



JEW S IN ACTION

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FIVE YEARS OF THE
JEWISH PEOPLES COMMITTEE

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1943

The Jewish people face grave problems today. Anti-Semitism and discrimination in America, pogroms and complete annihilation in many other parts of the world are awakening the Jewish people to the realization that they must unite themselves for action before it is too late.

How can the Jewish people achieve this necessary unity? What program of action shall they undertake? In whom can the Jewish people put their trust?

To answer these questions it would be well to review the history of the Jewish people during the past five years and see what were the problems and issues and how they were dealt with.

HUSH - HUSH POLICY

In 1936 the Jews of Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary and Roumania were being annihilated by ruthless persecution, torture and legalized pogroms.

Despite the fact that the need for action as well as unity was all too evident, the Jewish leaders of America adopted a policy of know nothing, say nothing and do nothing.

It was bad manners to raise your voice. The Nazis might not like it.

The same dumb, blind ostrich technique was employed by them in fighting anti-Semitism in America. They were hush-hushing and sabotaging every attempt at action and this at a time when Coughlin, Winrod, Moseley and Pelley were whipping up a spirit of mob violence against the Jews.

Several of the leading Jewish organizations did make announcements of preparing to wage a campaign against anti-Semitism. Jews were urged to contribute. And with traditional generosity Jews did contribute handsomely.

What did these organizations do with so much money? Devoted ostensibly to fighting anti-Semitism, they established elaborate offices, engaged highly competent personnel, introduced efficient research departments which kept on file every scrap of information about anti-Semitic activities.

And all this for what purpose? *To suppress all efforts to fight anti-Semitism.*

Now to every reasonable person such a change may sound incredible but the facts are too well known for one's comfort. These Jewish organizations spend hundreds of thousands yearly to pile up information of anti-Semitic activities, but they keep this information buried in their files like some rotting corpse.

Moreover, whenever some "misguided" Jews have felt a moral obligation to take action, the "leaders" of American Jewry have moved heaven and earth to silence them. They have used all sorts of pressure, legal ones and others not quite so legal. They have tried to shut off financial support from these groups by slander, by intrigue and by whispering campaigns.

It is with sorrow and indignation that we say: the leaders of the "Big Four"—the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee have been guilty of these outrages.

It became an uphill struggle within the Jewish community for anyone having the temerity actually to want to defend the Jewish people against their enemies.

THEY CALL IT DEMOCRACY

It was at this time that the American Jewish Congress announced a Washington Conference to make preparations for the 1936 World Jewish Congress. Representatives of many Jewish organizations representing some 130,000 members came to Washington with the plea that a truly democratic procedure be followed in the selection of delegates. These organizations pledged their support to any program that could be presented to the World Congress as representing a united American Jewry. Although many delegates at the Washington Conference recognized the proposal as the only one any sincere Jew could entertain, the *leaders* who controlled the Congress saw fit to *sabotage* the proposal.

Rebuffed, yet unresigned, representatives of these organizations went to Geneva to continue their earnest plea for unity within the World Jewish Congress itself. The leaders, ignoring the opposition in their own ranks, prevented the representatives of these organizations from presenting their plea to the Congress.

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THE PEOPLE NEED AN ORGANIZATION

The delegation knew that the crying need of the hour was a united Jewish people joining with all progressive people for the preservation of democracy. Realizing the futility of making any further efforts to convince the leaders of the American Jewish Congress of the urgency of such action, these delegates returned to America and set themselves the task of establishing an organization for the hundreds of thousands of Jews who desired to carry on a militant struggle for the defense of Jewish rights.

To accomplish this program of action, the JEWISH PEOPLES COMMITTEE was created. No one better expressed the justification for the Jewish Peoples Committee program than Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, when he said: "If a people want to survive, then they must first of all fight for their liberty if they want to receive support from others."

The Jewish Peoples Committee felt that it was possible, in fact urgent, to find a common program for all Jews regardless of their political, social, economic or religious beliefs. Its understanding of the meaning of "Unity of Israel" was unity for a common objective regardless of individual doctrine or dogma.

