICH WILHELM von, 165-66, 168
Proskauer: His Life and Times (Hacker and Hirsch), 114-15
 PROSKAUER, JOSEPH MAYER, 114-15
 Protestants, 166, 172, 177, 199
Protocols of the Elders of Zion, 154
 Public Library, New York City, 40
 Pupin Laboratories, Columbia University, New York City, 40

Q

QUIMBY, EDITH, 42
 Quincy, Ill., 147

R

Rabbinical Assembly, 132-40
 Rabbis, rabbinate, 12-13, 48, facing page 49, 49-50, 62-64, 72, 74, 109-11, 131-41, 151, 158, 160, 174, 181, 187-89
 RAGAN, FRED D., 128
 RANGE, WILLARD, 180
 RAPAPORT, BARNEY, 213
 RATHENAU, WALTHER, 154, 156
 Real estate, 143
 "Rebecca Cohen Loses Her Baby" (Cohen), 67-68
 "Recent Developments in South American Jewry: Argentina," 118
 Reconstruction (post-Civil War), 216
Reconstructionist, 139
 Red Cross, 75
 Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, Pa., 48
Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel Bulletin, 48
 Reform Jews, 63-64, 131-35, 138-40, 181, 195
 Reform Judaism; *see* Judaism, Reform
 Refugees, 30-31, 158, 162, 183, 194
 REHINÉ (family), 146; ZALMA, 146
 Reichstag, Germany, 155-57, 178
 Religion, 11, 64, 205, 212-13, 216
 Religious education, 188, 199
 Reno, Nev., 121
 "Report from the Magazine Rack: What are the Rabbis Reading?" (Maller),

- 131-41
 Revolution, Revolutionary War (American), 67, 144
 Rhode Island, 184; *see also* Newport
 RICHARDS, BERNARD G., 152, 158
Richmond Enquirer, 143
 Richmond, Va., 119, 142-46, 148
 RIDDER, VICTOR, 178
 RISCHIN, MOSES, 185, 205
 Riverdale, N. Y., 43
 Riverside Trust Co., Hartford, Conn., 213
 RIVKIN, ELLIS, 65
 Rockefeller Foundation, 166
 ROLLER, DUANE, 40
Rolling Stone, 139
 Romania, Romanians; *see* Roumania, Roumanians
 ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN DELANO, 179-81, 183, 204
 "Rose H. Alschuler: I Believe—Today," 46-47
 ROSE, PETER I., 197, 210
 ROSEMAN, KENNETH D., 210-11
 ROSEN, GLADYS, 223
 ROSENBAUM, MARTIN, 177
 ROSENBERG, DAVID, 223; ETHEL, 223; JAMES N., 161, 169; LEON JOSEPH, 223-24
 ROSENBLOOM, JOSEPH R., 224
 ROSENFELD, CARRIE, 77-79; FRANKIE, 79; JENNIE; *see* Gerstley, Mrs. Henry (Jennie Rosenfeld Gerstley); SIMON, 78-79
 ROSENSOHN, ETTA LASKE, 206
 ROSENWAIKE, IRA, 142-49
 Rosh Hashanah (New Year), 68
 ROSWIT, BERNARD, 42-43
 ROTHSCHILD, ALEXANDER, 191
 ROTHSCHILD & HORSFALL, 191
 ROTTENBERG, DAN, 109
 Roumania, Roumanians (Roumanian Jews), 52, 54, 60, 163, 194, 205
 RUBIN, HARRIS, 125
 RUBINSTEIN, JUDAH, 226
 Rumania; *see* Roumania
Runners World, 140
 Russian Jews, 35, 193, 196, 206, 217
 Sabbath observance, 147
 SACHS, JAKE, 35-37; MRS. JAKE, 35-37
 SACKETT, FREDERIC M., 156, 172
 Sacramento, Cal., 119
 St. Charles, Mo., 143
 St. Genevieve, Mo., 143
 St. Louis, Mo., 121, 142-44
 SAMPSON, JENNIE (Mrs. Herman Mendelsohn Block), 148
 SAMUELSON, MYRON, 185
 San Francisco, Cal., 121, 128, 147
 SANDMEL, SAMUEL, 66
 SANGER (family), 128; GRANT, 35; MARGARET, 35-38
Sangers' Pioneer Texas Merchants (Rosenberg), 223-24
 SARNA, JONATHAN D., 224
 SARTRE, JEAN PAUL, 64
 SAXON, JOHN, 9
 SCHATZ, NATHAN A., 203
 SCHENOVE, SERGEANT, 13
 SCHIFF, JACOB H., 160; MORTIMER, 156
 SCHLEICHER, KURT von, 179
 SCHNADIG (family), 126
 SCHNEERSON, MENACHEM M., 124
 SCHNEIDERMAN, HARRY, 170
 SCHOENHEIMER, RUDOLF, 40
 Schools, 7-8, 14, 20, 40, 204; Basic School, 14; *see also* Graduate schools, High schools, Junior high schools; Schools, All-Day
 Schools, All-Day, 134
 SCHURMAN, JACOB G., 178
 SCHWABACHER, WOLFGANG, 162
 SCHWARTZ, GEORGE B., 213
 SCHWOLSKY, JACOB, 203
 Scripps Howard, 171
 Sears & Roebuck, 12
 Seattle, Wash., 9
 SEIXAS, ABIGAIL, 144; GERSHOM MENDES, 144
 SELIGMAN (family), 160; JACOB, 112-13
 Seminaries, Jewish, 138, 145, 156
 Senate (of the United States), senators, 148-49, 169-71
 Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 170
 SENATOR, WERNER, 155
 Sephardim, 144-45, 147
 Sermons; *see* Homiletics and sermons

