

"Wear It With Pride, The Yellow Badge"

Article by Robert Weltsch, German Zionist leader, published in the *Juedische Rundschau*, April 4, 1933.

The first of April, 1933, will remain an important date in the history of German Jewry indeed, in the history of the entire Jewish people. The events of that day have aspects that are not only political and economic, but moral and spiritual as well. The political and economic implications have been widely discussed in the press, though of course the need for agitation has frequently obscured objective understanding. To speak of the moral aspect, that is our task. For however much the Jewish question is now debated, nobody except ourselves can express what is to be said on these events from the Jewish point of view, what is happening in the soul of the German Jew. Today the Jews cannot speak except as Jews. Gone is the fatal misapprehension of many Jews that Jewish interests can be pressed under some other cover. On April 1 the German Jews learned a lesson which penetrates far more deeply than even their embittered and now triumphant opponents could assume....

We live in a new period, the national revolution of the German people is a signal that is visible from afar, indicating that the world of our previous concepts has collapsed. That may be painful for many, but in this world only those will be able to survive who are able to look reality in the eye. We stand in the midst of tremendous changes in intellectual, political, social and economic life. It is for us to see how the Jews will react.

April 1, 1933, can become the day of Jewish awakening and Jewish rebirth. If the Jews will it. If the Jews are mature and have greatness in them. If the Jews are not as they are represented to be by their opponents. The Jews, under attack, must learn to acknowledge themselves. Even if we stand shattered by the events of these days we must not lose heart and must examine the situation without any attempt to deceive ourselves. One would like to recommend in these days that the document that stood at the cradle of Zionism, Theodor Herzl's "Jewish State," be distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies among Jews and non-Jews....

They accuse us today of treason against the German people: The National-Socialist Press calls us the "enemy of the Nation," and leaves us defenseless. It is not true that the Jews betrayed Germany. If they betrayed anyone, it was themselves, the Jews. Because the Jew did not display his Judaism with pride, because he tried to avoid the Jewish issue, he must bear part of the blame for the degradation of the Jews.

Despite all the bitterness that we must feel in full measure when we read the National-Socialist boycott proclamations and unjust accusations, there is one

point for which we may be grateful to the boycott Committee. Para. 3 of the directives reads: "The reference is...of course to businesses owned by members of the Jewish race. Religion plays no part here. Businessmen who were baptized Catholic or Protestant, or Jews who left their Community remain Jews for the purpose of this Order." This is a [painful] reminder for all those who betrayed their Judaism. Those who steal away from the Community in order to benefit their personal position should not collect the wages of their betrayal. In taking up this position against the renegades there is the beginning of a clarification. The Jew who denies his Judaism is no better a citizen than his fellow who avows it openly. It is shameful to be a renegade, but as long as the world around us rewarded it, it appeared an advantage. Now even that is no longer an advantage. The Jew is marked as a Jew. He gets the yellow badge.

A powerful symbol is to be found in the fact that the boycott leadership gave orders that a sign "with a yellow badge on a black background" was to be pasted on the boycotted shops. This regulation is intended as a brand, a sign of contempt. We will take it up and make of it a badge of honor.

Many Jews suffered a crushing experience on Saturday. Suddenly they were revealed as Jews, not as a matter of inner avowal, not in loyalty to their own community, not in pride in a great past and great achievements, but by the impress of a red placard with a yellow patch. The patrols moved from house to house, stuck their placards on shops and signboards, daubed the windows, and for 24 hours the German Jews were exhibited in the stocks, so to speak. In addition to other signs and inscriptions one often saw windows bearing a large Magen David, the Shield of David the King. It was intended as dishonor. Jews, take it up, the Shield of David, and wear it with pride!...

Proclamation by the Central Committee of German Jews

From the liberal, anti-Zionist *C.V.-Zeitung*, April 27, 1933.