THE JEWISH PEOPLES COMMITTEE ACTS

Toward the close of 1936, the persecution of the Jews in Poland had reached the pogrom stage. American Jewry demanded that political action be taken in their behalf and material aid be extended to them. The American Jewish Congress issued a call for a conference. In response, the Jewish Peoples Committee sent a letter of acceptance only to be told that its offer of aid had been rejected.

The Jewish Peoples Committee thereupon addressed an open letter to the delegates attending the Conference in which it stated:

"We want to call to your attention that this is not the only conference to aid the Jews in Poland which has been called. On Sunday, February 7, the Jewish Labor Committee will also hold a conference on the Polish situation. Why separate conferences? Do such separate conferences strengthen any action in defense of the Polish Jews? Is it wise to compel

us to call a separate conference? We feel certain that the delegates assembled here realize that the disastrous results of such a policy, forcing division within the ranks of the Jewish people, can only serve to play into the hands of the anti-Semites and all enemies of the Jewish people."

The Jewish Peoples Committee saw the tasks before it far too realistically to fall into the trap of doing nothing. There was a great deal to be done and the plight of the Jews of Poland was getting worse.

On April 5, 1937, a delegation of 200, presented a petition bearing 960,000 signatures to the Polish Consul in New York, demanding the immediate suppression of the pogroms.

On July 26th, a similar delegation called upon Secretary of State Hull and upon the Polish Ambassador. Following that a call was issued for a march on Washington on November 20th and particularly urged the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Labor Committee and the Federation of Polish Jews to join their forces with those of the Jewish Peoples Committee in this action.

These organizations which consistently worked for "hush-hush" naturally boycotted the efforts of the Jewish Peoples Committee.

Dr. S. Margoshes, editor of the Jewish "Day" did not let the matter rest merely with a rejection of the proposal, but launched a campaign of calumny and abuse against the Jewish Peoples Committee. Besides accusing the Jewish Peoples Committee of being Communist-controlled, he unburdened himself of the following amazing statement editorially:

"There is no doubt about it, that the picketing of the Polish Embassy in Washington by a thousand delegates of the Jewish Peoples Committee will be regarded by our government as well as by the American people as nothing but a 'nuisance' caused by Jews. This attempt must be smashed and as vigorously as possible, and if necessary with the police."

Thus we see how a Jewish "leader" deports himself in time of ultimate crisis for his people.

But despite all the efforts of these "leaders in Israel" the march on Washington proved a success. The Jewish people responded magnificently. Hundreds of cars, bearing delegates, converged upon the nation's capitol.

At the conference there assembled one thousand delegates,

representing Jewish organizations, religious, fraternal, social, cultural and labor, with a combined membership of 420,000.

The following day the delegates called upon the President and the Vice-President of the United States, upon the Chairmen of the Foreign Relations Committees of the Senate and the House, and upon the Polish Ambassador.

The publicity given to all these incidents in the daily press drew the attention of the American people to the tragedy facing the Jews of Poland. Protests of indignation were issued by hundreds of leading American university professors, editors, scientists, writers and public officials. The Polish Ambassador was obliged to issue public statements in lame defense.

In this action the Jewish Peoples Committee demonstrated a number of important truths: that militancy and not "hush-hush" is the one effective way of fighting for Jewish rights; that decent Christians expect Jews to be upstanding and display human dignity in defending their people from the attacks of its enemies.

UNITY WITHOUT THE PEOPLE

Meanwhile, a threatened stampede by rank-and-filers within the major Jewish organizations as well as pressure on the part of the Jewish Peoples Committee finally forced the leaders of these organizations to organize into the General Council for Jewish Rights. The news of this merger caused universal rejoicing among Jews. The Jewish Peoples Committee, although denied admittance into the Council, welcomed this merger because it hoped that it would result in some program of action.

Without loss of time the General Council for Jewish Rights resolved itself into an organization for the *suppression* of any demand for public protest or attempt at action in the fight against Hitlerism abroad and at home.

