

THE FLINT PLAN

A Program of Action for American
Jews

By

RABBI ELMER BERGER

Rabbi, Temple Beth El

Flint, Michigan

PAMPHLET No. 1

Published by

Committee on Lay-Rabbinical Cooperation

Dr. Morris Lazon, Chairman

Rabbi Elmer Berger

Dr. William Fineshriber

Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld

Dr. Samuel H. Goldenson

Rabbi Irving Reichert

Dr. William Rosenau

Rabbi Hyman Schachtel

Dr. Jonah B. Wise

Dr. Louis Wolsey

956:11
B

American Jewish Committee
LIBRARY

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES BY NON-ZIONIST RABBIS

We, Rabbis in American Israel, who believe in the universalism of Judaism's ethical and spiritual values and teachings, express our hearty agreement with the following Statement drawn up by those who convened in Atlantic City, June 1st and 2nd, 1942, for the purpose of giving voice to our convictions and to discuss ways and means of giving greater emphasis in Jewish life and thought to those doctrines and of securing wider recognition and appreciation of them among our neighbors.

The special reason for our gathering is in the growing secularism in American Jewish life, the absorption of large numbers in Jewish nationalistic endeavors and the tendency to reduce the religious basis of Jewish life to a place of secondary importance. A further reason for taking counsel together is in our realization that at this time more than ever all men for their own good and the good of mankind should give every emphasis to those moral and religious values and principles that transcend boundary lines and hold all men in a common bond of human fellowship.

- (1) We believe that the present tragic experiences of mankind abundantly demonstrate that no single people or group can hope to live in freedom and security when their neighbors are in the grip of evil forces either as perpetrators or sufferers. We hold therefore, that the solution of the social, economic and political problems of one people are inextricably bound up with those of others. To this general rule the problems of our Jewish people constitute no exception, though unhappily we Jews are often the first victims of the distemper of peoples and suffer most from the maladjustments of society.
- (2) We declare our unwavering faith in the humane and righteous principles that underlie the democratic way of life, principles first envisaged by the Prophets of Israel and embodied in our American Bill of Rights. In keeping with these principles we hold that the Jewish people have the same right to live securely anywhere in the world and to enjoy the fruit of their labor in peace as have men of every other faith and historic background. We fervently hope and earnestly trust that in the coming peace programs that right will be fully recognized, unequivocally expressed, and inextricably woven into the texture of the new world order.
- (3) Realizing how dear Palestine is to the Jewish soul, and how important Palestinian rehabilitation is towards relieving the pressing problems of our distressed people, we stand ready to render unstinted aid to our bretheren in their economic, cultural and spiritual endeavors in that country. But in the light of our universalistic interpretation of Jewish history and destiny, and also because of our concern for the welfare and status of the Jewish people living in other parts of the world, we are unable to subscribe to or support the political emphasis now paramount in the Zionist program. We cannot but believe that Jewish nationalism tends to confuse our fellowmen about our place and function in society and also diverts our own attention from our historic role to live as a religious community wherever we may dwell. Such a spiritual role is especially voiced by Reform Judaism in its emphasis upon the eternal prophetic principles of life and thought, principles through which alone Judaism and the Jew can hope to endure and bear witness to the universal God.

The maladjustments of society and the consequent sufferings are at bottom due to man's forgetfulness of the elementary decencies and virtues and to the violation of moral and spiritual principles that have universal validity. It is incumbent therefore, upon all of us, Jews and non-Jews alike, to stress to the utmost in thought, word and deed those teachings of our own religion that are all-inclusive, if we would permanently correct the evils that so often bring suffering to mankind.

Reform Judaism, as we conceive it, is the contemporary manifestation of the eternal prophetic spirit of Israel, through which alone Judaism and the Jew live to witness to the universal God.

