Reich Deputation of German Jews

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Reich Deputaty: Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck

With this fascist support, the leaders of the Zionist Union for Germany were able to obtain a leading position amongst the German Jews for the first time. ln the autumn of 1933, the “Reich Deputation of German Jews” founded and all large Jewish organizations including the CV and the ZVFD participated in it. The leader of the Reich Deputation was Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck in whose person the divided attitude of the Reich Deputation towards Zionism was mirrored; Baeck was at one and the same time member of the main council of the CV as well as the president of the Zionist settlement fund “Keren Hayesod” in Germany. The newly-created Reich Deputation offered the Zionist leaders broader platform for their activity.

The Reich Deputation was not, as is sometimes claimed, founded at the behest of the fascist authorities. Ball-Kaduri writes: *“So it came about that the establishment of the Reich Union took place without any interference from the State; with the establishment process completed, this was simply reported to the Reich Ministry of the Interior—the Gestapo did not show any interest at all.”26* It was only on July 4. 1939 that the ordinance regarding the compulsory establishment of the Reich Union of Jews in Germany was issued, changing the organization’s name from Deputation to Union. This ordinance made it obligatory for all Jews to become members of the Reich Union. Paragraph 2 of this ordinance also fulfilled the Zionist aims by saying: *“The Reich Union has as its goal the promotion of the emigration of all Jew.”* **27**

The higher echelons of the Nazi party allowed various kinds of political activity. In this regard, for example, the Bavarian political police noted on July 9, 1935:

The Zionist organizations have for some time been collecting donations from their members and sympathizers with the intention of promoting emigration, the buying of land in Palestine, and the gaining of support for settlement in Palestine. These collections do not require government permission as they are held in closed Jewish circles. Moreover, on the part of the state police there is no objection against these arranged meetings since they deal with such funds as are meant to promote the practical solution of the Jewish problem. **62**

After 1933, the fascists permitted the Zionists to continue with their propaganda. While all the newspapers in Germany were placed directly under the supervision of the Ministry of Propaganda (the newspapers published by the Communists or the Social Democratic Party or the track unions and other progressive organizations were banned) the Zionist Judische Rundschkau was allowed to appear unhindered.

Facists Willed the conversion of Jews to Zionism

Winfried Martini, the then correspondent in Jerusalem of the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung who, according to his own testimony, had “close personal ties with Zionism” remarked later on the “paradoxical fact” that all papers, it was the Jewish [i.e. Zionist] press that for years retained a certain degree of freedom which was completely withheld from the non-Jewish press,”**28** He added that in the Judische Rundschau there was very frequently to be found a critical view of the Nazis without this in any way leading to the banning of the paper. Only with the end of the year 1933 onwards did it lead to a ban on selling this paper to non-Jews. The Jews should, according to the wish of the fascists be converted to Zionism, even if this were done with arguments directed against the fascists. In this fashion, the circulation of this Zionist paper, which had until then been small, **29** underwent a rapid swing upwards.

That the Zionist newspaper could congratulate itself on being in the good books of the fascist leaders is understandable, when the position of the paper vis-a-vis the boycott of the Jews on April l, 1933, is considered. This organized pogrom against Jewish citizens in Germany which aroused indignation all around the world and anger and revulsion in all decent Germans was not condemned outright by the paper; rather it was evaluated as a comfirmation of Zionist views “the fatal error of many Jews that one can represent Jewish interests under another cloak is removed,” wrote the Judische Rundschau referring to the pogrom “The First of April 1933 can be a day of Jewish awakening and Jewish renaissance.”**30**

The freedom of activity for the Zionists included the publishing of books as well as the newspaper. Until 1938, many publishing houses (among others, the Judische Verlag in Berlin- Charlottenburg and the Sehochen- Verlag, Berlin) could publish Zionist literature unhindered. Thus there appeared with complete legality in fascist Germany works by Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion and Arthur Ruppin,