The Reconstructionist (edited by leading Rabbis and educators), in an editorial on December 2, 1938, called "Paging the General Council for Jewish Rights" stated:

"Last June there was formed the General Council for Jewish Rights . . . But what leadership has the General Council for Jewish Rights manifested in the latest crisis? Have the constituent organizations and individual members been called upon to express their protest in some concrete fashion? Has any

attempt been made to mobilize the masses in organized protest and to translate their indignation into effective action? . . . Is this how the equal rights of Jews are to be defended?"

LEADERS AND MIS-LEADERS

It would be wearisome to retail the number of other instances in which the leaders of the large Jewish organizations not only failed to take action but tried their utmost to wreck the efforts made by the Jewish Peoples Committee.

How many Jews are aware of the fact that when President Roosevelt, a few years ago, contemplated a public blast at Hitler for persecuting the Jews, an influential Jewish organization hurriedly sent a delegation of self-appointed leaders to Washington to dissuade him from his intentions. It might madden the Nazi beast, they pleaded, and he would "take it out" on the Jews even more.

How many Jews are aware of the fact that when Rabbi Wise discovered that Congressman Donald L. O'Toole had introduced a bill into Congress providing for the opening of the gates of America to more refugees, he wrote to him and stated:

"I wish I thought that it were possible for this measure to be passed without possible repercussions upon the Jewish community in this country. I have every reason to believe, unfortunately, that any effort that is made at this time to waive the immigration laws, however humanitarian the purpose, will result in serious accentuation of what we know to be a rising wave of anti-Semitic feeling in this country. . . ."

"It may interest you to know that some weeks ago the representatives of all the leading Jewish organizations met in conference to discuss the President's proposal and other proposals which have been made to waive the immigration barrier. It was the consensus of opinion that such bills at this moment in the light of present unemployment in this country, and in the light of the inspired propaganda directed against the Jewish people, and circulated throughout the country, would be injurious to the purposes which all of us would like to serve. For that reason it was decided that no Jewish organization would at this time, sponsor a bill which would in any way alter the present immigration laws."

How many Jews are aware of the fact that when Robert Edmondson, one of America's leading anti-Semites, was hauled into court for his mob-inciting and

filthy literature against the Jews, the leaders of the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee presented a memorandum to Judge James Wallace asking him not to punish Edmondson. The argument they gave was that to punish Edmondson would mean a violation of the rights of free speech and free press.

Strange indeed, that these organizations which stifle every attempt at free speech and democracy within Jewish life should find it so necessary to rush to the defense of the free speech of anti-Semites.

THE GREATEST ANTI-NAZI RALLY

Again, in its efforts to arouse to action the American Jewish Congress and other Jewish organizations dedicated ostensibly to fight the Nazis in Germany and in the United States, the Jewish Peoples Committee was frustrated.

Realizing the necessity of immediate action, the Jewish Peoples Committee, despite attacks and direful warnings from "The Big Four," announced a great mass meeting at Madison Square Garden on November 21st, 1938.

It arranged for this meeting with the cooperation of the German-American League for Culture, the North American Hungarian Democratic Federation, the German-American Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Fund, the American League for Peace and Democracy, the Coordinated Council for Czechoslovak Democracy, and the Polish National Alliance.

Twenty thousand people jammed the great hall on the night of the meeting and many thousand who failed to gain admission listened to the speeches outside. The meeting was addressed by such prominent men and women as H. V. Kaltenborn, Dorothy Parker, Ernst Toller, Dashiell Hammett, Michael Quill, the famous German leader of Protestantism, Professor Tillich, the Rev. Dr. Harry F. Ward and others. Virtually thousands of letters, cables and telegrams poured in from men and women and organizations of every variety and belief.

There could be no question that the Madison Square Garden meeting had immediate and incalculable results. The entire press of the country featured it. The radio news broadcasts reported it. The leading New York newspapers

carried accounts of it on the front page, several even headlining it! The country buzzed with the news and by general newspaper agreement it was described as the *greatest anti-Nazi rally ever held in the United States.*

INVESTIGATING COUGHLIN

Meanwhile the growing menace of anti-Semitism in the United States was awakening the Jewish people to the realization that it was urgent that they begin to take action against that which imperiled their own existence at home. Here in America hundreds of fascist and anti-Semitic organizations were carrying on an organized campaign against the Jewish people. Demagogues like Coughlin, Winrod, Pelley and a host of other fascists were spreading their anti-Semitic doctrines through the width and breadth of America. The Christian Front and the Nazi Bundists were growing more brazen from day to day and were openly calling for pogroms against the Jews of America.