...There is great distress in German Jewry. We German Jews bore our share in the general distress in Germany. We contributed our contingent to the great army of people who were without work and without income, and seemed to be excluded from meaningful life. New distress has overtaken us. Jewish people are torn away from their work; the sense and basis of their lives has been destroyed.

The purpose of a community reveals itself in times of trouble. When the individual can no longer see any sense in his existence, when he is alone, the community can direct him to a purpose and an aim; when he alone can no longer do anything, then the community must show its strength. In times of distress the community must grow anew, gain life and existence. It is from the community that the individual must draw the strength to live and be active.

We are faced with new tasks of unknown magnitude. It is not enough to give bread to those who do not know how they are to survive the next few days. Of course it is our first task to make sure that none of our people goes hungry or lacks a roof over his head. Of course we must make sure that the institutions remain that we have built for our children, for our old and our sick, as we have done in the past. They are more necessary than ever today, even though difficulties may force us to reduce considerably the demands we have made in the past concerning facilities in these institutions. But all that is not enough. We will not, and may not, consider that we have done enough if we offer charity to our brothers and sisters and provide for their simplest needs. Our duty is to help them to find a new basis for their existence, work with which they may make a living, which gives them once more a task and sense to their lives! It would of course be pointless if our people were to rush into various occupations that appeal to them in some way, without much thought. It will be the task of those responsible to investigate carefully where there is room and opportunity for the work of Jewish people, and then to offer them the opportunity to prepare themselves for this work.

Anyone who is still able to give must sacrifice the maximum! The greatest possible demands must be made on everybody! Whoever evades this duty is an enemy of the community. ... The tasks that await us can only be carried out in unity and cooperation. All our differences of opinion, everything that divides us, must be put aside. The major organizations and social institutions of German Jewry have made the first move in this direction. They have united for joint effort in the Central Committee of the German Jews for Relief and Reconstruction.* All special interests and personal wishes are silent there. The people who work together there labor only with one great common aim before them: The Aid organization of the German Jews!

...German Jews, show that you are able to rise to the magnitude of your task! Do not imagine that the problems of German Jewry can be solved without the greatest of sacrifices, by means of undirected emigration. There is no honor in leaving Germany in order to live untroubled on your income abroad, free of the fate of your brothers in Germany. It will not help anybody to go abroad aimlessly, with no prospect of making a living, but only increase the numbers there who are without work and means. Every prospect will be examined, every possibility exploited to help those who no longer have a prospect of earning a living in the German Fatherland to find some means of settling abroad! But don't leave Germany senselessly! Do your duty here! Don't push people off blindly to an uncertain fate.

Let nobody fail in his duty in this hour of trial! Let everybody contribute according to his ability, and in his own place, to the task of helping others! The hour of German Jewry has arrived, the hour of responsibility, the hour of trial. Let German Jewry prove itself capable of facing this hour.

* Zentralausschuss der deutschen Juden fuer Hilfe und Aufbau

The Position of the German Jews, as seen by Alfred Wiener, of the Leadership of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, commonly abbreviated as C.V.

From the C.V.-Zeitung, June 1, 1933.

The great majority of German Jews remains firmly rooted in the soil of its German homeland, despite everything. There may be some who have been shaken in their feeling for the German Fatherland by the weight of recent events. They will overcome the shock, and if they do not overcome it then the roots which bound them to the German mother earth were never sufficiently strong. But according to the ruling of the laws and regulations directed against us only the "Aryans" now belong to the German people. What are we, then? Before the Law we are non-Germans without equal rights; to ourselves we are Germans with full rights. We reject it, to be a folk or national minority, perhaps like the Germans in Poland or the Poles in Germany, because we cannot deceive our own innermost [feelings]. We wish to be subject as Germans with equal rights to the new Government and not to some other creation, whether it is called League of Nations or anything else.

Thus we are suspended between heaven and earth. We will have to fight with courage and strength in order to get back to earth, in the eyes of State and Law too...