Henry Barnston, Houston, Texas
 Samuel H. Baron, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
 Elmer Berger, Flint, Mich.
 Louis Binstock, Chicago, Ill.
 Sheldon H. Blank, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Joseph Blatt, Oklahoma City, Okla.
 I. Mortimer Bloom, New York, N. Y.
 Edward N. Calisch, Richmond, Va.
 Simon R. Cohen, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Simon Cohn, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Beryl D. Cohon, Boston, Mass.
 Abraham Cronbach, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Max C. Currick, Erie, Pa.
 Julian B. Feibelman, New Orleans, La.
 Morris M. Feuerlicht, Indianapolis, Ind.
 Morton C. Fierman, Washington, D. C.
 Solomon A. Fineberg, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.
 Wm. H. Fineshriber, Philadelphia, Pa.
 Solomon Foster, Newark, N. J.
 Leo M. Franklin, Detroit, Mich.
 Ephraim Frisch, San Antonio, Texas
 Norman Gerstenfeld, Washington, D. C.
 Samuel H. Goldenson, New York, N. Y.
 A. D. Goode, York, Pa.
 M. W. Graff, Roanoke, Va.
 L. Elliot Grafman, Long Beach, Cal.
 Milton Greenwald, Evansville, Ind.
 Julius K. Gutmann, Danville, Va.
 Carl N. Herman, West Palm Beach, Fla.
 Abram Hirshberg, Chicago, Ill.
 Maurice A. Hirshberg, Calumet City, Ill.
 Samuel Hirshberg, Milwaukee, Wis.
 Abraham Holtzberg, Trenton, N. J.
 Samuel D. Hurwitz, Camp Wolters, Tex.
 Pizer W. Jacobs, Blytheville, Ark.
 David Jacobson, San Antonio, Texas
 Louis A. Josephson, Cleveland, Miss.
 Samuel Koch, Seattle, Wash.
 E. A. Landau, Albany, Ga.
 Isaac Landman, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 S. Landman, Kew Gardens, L. I., N. Y.
 M. S. Lazaron, Baltimore, Md.
 David Lefkowitz, Dallas, Texas
 David Lefkowitz, Jr., Shreveport, La.
 S. M. Lefkowitz, Camp Livingston, La.
 S. J. Levinson, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Aaron L. Weinstein, Jamaica, L. I., N. Y.
 David H. Wice, Newark, N. J.
 Jonah B. Wise, New York, N. Y.
 Louis Witt, Dayton, Ohio
 Samuel J. Wolk, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Louis Wolsey, Philadelphia, Pa.
 Nathan Stern, New York, N. Y.
 Allan Tarshish, Hazelton, Pa.
 Maurice Thorner, Jersey City, N. J.
 Benjamin A. Tintner, Ft. Monmouth, N.J.
 Leo E. Turitz, Bradford, Pa.
 Sidney E. Unger, Ft. Eustis, Va.
 Samuel M. Silver, Univ. of Maryland
 Herman E. Snyder, Springfield, Ill.
 George Solomon, Savannah, Ga.
 Solomon E. Starrrels, Albuquerque, N.M.
 Malcolm H. Stern, Philadelphia, Pa.
 Jacob M. Rothschild, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 Leonard J. Rothstein, Harrisonburg, Va.
 Eugene J. Sack, Philadelphia, Pa.
 Ira E. Sanders, Little Rock, Ark.
 Samuel Sandmel, Chapel Hill, N. C.
 Hyman J. Schachtel, New York, N. Y.
 A. D. Shaw, Baltimore, Md.
 David D. Shor, Helena, Ark.
 Abraham Shusterman, Baltimore, Md.
 Joseph Rauch, Louisville, Ky.
 Sidney L. Regner, Reading, Pa.
 Irving F. Reichert, San Francisco, Cal.
 Victor E. Reichert, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Max Reichler, Brooklyn, N. Y.
 William Rosenau, Baltimore, Md.
 Jerome Rosenbloom, New York, N. Y.
 William F. Rosenblum, New York, N. Y.
 Clifton H. Levy, New York, N. Y.
 Eugene Mannheimer, Des Moines, Ia.
 Charles Mantinband, Williamsport, Pa.
 David Marx, Atlanta, Ga.
 Israel I. Mattuck, London, England
 Julian Morgenstern, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Nathan A. Perilman, New York, N. Y.
 David Philipson, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Isador E. Philo, Youngstown, Ohio

A Prefatory Word to Americans of Jewish Faith

What do Jews want from this war?

Nothing more nor less than what our fellow-citizens want:

Victory for the Allied Nations, because in that victory are bound up the freedom of men and the future of civilization;

The right of all men to live as citizens anywhere in the world and to be secure in that right so long as they assume and fulfill the obligations of citizenship;

The implementation of the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms which reestablish decency, honor and justice as the basis for international law and elevate the co-operative fellowship of free peoples as the goal of the nations.

This is no time to press special interests. To do so is to divide counsel and to play into the hands of the Axis. All efforts of all citizens must be centered on the one task—winning the war.

We recognize the probable need for countless thousands of all faiths to migrate after this holocaust is ended. We view with anguish their plight and suffering and pledge our assistance to their readjustment to any new environment, including Palestine, which can be accomplished.

American Jews profoundly desire to find homes for their driven fellow Jews. They wish to see the doors of Palestine open to the largest possible Jewish immigration. They would gladly share in the economic and cultural rehabilitation of Palestine, of which they have already cheerfully borne a large share of the cost irrespective of their feeling on the subject of Jewish nationalism.