Realizing that the interests of the Jewish people as well as of democracy itself were at stake, the Jewish Peoples Committee began a nation-wide campaign against anti-Semitism and race-hatred.

In this fight it enlisted the aid and support of hundreds upon hundreds of distinguished Americans. From one end of the country to the other the Jewish Peoples Committee distributed leaflets and pamphlets calling upon the Jewish people as well as upon the American people as a whole to join in eliminating from American life the cancerous evil of anti-Semitism and race-hatred.

The campaign which it initiated demanding that the Department of Justice investigate the activities of Father Coughlin aroused the immediate support of hundreds of organizations.

The campaign gathered momentum. Hundreds of thousands of letters came pouring into the Department of Justice supporting the demands of the Jewish Peoples Committee.

On January 26, 1940, O. John Rogge, Assistant Attorney General, wrote to the Jewish People's Committee and promised that the Department of Justice would investigate Father Coughlin and his activities. A few days later in an interview with reporters, Rogge confirmed this

and stated that the Department of Justice would proceed with such an investigation.

This statement was headlined in the press throughout the country.

While it is true that the Department of Justice has to *this very day not carried through the investigation* of Father Coughlin, a fact which has caused serious misgivings on the part of democratic-loving people generally, the results of this vigorous campaign had a tremendous effect in educating millions of American to an understanding of the menace of anti-Semitism and fascism.

WORLD WAR II

Today, tragedy and destruction stalk through the world bringing misery and death to millions of human beings. In the midst of this world conflagration stand our own Jewish brethren who suffer not only as human beings but as Jews, as members of a minority group.

In the Hitler-conquered countries of France, Rumania, Holland and Czechoslovakia, the Jewish people are faced with ghetto-walls, barbaric decrees barring them from all walks of life and pogroms.

Nor does fate deal more kindly with those who flee from Hitler and his Nazi hordes. The British rulers, *supposedly fighting Hitlerism*, deny its victims the elementary right of refuge. Hunted and helpless Jews who manage to escape from these lands of terror wend their way to the shores of Palestine, only to be told by the government, that claims to be fighting everything that Hitler stands for, that they will not be permitted to enter. The tragic climax to this heartrending tale is reached when the ship "Patria" to which they have been transferred, explodes and over two hundred of these refugees go to their death at the very shores of Palestine.

At the very moment that this tragedy was taking place, the newspapers were announcing the fact that the *British Government had given permission to five hundred Polish nobles and war lords to enter Palestine*. Strange indeed that Jewish refugees, homeless and destitute people, driven from land to land, are refused admittance while Polish nobles are received with open arms.

When this incident took place, the Jewish Peoples Committee called upon the American people to protest to the British Government and to demand that the survivors be permitted to enter Palestine. Hundreds of prominent American citizens signed an open letter to the British Government decrying this inhuman act.

The late Lord Lothian, British Ambassador to the United States, replied to the protests of the Jewish Peoples Committee by stating that the reason these refugees were not allowed into Palestine was because there were "many spies among them." This flimsy pretext was rejected by even the most reactionary Jewish press and Jewish organizations. Despite this, however, the majority of the Jewish press and the Jewish organizations did everything in their power to hush-hush the whole incident. Rabbi Wise went a step further and praised the British government for serving notice upon the Nazis that they could not get any spies into Palestine.

IT IS HAPPENING HERE

Here in America, the problems which confront the Jewish people become more complex each day. The "leaders" of American Jewry who only yesterday were doing everything in their power to hush-hush all protests against the Nazis have suddenly become loud in their cries that Hitler must be defeated and that the British rulers who helped Hitler come to power, who sacrificed one country after another to Hitler, who allow helpless refugees to die at the gates of Palestine, are the ones who will destroy Hitlerism and create a new world order.