Memorandum from the Organization of Independent Orthodox Communities* To the German Chancellor, October 1933

...The position of German Jewry today, as it has been shaped by the German People, is wholly intolerable, both as regards their legal position and their economic existence, and also as regards their public standing and their freedom of religious action.

The memorandum then documents in some detail the various legal, economic, cultural restrictions placed on German Jewry which "means, then, that the German Jew has been sentenced to a slow but certain death by starvation. ... Added to this is the defamation of the Jews, whose good name is sullied, which prejudices the people even more sharply against the Jews and robs them of the air they need to breathe.

Thus the position of German Jewry must be perceived as altogether desperate by the most objective of observers the world over, and one must understand that the German National Government might all too easily be suspected of aiming deliberately at the destruction of German Jewry. This false concept must be disproved with concrete arguments if an information campaign is to have any effect. Orthodox Jewry is unwilling to abandon the conviction that it is not the aim of the German Government to destroy the German Jews. Even if some individuals harbor such an intention, we do not believe that it has the approval of the Fuehrer and the Government of Germany.

But if we should be mistaken, if you, Mr. Reich Chancellor, and the National Government which you head, if the responsible members of the National Administration of the NSDAP have indeed set themselves the ultimate aim of the elimination of German Jewry from the German People, then we do not wish to cling to illusions any longer, and would prefer to know the bitter truth.

It is in your interest, and in that of the whole German People, to tell us the truth openly. We would then prefer to consider your intention as fact and make our arrangements accordingly. We confess that this would be an unspeakable tragedy for us. We have learned to love the German soil. ... And we have learned to love the German people. At times it hurt us, particularly in the Middle Ages. But we were also present at its rise. We feel closely linked to its culture. It has become a part of our intellectual being and has given us German Jews a stamp of our own. And yet we would and could muster up the courage to bear our tragic fate and leave its reversal confidently to the God of History.

But if the German National Government does not seek the destruction of the forces of German Jewry; if it seeks to force us away from influence on the structure of public life, reserving this for those of German racial origin, but will

give us a place in the process of the reconstruction of the German Nation, if it is willing to maintain moral Jewry, which is the sworn enemy of materialism, then let it tell us this openly, too.

In view of the atmosphere that has been created we shall not demand of the German Government the cancellation overnight of all the regulations affecting the Jews, although we consider them a great, historic error; we do not wish to create difficulties for the National Government.

We would today have to accept some of the restrictions, if with an aching heart. Orthodox Jewry never sought dominance in economic life, which is in any case not possible for those who observe the religious precept of the holy Sabbath, which saves the Jews from materialism. Jewish Orthodoxy has always opposed baptism and mixed marriage in the sharpest possible manner.

But we do aspire to living space within the living space of the German people, the possibility of practicing our religion and carrying out our occupations without threats and without abuse. In accordance with our religious duties we will always remain loyal to the Government of the State. Within the framework of the German people the German Jew will gladly take part in the task of reconstruction of the German Nation and do what is within his power to win friends beyond the German borders.

In presenting this statement for your just examination, Mr. Reich Chancellor, we request the opportunity of a personal interview shortly, as representatives of the undersigned organizations, which have for decades cared for the religious requirements of Orthodox German Jewry. We are convinced that such a discussion would benefit, at the very least, the internal and external policy interests of Germany, which urgently require clarification of the situation and a gradual reduction of the tensions that have developed from the present situation.

In expectation of the gracious acceptance of our request, we remain, with deep respect,

Reich Union of Orthodox Synagogue Communities, Halberstadt , signed Rabbi Dr. E. Schl, Halberstadt; Rabbi Dr. E. Munk, Berlin

Independent Association for the Interests of Orthodox Jewry, Frankfurt on Main, signed Dr. S. Ehrmann Dr. J. Breuer

National Organization of Agudas Jisroel in Germany , Berlin, signed Rabbi Dr. M. Auerbach, Berlin; Jacob Rosenheim, Frankfurt on Main

October 1933