S

Sabbath, 63, 128, 200-201

- SHAFIR, SHLOMO, 150-83
 Shearith Israel Congregation, Charleston, S. C., 118
 Shearith Israel Congregation, New York City, 147
 SHERMAN, WILLIAM TECUMSEH, 21, 30, 216
Sh'ma, 139
Shulhan Aruch, 64
 SILVER, ABBA HILLEL, 158, 174-75, 178, 181
 SILVERMAN, MORRIS, 187-88, 190-92, 195-96, 202-6, 212-13
 SIMON, DR. (of Cincinnati, Ohio), 96
 SIMON, LEO, 164
 Sinai Congregation, Chicago, Ill., 118
 SINGER, ISAAC BASHEVIS, 62, facing page 63, 63-66
 SINGERMAN, ROBERT, 108-9
 Sisters of Zion, Hartford, Conn. 206
 SKAINS, CHARNER, 12
 SMOLAR, BORIS, 171
 SNOODY, COLONEL, 23
 SOBERNHEIM, MORITZ, 165, 171
 Society for Ezrat Orchim, Richmond, Va., 119
 Society for the Relief of Orphans and Children of Indigent Parents, Charleston, S. C., 120
 SOCRATES, 20
 Solomon A. Berson Research Laboratory, New York City, 44
 SOLOMONS, EDWARD A., 125
 SONNEBORN, HENRY, 125
 Sons of Israel Congregation, Houtzdale, Pa., 118
 South Carolina, 119; *see also* Charleston
 South End, Hartford, Conn., 196, 199
 Spanish-American War, 15
 SPEISMAN, STEPHEN A., 224
 SPEYER, JAMES, 160
 SPICEHANDLER, EZRA, 65, 128
 SPIVAK, CHARLES D., 124
Sports Illustrated, 14
 SPRAGUE, MAYOR (Hartford, Conn.), 192
 Stanford University, 43
 State Department, United States, 151, 157, 180
 Stavicks, Russia, 69
 STEIN, GERTRUDE, 25
 STEIN, KENNETH W., 224-25
 STEINBERG, MILTON, 117
 STERN, HEINRICH, 163-64; HORACE, 169; MALCOLM H., 108-9, 144; PAULA, 225
 STERNBERGER, ESTELLE M., 174
 Steuben Society, 178
 STEVENSON, FRANK, 83-87, 89, 91-97; MRS. FRANK STEVENSON, 95
 STIMSON, HENRY L., 157, 170, 172
 STIRLING (family), 22
 Stockton, Cal., 119, 121
 Storekeepers; *see* Shopkeepers
Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915 (Hertzberg), 215-18
 STRAUS (family), 160; EUGENE, 44; ROGER W., 172, 174, 177
 STRAUSS, THERESE A., 125
 STRESEMANN, GUSTAV, 167, 183
 SULMAN, ESTHER, 185
 Sunday, 200-201, 204
 Supreme Court, Jews on, 160, 181
 SUSSMAN, ALEXANDER, 40; SIMON, 39
 Swedish Jews, 160
 Synagogue activities, 48, 64, 68, 72, 76, 136, 142, 144-45, 147, 158, 166, 174, 188, 192, 195, 197-98, 204-5, 210-11, 217
- T
- Talmud, 65-66, 132
 Talmud Torah, Hartford, Conn., 199
 Talmud Torahs, 199-200
Tarnished Dream, The. The Basis of American Anti-Semitism (Dobkowski), 220-21
 Temple B'nai Israel, Sacramento, Cal., 119
 Temple Emanu-El, New York City, 110
 Temple Gemiluth Chesed, Port Gibson, Miss., 119
 Temple Israel, Stockton, Cal., 119
 Temple Israel, Uniontown, Pa., 119
 Temple, The, Cleveland, Ohio, 158, 174
 Ten Commandments, 11
 TENENBAUM, JOSEPH, 169, 174-76
 Teutonia, 177
 Texas; *see* Fort Clarke, Galveston, Houston, Marshall