American Jews take the position that the unity which binds Jews together is their common religio-cultural heritage. It has nothing to do with politics.

American Jews reject the philosophy of diaspora-nationalism—(the theory that Jews living outside Palestine are 'in exile').

American Jews cherish their American citizenship and would have none other. Their loyalty is exclusively to the United States of America.

THE ISSUE IS NOT PALESTINE RECONSTRUCTION. The issue is the secularistic philosophy and the political program, methods and goals of certain groups which are not so numerically important as their representations might lead the public to infer.

This crisis is being viewed by too many people as Palestine's **opportunity**. This is a wrong diagnosis.

This is the hour of Israel's and the world's greatest **danger**—and there is an enormous difference in the strategy necessitated by the respective concepts.

I am not ready to swallow England's policies whole—but it would be tragic if we failed to put first things first!

I sympathize with India and with Ireland but they too are making the mistake of thinking in opportunistic terms rather than in terms of the actual preservation of their lives.

The Atlantic City meeting will we believe mark a turning point in American Jewish life. Rabbi Berger's paper, which was read at that meeting, indicates a practical program of action. What we need is organization. We must bring before the American Jewish community an essentially American Jewish point of view. We have been silent thus far and our voice has not been heard. We must pool our resources and organize our power. And they are great.

Let us begin as the paper suggests by bringing together in every community men and women who see the situation as we see it. We believe the laymen are waiting for some sign of leadership. The committee on Lay and Rabbinical organization is composed of Rabbis Goldenson, Jonah B. Wise, Hyman Schachtel, Rabbis Elmer Berger, Louis Wolsey, William Fineshriber, Irving Reichert, William Rosenau, Norman Gerstenfeld and Morris Lazon. It is prepared to help in every way. We shall be happy to send speakers for your meetings, forums and discussions.

Further copies of this pamphlet may be secured upon request. Copies of Rabbi Lazon's pamphlet "Is This the Way?" are

also available. We can send you also mimeographed copies of all papers read at the Atlantic City meeting by Rabbis David Philipson, Isaac Landman, Morris Feuerlicht, Abraham Shusterman and Morris Lazaron.

We are furthermore anxious to print a bi-weekly eight page bulletin or paper which will be the voice of our movement and its instrument of education. At the present time all the agencies of publicity and propaganda are in the hands of the other side.

These things all take money. We call upon all who agree with us that we face the most serious situation which has ever confronted American Jews to contribute toward the promotion of this work.

MORRIS S. LAZARON, Chairman
Committee on Lay-Rabbinical Co-operation

THE FLINT PLAN

* A Program of Action for American Non-Zionists

By Rabbi Elmer Berger

The following discussion is the record of one community's rise in "righteous might" against a false and what, if left unchallenged must inevitably be a Munich-kind of peace for the non-nationalistic, non-Zionist Jews of American Israel. The organization of non-Zionist opinion and forces in Flint was not taken out of any hasty anger or any ill-considered reactions to any single, isolated incident in the long record of the Jewish nationalist's relentless exploitation of the non-Zionists' silence and disorganization. It came as a positive response to a long-restrained demand for expression of an interpretation of Jewish life which significant numbers of American Jewry are convinced is spiritually more satisfying and practically more harmonious with the declarations of free men expressing the emergent forces of the post-war world than are the restrictive and segregating philosophies of nationalism which belong to a European-controlled world of the last century. The Flint program represented an informed rebellion against the corrosive forces of Jewish nationalism. It did not seek to create conflict in Israel. It simply and honestly recognized an already existent conflict between two, fundamentally irreconcilable philosophies of Jewish life and hopes. It proceeded in true democratic fashion to meet the opposition in that conflict upon something like even terms. It was a declaration, by action, that the non-Zionist Jews of Flint would no longer be committed to nationalistic programs by default and silence and disorganization. It was an organized affirmation of those values and characteristics of Jewish tradition which we believe to be the best and truest representation of Israel's historic destiny.

One more word of introduction seems necessary. I trust that I shall be forgiven the many personal allusions in this paper. But for myself and for every member of the group, this was as much a personal as a group experience. There were no patterns for such action in American Jewish life. Personal convictions, integrity with those convictions and a determination to end the silence which has made us accessories after the fact

* This paper is printed through the courtesy of the Flint Non-Zionist group.

of constant misrepresentation of Jewish Life by those who presume to speak for ALL Jews,—these were the forces that brought the group together. Unless each person, coming to the group, felt these things keenly, he was discouraged rather than encouraged to join with us. It is therefore inevitable that much of this discussion be concerned with a rather personal and intimate story.