Some people might be inclined to believe that these leaders have repented. But as one studies the scene a bit more closely, one finds that a strange phenomenon is taking place. *These leaders who cry that they are so ready to fight Hitlerism abroad are doing everything in their power to prevent any struggle against manifestations of Hitlerism at home.*

In the past they did not deny the existence and the danger of anti-Semitism. They merely said that it was not wise to cry out too loudly against it. Today they go a step further and state that there is nothing to fear because anti-Semitism is on the "decline" in America.

Thus, the American Jewish Committee in its annual report states that anti-Jewish agitation in America has "struck a new low of disrepute during the past year."

Do the facts bear out these reports? Is anti-Semitism really on the decline in the United States? Let us see!

At the very moment that Assistant Attorney General Rogge was promising an investigation of Coughlin, a number of Christian Fronters were being tried on charges of conspiring to overthrow the government, of spreading anti-Semitism and of stealing government property.

Throughout the trial, the defendants ranted and raved. Prosecuting Attorney Kennedy gave them a helping hand. During his summary he stated that "the avowed purposes of the Christian Front are good, sound American principles."

Twelve of the defendants were acquitted. The retrial of the remaining five was postponed time and again, at the request of the United States Attorney. Finally, after a long series of delays and postponements, Prosecuting Attorney Kennedy asked that the whole case be thrown out of court.

The very American Jewish Committee which stated that anti-Semitism is on the decline issued another report that in the elections of 1940, there were more candidates running for public office on an out-and-out anti-Semitic program than ever before.

The Dies Committee which was established to investigate un-American activities has allowed its hearings to be used as a propaganda platform for vigilante organizations, notorious strike-breakers and rabid anti-Semites. It has consistently refused to investigate such un-American enemies of the people as Father Coughlin, Henry Ford, the Ku-Klux-Klan and the host of other fascists and anti-Semites. Congressman Dickstein on the floor of the House stated that 110 fascist organizations have the key to the back door of the Dies Committee.

The very publications of the Jewish organizations that cry the Jews have nothing to fear, point out week after week the alarming increase in the activities of the Ku-Klux-Klan. Thus for example in the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania, the Klu-Klux-Klan has instituted a most vicious boycott against Jewish merchants.

Particularly alarming at this time is the tremendous increase of discrimination against the Jewish people. In in-

dustry it has risen to such an alarming extent that even Governor Lehman in his annual message to the New York Legislature was forced to take cognizance of it. One need but turn to the advertising sections of the newspapers to see how alarming this situation is. Day after day and week after week one can thumb through the ads and find, to an ever increasing degree, ads which call for "Christian only."

In California the National Youth Administration together with the State Relief Administration allocated a certain amount of funds for the training of young people in aviation project and announced that Jews and Negroes would not be eligible.

The American Hebrew, a conservative Jewish magazine, reports that Jewish doctors and dentists are discriminated against in the Army and the Navy, no matter how well qualified they may be.

When the anti-alien bills were introduced into Congress, liberal and progressive organizations throughout the country carried on a campaign against the passage of these bills because they knew that they were not only entirely out of keeping with the rich traditions of America but also because they knew that such bills were forerunners of attacks and persecution of the foreign-born.

Already it is evident that their prophecies were not without foundation. Curt Swinburne, Secretary of the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born, after completing a tour through many states reported that "*the extent and intensity of existing discrimination is very much greater than reports in the past would lead one to believe.*"

"The existing discrimination affects directly not only the non-citizen and the naturalized citizen, but even those native-born Americans who have 'foreign-sounding' names. For instance, in Detroit, Michigan, every major industrial plant, with few exceptions, has fired all non-citizens and even citizens of foreign birth find it almost impossible to secure employment because they were not born in this country."

On the basis of these facts as well as on the basis of hundreds of other instances of anti-Semitism and discrimination, it is obvious that the Jewish people are confronted with a most alarming situation. One would imagine that the Jewish leaders would make some attempt to acquaint the Jewish people with it and to urge them to take some action.