THERNSTROM, STEPHAN, 184, 193, 199
 Third Reich, 110; *see also* Nazism
 Thuringia, 155
 THURMAN, ISRAEL N., 174
Time, 14, 158
Times (London), 166
To 120 Years! A Social History of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (1856-1976) (Rosenberg), 223
 "To Peter on His 15th Birthday" (Jane Meinrath Bloch), 80-103
 TOBIAS, T. J., 125
 Torah, 64-65
 TORCZYNER, N., 175
 Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 120
 Touro Club, Hartford, Conn., 204
 TRACHTENBERG, JOSHUA, 111
 Tradition, Jewish, 131
 TRELOAR, WILBERT H., 225
 Tresteny, Russia, 69
 Tumble Brook Country Club, Hartford, Conn., 210, 213

U

UNBEHAGEN, TEDDY, 26
Understanding Conservative Judaism, (Gordis), 114
 Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 75, 160
 Uniontown, Pa., 119
 United Hebrew Benevolent Association, Helena, Mont., 120
 United Jewish Charities, Hartford, Conn., 206, 208-10
 United States, 35, 59, 70, 104-6, 134, 148, 152-54, 156, 158-59, 161-63, 165, 168-70, 172-73, 176-79, 183, 189-90, 192, 211-12, 215; *see also* America
 United States Marine Corps, 7, 10-11, 17-18, 26-28, 31
 Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, 177
 Universities, 7, 42, 76, 155, 180; Berlin University, 167, 177; City University of New York, 40; Columbia University, 40; Duke University, 7; Harvard University, 181; University of Illinois, 39-41; Louisiana University, 148; New York University, 41; Stanford University, 43; Yale University, 147

University of Illinois, 39-41
 University of Louisiana, 148
Unorthodox Judaism (Mirsky), 116-17
 UROFSKY, MELVIN I., 117, 225

V

VAN DUSEN, ALBERT E., 188, 191
 Vassar College, 46, 80
 VENABLES, RICHARD, 143
 Versailles Treaty, 20
 VINCENT, SIDNEY Z., 226
 Virginia, 144; *see also* Richmond, Williamsburg
 VLOCK, LAURA, 195
Voelkischer Beobachter, 176
 VOGELSTEIN, LUDWIG, 160, 169
Vossische Zeitung, 164