For these reasons too, it is a bit difficult to present any chronological record of the events which led to the organization of this Flint committee to oppose political Zionism, diaspora nationalism and secularism in the community's Jewish life. For the factors which led to the organization of that group a few months ago were a compound of tangible, external events in the community's life and of intangible factors which have to do with personalities and community character. I wish that I might be able to offer my non-Zionist colleagues of the American Rabbinate some sure-fire formula for the creation of such local groups which might then be coordinated into some articulate, national organization. For the time has come when it must be the devout wish of every man who opposes the increasing politicalizing of Jewish life that "like-minded" rabbis will stand forth as leaders in a program of positive action that will enlist in active participation the "like-minded" laymen of American Jewry.

Although there is no ready-made formula for the creation of such laymen groups, I am sure that there must exist in the congregations of each of the men who have subscribed to our view-point, the same elements and attitudes that existed in my own congregation. By reason of an essentially religious and universalistic interpretation of Jewish tradition and opposition to nationalism and secularism, each of you must have the same potential forces in your community as I found existent in my own. For however much all of us may sometimes question the effectiveness of the pulpit, over long periods of time, congregations do take on characters and attitudes that directly reflect their leadership.

So that while there may be no ready-made formula, I think we may start with the assumption that our communities hold in common the elements from which the starting formula may be compounded; leadership that stands in unmistakable oppo-

sition to nationalism and secularism and the hard-won fruits of such ministries in the form of sympathetic attitudes among at least significant numbers of our laymen. By way of introduction, one more encouraging word might be added. Many of you will have an advantage which I did not have in Flint. The Reform congregation in Flint is a new congregation, less than fifteen years old. Michigan is a stronghold of Zionism, perhaps because liberal, American Judaism is so new to every community of the state. The associations of people in my congregation with Jews in Detroit, for example, are almost entirely associations with Orthodox or Conservative Jews. Even within the community itself, the break that resulted in the formation of the Reform Temple is of such recent date that the line of demarcation between the Orthodox and Reform congregations is not clear and the sovereignty of the Temple is often put to question in its right to interpret Jewish values in accordance with its own philosophy whenever such interpretations run counter to vaguely defined but violently expressed wishes for an impossible uniformity, called unity. The Temple's sovereignty is often put to question by members of the Temple themselves, a number of whom still retain a kind of nostalgic membership in the "schul."

I tell this story by way of background not to inflate the difficulties which our Flint, non-Zionist group encountered. Rather the opposite. The fact that we have created an anti-nationalist group in such an environment, is a source of encouragement. For many Reform Rabbis serve congregations with older and firmer traditions in Reform and in older and more stable communities. The success of our group in Flint, in the face of these difficulties which are at least less in many of your communities, ought, I hope, to help demonstrate the feasibility, perhaps even the practical necessity of the creation of such groups in other communities in American Israel.

It may seem surprising, after the recital of this background, for me to say first of all that the actual organization of our group was practically a spontaneous action. For my years of ministry in Flint, through uncompromising opposition to nationalism, I had prepared the attitudes that now, spontaneously, demanded action. But each of the non-Zionists of the Rabbinate and many of them for longer periods of service, has

done the same. Finally, this year, the Temple's persistent resistance to the many shapes and forms of political Zionism crystallized a more than usual opposition among the Zionists. Probably following the pattern in the larger Zionist scene in which American Zionists are now desperately pressing for the realization of their political hopes, the Flint Zionists sought to push what they thought was their advantage. They were somewhat more desperate and correspondingly more pitiful in their attacks. When they discovered that the usual threats and abuse and their sanctimonious pleas for "unity" availed them nothing, they determined to force the issue to a show-down. I was persuaded, at first much against my better judgment, to participate in a debate upon the issue of Zionism. The debate was to be held before the entire Jewish community and with much hesitation I finally accepted the challenge.

My hesitation was caused by my own doubts about the possibility of success in presenting the anti-nationalistic arguments in terms which might be understood by a group of people, many of whom had not been previously prepared for it in any way by any associations with liberal, universalistic Judaism. This debate crystallized the results of my years of opposition to Zionism in Flint. The result was more than gratifying. The audience, much of it Orthodox or unaffiliated, was definitely hostile at the beginning. No decision was to be made for the debate, but after I left the platform, dozens of people thanked me and took pains to explain that they had never understood Zionism before; indeed, they had never heard the non-Zionist view-point before; that they were not nationalists; that they were interested in refugee assistance for the most part and some few in cultural possibilities in Palestine, but that they were definitely not in sympathy with the Zionist politicalizing of Jewish life and were unaware of such politicalizing in many areas of American Jewry.