Instead we find the amazing spectacle of these Jewish organizations reporting to the Jewish people that anti-Semitism is "dying out in America." And when a magazine like "Friday" does the Jewish people as well as the American people generally the great service of exposing the anti-Semitic activities of Henry Ford and Cameron, these organizations not only deny the truth of these exposes but even label them as "forgeries!" When "Friday" magazine called up the Jewish press and asked them to put in a page ad about these exposes, they refused to do so. *And when a writer for an Anglo-Jewish paper in New York insisted upon publicizing the findings of "Friday Magazine," he received a call from a leading Jewish newspaper urging him to stop publicizing these exposes and if he did he might receive some "good" advertising!*

Why do the Jewish organizations attempt to hide these facts? Why do they go out of their way to label organizations that are anxious to do something about this rising tide of anti-Semitism and discrimination?

It is becoming increasingly clear that in their desire to prevent the Jewish people from becoming aware of these burning issues they cry loudly that national unity is at hand. But what kind of national unity can there be when Jews, Negroes and other minority groups are discriminated against? Was this not the type of national unity under cover of which Hitler came to power? Was this not the type of national defense which brought the downfall of France?

It is becoming more and more obvious that *those who seek to divert the attention of the people from the problems which confront them here in America are not really interested in the destruction of Hitlerism abroad.* For democracy will not be saved abroad by the destruction of democracy at home.

On June 21st, 1938, at the Forty-Ninth Annual Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein delivered an address called "Toward a program for American Judaism." During the course of his speech he said:

"Jews must recognize that their welfare is bound up with the preservation of democracy . . . There is an understandable tendency among Jews in these critical times to withdraw from all controversial issues and even to condone injustice when protests against it might seem to jeopardize the Jewish position. However understandable this may be, it is an unsound and short-sighted policy. Neither timidity

nor sycophancy has ever purchased security for the Jews. The anti-Semite cannot be placated by Jewish self-abasement. . . . In the very nature of things the forces of reaction are our enemies. They cannot be trusted anywhere, whether in Germany, Italy, or Jersey City. Realistically the Jew must understand that in a crisis his trusted friends will be found not in the camp of reaction but among the organized workers, the liberals, the social idealists, the defenders of civil liberties and the liberal Christian groups . . .

"They must also recognize that political democracy is bound up with economic democracy. If and when our system falls it will not be because of foreign agitation but because of its inability to provide a decent living for the people of this land . . ."

The Jewish Peoples Committee believes these words to be as true today as when they were spoken in 1938. Tragically enough, there are those including the very one who uttered these words, who are most anxious to forget them.

In this period of stress and strain the Jewish Peoples Committee reiterates and reaffirms its essential position, namely that the Jewish people must unite themselves together with all progressive groups in the struggle against anti-Semitism and discrimination and for the defense of democracy at home and abroad. Hitlerism will not be destroyed by those who destroy democracy at home. Hitlerism will only be destroyed by those who join together and work for the strengthening and the heightening of the democratic process now and not at some future date.

This is the philosophy and justification for the existence of the Jewish Peoples Committee. It will unremittingly strive for the unity of all Jews in their common defense. It is determined at all times to take forthright action in behalf of the Jewish people and against its enemies. It is resolved beyond any doubt to join with all men and women of decency and good-will to defend our American civilization and democratic ideals against reactionaries, fascists, anti-Semites, labor baiters and war-mongers. It will work for a better world in which social justice will prevail for all, including the Jewish people.

The Jewish Peoples Committee calls upon all Jews to unite with all progressive forces to

**DESTROY ANTI-SEMITISM!
ABOLISH DISCRIMINATION!
DEFEND DEMOCRACY AND PEACE!**

JEWISH PEOPLES COMMITTEE
*for United Action Against Fascism
and Anti-Semitism*

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

As an expression of my sympathy with the fight of the Jewish Peoples Committee against anti-Semitism and race hatred, please enroll me as a member at \$..... per year.

Name

Address

City State.....

Contributing Member—\$10 per year

Supporting Member—\$5 per year

Member—\$1 per year