W

WALDMAN, MORRIS D., 154-56, 158-62, 166-67
 WALLACH, ERNST, 161, 163
 WALTERS, JUDITH ALLISON, 117
 Walton High School, New York City, 40
 War, wars, 7, 16, 20, 26, 40, 60; Civil War, 20, 216; First World War, 15-16, 154, 180, 197, 216; Indo-China War, 30; Korean War, 16; Revolution, Revolutionary War (American), 67, 144; Second World War, 10, 16, 178; Seminole War, 67; Six-Day War, 136; Spanish-American War, 15; Vietnam War, 7
 WARBURG, FELIX M., 151, facing page 156, 156, 162, 169-70, 175-76; MAX, 154-56, 180
 WARM, JACOB, 125
 Washington (state); *see* Seattle
 WASHINGTON, BOOKER T., 104
 Washington, D. C., 149, 151, 158, 165, 171, 175-76, 178
 WASHINGTON, GEORGE, 142
 Waterbury, Conn., 186
Water's Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy (Stern), 225
We Are One! American Jewry and Israel (Urofsky), 117
 WEBB, DANIEL, 43
 WEIL, BRUNO, 163-64

- Weimar Republic (Germany), 153, 177
 WEINBERG, WERNER, 128
 WEISBROT, ROBERT, 225-26
 WEIZMANN, CHAIM, 172, 175, 206
 WERTHEIMER, MILDRED S., 162
 WEST, F. J., 33
 West Hartford Jewish Historical Society,
 192-93
 West Side Improvement Association, New
 York City, 107
 Western world, the West, 173, 175, 182
 Westport High School, Kansas City, Mo.,
 80
 White House, 171, 181; *see also* Washing-
 ton, D. C.
 Wichita, Kans., 119
 WIENER, ALFRED, 163
 WILEY, ALEXANDER K., 172
 William S. Middleton Medical Research
 Award of the VA, 45
 WILLIAMS, MICHAEL, 177
 Williamsburg, Va., 142-43
 WILLOWSKI, JACOB DAVID, 125
 Wilmington, N. C., 119
 WILSON, WOODROW, 177, 183
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, 120
 WIRTH, JOSEPH, 157-58, 165
 WISCHNITZER, MARK, 163
 Wisconsin; *see* Milwaukee
 WISE, ISIDORE, 203; JAMES WATER-
 MAN, 170, 176, 181; STEPHEN S.,
 110-11, 151-52, 158, 170-71, 174-78,
 181
Wissenschaft des Judentums, 137-38
 WITTING, CAPTAIN, 70
 WOLF, LUCIEN, 152
 WOLFF, EGON, 128; FRIEDA, 128
 Women, 35, 39-42, 53, 55-56, 80, 84,
 190, 206-7
 World Jewish Conference, 175
 World Jewish Congress, 167-68, 175
 World Jewry, 61
World Telegram (New York City), 178
 World War I, 15-16, 154, 180, 197, 216
- Y
- Yale University, 147
 YALOW, AARON, 41, 43; BENJAMIN,
 43; ELANNA, 43; ROSALYN S., 39
 YALOW, ROSALYN S., "An Autobio-
 graphical Sketch," 39-45
 Yiddish language, 52, 57-58, 62, 65-66,
 104, 106, 132
 Yiddish press, 150, 174
 Yiddishkeit, 62
 YMHA, Hartford, Conn., 205, 210, 213
 Yom Kippur, 110
 Young Ladies' Aid Society, 75
 Young plan, 155
 YULEE, DAVID LEVY, 128
 YWHA, Hartford, Conn., facing page
 205, 205, 210
- Z
- ZACHARIAS, JERROLD, 40
 ZECHLIN, EGRON, 165
Zion, 137
 Zion, Guard, Hartford, Conn., 206
 Zionism, Zionists, 136, 157, 164-65,
 175-76, 205-6, 214; *see also* American
 Zionists, Labor Zionists
 Zionist Federation, 163, 165
 ZIPPER, CLARA, 39
 Zohar, 65, 132
 ZUCKERMAN, BARUCH, 168

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