I was encouragingly surprised at such a response from people whom I had thought to be unredeemable Zionists but who now admitted to me that they were not and had not understood what they were supporting by their rather uncritical support of what they believed to be charity. It seemed to me then, as I heard these confessions, that if such a forthright statement as I had made at this debate could produce such a favorable

reaction in Flint, there must be other and older communities where a forthright stand and a definitive explanation could produce still more desirable results. The same thought apparently occurred to a significant group in my own congregation who had heard the debate. For a day or so later, I was called by one of the younger men in the congregation. He asked me if I would meet with him to discuss the possibility of organizing a local group which would positively affirm the religious character of Israel and actively resist the nationalizing and secularizing tendencies of the Zionists. We did meet. We decided to explore the possibilities of such a group. We carefully examined the Temple's membership list and selected out a small group of representative people whose convictions we were sure were in accord with ours. We determined that to begin with it must be a small group, sure of its ground, well enough informed in Jewish history to be able to defend itself against the inevitable attack of the nationalists. For about four years I had conducted a study group in Jewish history and this group served as the nucleus of the anti-nationalist group, although there were more in the latter and not all of the study group saw their way clear to participation.

At any event, we telephoned the people whom we had selected. We used no pressure of any kind. We tried to sell them nothing. We were not sure enough ourselves of any specific program to advertise one. In simple, straight-forward language we told these people what we hoped to do and asked them to come to the organizational meeting if they thought they might like to explore the possibilities of such a group with us. Everyone who had been called came. It was the most inspiring, religiously-minded, sober meeting that a much meeting-beleaguered rabbi ever attended.

It was just about this time that the preliminaries were taking place, leading to the Atlantic City meetings. It was extremely interesting for me to see how the attitudes, the fears and the hopes expressed in both of these preliminary discussions followed an almost identical pattern.

We were, for example, much concerned about a name for the group. Involved in these deliberations were realizations of the danger of appearing to be only a negative group, standing in opposition to something and not positively sponsoring a pro-

gram ourselves. Through a discussion of that single problem, the group finally found its way to the realization that in Jewish life, IT WAS JUDAISM THAT REPRESENTED WHAT THEY WANTED BY WAY OF REPRESENTATION OF JEWISH LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY. For this reason, the group was unsatisfied with its own, first selection of a name, "The Flint Committee in Opposition to Political Zionism."

The almost inevitable way in which Judaism emerged as the focal point of this group's interest as a result of this discussion is, I think, significantly important. Take a similar group from your own community with anti-nationalist convictions. Start them and encourage them in the thinking that revolves about this problem. Unless Flint is unique, if that discussion is carefully directed, that group must inevitably arrive as ours did, at such an unshakable conviction about the centrality of the synagogue in Jewish life as will not be produced by numberless academic discussions or resolutions. The best part of the process will be that they will arrive there themselves, without actually knowing how they came to such a conclusion. After much consideration we decided to leave the difficult problem of a name unsolved for the moment. It was not indispensable anyhow, since we had no intention of setting out on a membership crusade and those who responded to the call were sufficiently convinced of the desperate need for the work to be done to proceed to do it even if the workers had no formal name. The possible implications of illegitimacy were not overlooked by Zionists! Before we again discussed possible names, notice came to us of the Atlantic City meeting and we determined to be nameless, pending what we hope will now be a movement in the direction of a national program, embracing the totality of non-Zionists in American Israel.

I do not want to lengthen this discussion with any recital of mechanics which may seem trivial. But the opposition, desperately scared by even the intimation of the formation of such a group will exploit every tactical mistake and if this discussion of the experience of the group in Flint serves to encourage the formation of other groups, in other communities, I willingly confess our errors in the hope that future groups may avoid them. Since the group had crystallized about my own leadership and opposition to Zionism, there was general agreement

that I ought to officially head the organization. But it seemed to me then and it seems to me now that unless and until such a movement becomes better established, the Rabbi would do better not to be known as the official leader of such a group. In its present, embryo state, we felt that the group should have no official connection with the Temple; that vulnerable as the Temple is, through the Rabbi's position, the Temple ought not to be made an issue or unnecessarily involved. For this reason, we determined to meet outside the Temple. The group early realized that if it formed the committee and impaired the congregation it might have won a battle, but would lose the war. But as a group, organized by laymen and at least officially directed by laymen, the Rabbi may give of his time and services as he will, at the invitation of the group, just as Zionist Rabbis give of their time and services to the many Zionist organizations. Non-Zionist Rabbis who will perform such services will find, I am sure, as I found, that unlike the Zionist Rabbis, such services will be an investment in synagogue support and interest which will yield limitless returns. But the Rabbi, as yet, ought not to accept office in the group and in every formal way, the group ought to be independent of the synagogue.

So profoundly interested in the welfare of the synagogue was this group that its primary consideration in its own formation was the effect that such a group might have upon the synagogue itself. The only hesitant note in the whole meeting sounded upon the welfare of the Temple. Would such a group which must inevitably be preponderantly of Temple members, split the congregation? We determined also, that we would not welcome any unaffiliated Jews to the group, for we wished to emphasize its religious character. I pointed out to those in attendance at the meeting that I was sure our action would not divide the congregation. My own position had been unmistakably clear for years. The pulpit was definitely and uncompromisingly anti-nationalist. When I had first come to Flint there had been several resignations from the congregation, with other excuses offered, but obviously because I had refused to cooperate with the Zionists. Otherwise, there had been the constant pressure and the frequent sniping of the usual Zionist tactics, but no serious impairment of the congregation's life. Besides, our group promised a blood-transfusion of increased interest and support. IN SHORT, WE WERE NO LONGER TO

BE INTIMIDATED BY THE USUAL CRIES FOR UNITY AND CHARGES OF SECESSION FROM JEWISH LIFE.

We proceeded then, after these preliminaries, to the election of officers and to some attempt to formulate a program. We were ever conscious of the fact that our activity must not be only negative; a kind of religiously motivated defense organization. What was needed was education; an exploration and explanation of Jewish history to establish the legitimacy and superiority of our religiously-centered interest in Jewish life. For the root of the nationalist evil in America is ignorance; a failure to understand its methods and its goals which allows for a deft confusing of philanthropy and politics which has completely disarmed most American Jews.

Unfortunately, there must also be attack upon the perversions and distortions of Jewish life resulting from the deleterious effects of nationalism. The program must do two things. It must be a process of self-education for the anti-nationalist group, for they must become ambassadors of our view-point to the Jewish community, as individuals as well as a group, when they would be inevitably challenged by the opposition. The program must also look to public relations; to pronouncements which would be authoritatively made and publicized, as news, for both Jews and non-Jews to read; a counter-attack designed to destroy the already prevalent notion that all Jews are nationalists—a notion created and encouraged by those who issue statements in the name of ALL Jews.

So we clarified our purposes and began to work. The first, concrete task that the group undertook was the printing and distribution of copies of the statement that I had made for the debate in Flint. Enthusiastically, with the same spontaneity with which the group had first come together, the money was oversubscribed. We hope to publish ourselves or help with the publication of still other literature which we hope will be authored by men who have always seen the menace of nationalism to our hopes as religious liberals and who will now find the courage, through organization, to broadcast those fears and to re-emphasize those hopes to a confused American Jewry. We hope to bring an occasional, prominent anti-nationalist speaker to Flint and to have such men speak against nation-

alism quite as vigorously as the Zionists broadcast their viewpoint. We are hoping that positive, practical action will be taken by the non-Zionists of the nation and for the furtherance of such action we are prepared to contribute support. We are going to demand—and receive—representation, as a group, on the Executive Board of the Flint Welfare Federation, another place where anti-nationalists have been completely ignored. We hope that some day this movement will gather sufficient strength to help us investigate and explore the secularizing of Jewish life that is subsidized by the whole federation scheme and particularly how that scheme, supported so largely by non-Zionist money, fosters the political forces which a religiously-minded Israel opposes. I have been asked by some of the group to start again the series of lessons on Jewish history, which some of them have already heard. We hope perhaps to publish another pamphlet which will discuss certain pivotal events in Jewish history from a religious viewpoint. I am planning to read them as much Zionist literature as they can stand. I intend to prove to them, as I have proven for myself, that the major premise of the Zionist has been historically and still is contemporaneously, an assumption of inevitable defeat for the hopes of the Jews in the western world and therefore an assumption of defeat for the liberal world itself. I have already discussed with them some of the papers presented by Zionists in the Central Conference of American Rabbis, pointing out to them how these men invariably begin with this assumption of defeat and invariably quote the anti-Semites of history for authoritative statements about Jewish life. I want them to see that Zionism is an escapist philosophy that must lead to frustration because in the end, the Jew cannot escape even if he should try. We discussed Reinhold Niebuhr's articles for "The Nation" and they soon saw how his withdrawal from liberal, religious attitudes and his spiritual defeatism fitted into this pattern.

There is, it will be found, abundant work to be done and an abundance of material with which to do it. Bible classes and history classes and discussion groups take on added interest, for what was once only academic is related, through this group, to an immediate and urgent problem in Jewish living. Once the group was started, it generated its own interest. It moved eagerly from question to question, for the effects of nationalism

have touched every fibre of Jewish life. There need be no frantic searching on the part of the Rabbi for discussion material. For what has happened has now become clear to us. The encrusted inhibitions have been stripped from this group's interest in Jewish values. They have re-discovered the kernel of Reform Judaism. I hear them repeatedly talking of "prophetic Judaism." And all this they find as stimulating as it must have been to those who fought the battle for Reform three-quarters of a century ago. The complexion of the Western Jew has not changed! He is still not a nationalist! But we have, to this date, given him no opportunity to express himself or to meet together or test his strength together with "like-minded" fellow-Jews.

I end as I began. There is no formula that I may recommend to you for the formation of such groups. The most amazing characteristic of the Flint group was the spontaneity of its formation and I can but remind you that the same elements that made for such action must be present in every community that has had non-Zionist leadership.

One more word however, ought to be added; a word of motivation to urge you to move out into your communities and to reap the benefits and crystallize the results of the Judaism, free of nationalism, which you have taught and preached. It is a word of motivation, motivated itself, not by pride in any ideology nor by any vain desire to see tangible results of your labors, however justifiable or human those desires may be. But a word of motivation, motivated by what is now an imperative necessity in our leadership for American Israel. This organizing of laymen ought to be accomplished—and soon, because unless we establish such organizations we shall have failed in our responsibilities to those men and women who are the heart and blood of Reform—and there are more of such men and women than you or I have suspected and many more than the Zionist cares to admit. If we fail to organize these non-nationalist laymen and to make articulate our religious and universalistic viewpoint; if we fail to affirm, with visible strength, our undivided allegiances to America and our unshakable faith in the declared purposes of the United Nations; if, by remaining silent and divided, we continue to accept, by default, the segregation, the particularistic war aims for Jews

as put forth by the political nationalists among our people; if we continue on as we have, we shall fail in our responsibilities as leaders, not alone to Reform but to the whole historic past of our people and to the future of Israel as well. For it cannot be that this people has lived and suffered and triumphed over numberless tyrants simply to give testimony at last to the necessity of a tiny political state emanating its restrictive and stultifying philosophy of diaspora nationalism as the ultimate pattern of human hopes. Had this been its goal, this people would not be unique and if now, by silence, we allow this to become its goal we shall have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage.

Because of the character of the Jewish community of Flint as I have described it, there must be more non-nationalist Jews in many other communities of America than I found in my own. Everywhere, this group of Jews who have repudiated Jewish nationalism needs leadership and needs it desperately. And we, the Rabbis who have repudiated nationalism need the support that these laymen will gladly give if we hope to make our interpretation of Jewish values articulate and significant in the American scene. For these laymen need direction and leadership and we need the broad base, the wide financial support, the strength of numbers to match our convictions in any test of strength with the corroding influences of nationalism. What little the Flint group has done and hopes to do, demonstrates, I think, the efficacy of such organizations. And such organizations will meet the philosophies which we oppose upon the level of reality; testing in free, democratic technique, the strength of a tradition which has many times before triumphed over despair and hopelessness and ghetto walls.

This group of anti-nationalist Jews comprises the forgotten men of American Israel. Like other forgotten men, they are growing bitter and resentful of Jewish life. Their attitude may well be illustrated by the remark that came to me frequently in my discussions with our group in Flint. We were searching about for some national organization which might lend us support and give us status. We found that there is not a single organization in an over-organized Jewry that would touch such a group and call it blessed. Everywhere there are these frustrating compromises and endless searchings for a formula for a

unity which is either impossible or evasive. We wrote a great many letters and always came up against the same exasperating barriers. Finally, in almost wrathful resentment at the whole Jewish scene, one of the members of the group said, in language stronger than I may use here, "This is a job for the Reform Rabbinate of America. They and they alone have an unmistakable responsibility to provide such leadership in American Jewish life."

This statement was a commentary of implied dissatisfaction with this Rabbinate for having failed to provide such leadership—and it was made by a friend. It is a commentary which we ought not longer to ignore. If we do ignore it, one of two things will happen to these anti-nationalist Jews. We may lose them to Jewish life as they have been lost to other Jewries in other ages. Or their rising resentment at the relentless nationalization of Jewish life will reach into the council chambers of some existent organization or will generate some new organization in American Jewry. Without the leadership of the Rabbinate it will become another secular movement in Jewish life. As such, our own, religious hopes for Israel which lead us to opposition to nationalism, will be frustrated for such a SECULAR movement against nationalism could be only assimilationist and negative. And we will then sit and wring our hands at another opportunity lost. This would be the final, logical conclusion to our fears of nationalism, carried into reality in Jewish life because of our own failure to provide some affirmative and organized religious leadership.

It is not enough that we fight this evil, poisonous growth, belonging to nineteenth century European philosophies, as individuals or even as a group of Rabbis. It is not enough that we remain neutral while the opposition fights tooth and nail for the realization of its goal. To refuse to join the issue because it may produce a quarrel is to duplicate the short-sighted diplomacies of liberals everywhere in the world who constantly appeased because they hated war. Eventually they had to fight anyhow for between these two forces there can be no real peace. The force we resist is organized upon a national, even an international scale and it includes laymen as well as Rabbis. The burden and strain of trying to fight Zionism alone, in Flint or anywhere else, must soon end in destroying our

hopes for the task is too great. It is at least a task for a national organization. We must determine to meet it on that scale and no longer talk of "peace for our time" while we are blitzkrieged one by one.

That such efforts, organized in every community and led by men devoted to liberal Judaism must meet with success, I am convinced. In communities larger than Flint and particularly in those communities where there are more than one Reform congregation, the task of organizing such laymen groups would be unbelievably easy and the presence of such groups in the larger centers would, in turn, make it possible to develop units in smaller communities. I know, for example, that if some such national movement were started, skeptical people would then come to our group in Flint in important numbers. Through such organizations synagogued Jews, for such groups will be composed of synagogued Jews, will find as our group found that they will take their liberal Judaism with them into the realities, into the vexing problems of a troubled Jewish community. They begin to see and recognize secularism at first hand and they will join the Rabbi in the problem of attempting to combat it. Where such organization might lead eventually, I do not know. But I would not fear its destiny if the religious leaders of a liberal Judaism seize the opportunity to lead and direct and discipline it.

American Jewry knows of the beginnings that have been made to provide an answer to Jewish nationalism at the Atlantic City meetings. Unless I am much mistaken, significant numbers of that Jewry will watch now, eagerly and even anxiously to see whether or not we have the vision and courage to translate our convictions into action. Much of this community of Jews is weary, discouraged, depressed. Because of Zionist propaganda which permeates its very life through a carefully designed and efficiently organized movement, this Jewry could be nothing but weary, discouraged and depressed. For this movement feeds upon defected hopes and premises its arguments upon the doctrines of the anti-Semites of history. I hope we shall meet the challenge, which we have only acknowledged by the Atlantic City meeting and our Statement of Principles, with a vigor and a dynamism worthy of the cause we represent. I hope that through the darkening clouds of nationalistic per-

versions, our resolve to lead these undefeated, anti-nationalist Jews will burst as a warming sun. I hope we shall find the courage and the vision not merely to utter high-sounding, well-meaning platforms, essential though they may be. I hope we shall take our liberal Judaism into the teeth of this despair and confusion and in definite, positive action with the laymen of like minds who are ready for such leadership, I hope we shall cheer them with an expansive hope and say to them—and mean it—"Comfort ye! Comfort ye! my people,' ever more clearly saith thy God."

A Footnote on Events Since Atlantic City

Since the Atlantic City meeting, at which this paper was read, events have moved encouragingly in the direction of a program of action for the non-Zionists of American Jewry.

At the Atlantic City meeting, a committee for Lay-Rabbinic Cooperation was appointed. Dr. Morris S. Lazon has accepted the chairmanship. Working with him on the committee are the following Rabbis: Dr. Samuel Goldenson, Dr. William Rosenau, Dr. Louis Wolsey, Dr. William Fineshriber, Dr. Jonah B. Wise, Rabbi Hyman Schachtel, Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld, Rabbi Elmer Berger and Rabbi Irving Reichert.

The committee has had one meeting, since the Atlantic City meeting. It has prepared the final draft of a Statement of Principles and secured sufficient funds to publish that declaration in the form of a half-page advertisement in the New York Times. The statement will also be released as news to the various news agencies of the country. Pledges of funds to carry on the program have also been received from a number of sources.

Local units, such as are described in this paper have already been called together in Baltimore, by the four Baltimore Rabbis and plans for units in Philadelphia, Washington and New York are already made. The Baltimore Rabbis were most enthusiastic about the meeting which they called in that city. Reporting the results of that meeting to the Committee when it met in Philadelphia on June 22, Dr. Rosenau declared that it was among the most inspiring and impressive meetings he

had attended in his long career in the American Rabbinate. Thus, the experiences of Flint have already been duplicated in another community.

Plans are being formulated for the publication of a magazine which will articulate our view-point. The committee awaits only funds and an expansion of this movement before making available educational material which is already at hand.

None of the committee underestimates the size of the task that confronts it but with the active cooperation of sympathetic men in the Reform Rabbinate, it is also confident of success. What has already been done in these cities mentioned above indicates the practical possibilities of this plan. **YOU CAN DO THE SAME IN YOUR COMMUNITY!**