The Advent of Hiter

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- Only the Zionists saw some benefit in this turn of events. The first public expression of this came from the **Berlin Rabbi, Dr. Joachim Prinz**, who was a **committed Zionist** and who directly after January 30, 1933, described the **Hitler takeover as the "beginning of the Jew's return to his Judaism."** In reference to the mounting Fascist terror against the German Jews, Prinz wrote; *"No hiding place hides us any longer. Instead of assimilation, we wish for the recognition of the Jewish nation and the Jewish race."* This was definitely not the view of an isolated individual...

- Identity: Anti Zionist German Jews
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- June 21, 1933: Zionist open declaration of fascism
- Facists reward the Zionists

Identity: Anti Zionist German Jews

Identity

To the Zionist leaders, Hitler's assumption of power held out the possibility of a flow of immigrants to Palestine. Previously, the majority of German Jews, who identified themselves as Germans, had little sympathy with Zionist endeavours. German statistic, compiled prior to the assumption of power by the fascists, classified the Jewish minority only under the heading "Religious Faith," and it was left to the fascist legislators to introduce the concept "race" as a characteristic and thereby include even the long-assimilated descendants of members of the Jewish community as Jews.

According to the statistics, there lived in Germany in 1933 503,000 Jews, constituting 0.76 percent of the total population. Thirty-one percent of all German Jews lived in the capital, Berlin, where they made up 4.3 percent of the city's population. German statistics also indicate that the population of the Jews in Germany decreased in the years between 1871 and 1933 from 1.05 percent to 0.76 percent [4]

These German Jews were overwhelmingly non or anti-Zionist, and prior to 1937, the Zionist Union for Germany (Zionistische Vereinigung fur Deutschland (henceforth ZVFD) experienced great difficulty in gaining a hearing. Amongst the Jews of Germany counted in the year 1925, there were, for example, only 8,739 persons (not even 2 percent) eligible to vote in the Zionist Conventions (that is, as members of Zionist organization).[5] At the regional elections of the Jewish community in Prussia that were held in February 1925, only 26 members out of 124- elected belonged to Zionist groups.{6] A report by the Keren Hayesod submitted to the twenty-fourth session of the ZVFD in July, 1932, said: *"In the course of evaluating the Keren Hayesod work in Germany, it should never be forgotten that we in Germany have to reckon not only with the indifference of extensive Jewish circles but also with their hostility."*[7]

Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith

Thus at the time of the Hitler takeover the Zionists were a fundamentally small and insignificant minority with little influence and it was the non-Zionist organizations that played the dominant role amongst the Jews. At their head was the Centralverein deutscher Staatsburger judischen Glaubens (CV, or Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith), founded in 1893, which, as its name implies, considered German Jews as Germans and regarded its chief duty as being to combat anti-Semitism.

[3] in the book Das Leben der Juden in Deutschland Jahre 1933 (Life of the Jews in German in 1933) by Kurt Jacob Ball-Kaduri (Frankfurt am Main, 1963) are cited, among others, the following "unpublished sources" which are kept in the Yad-Vashem Archive in Jerusalem."Contributions to the history of the Haavara transfers" by Dr. Leo David" (YWA 01/277), "Negotiations with the Gestapo in Berlin about Emigration 1936-1938″ (YWA 01/130),"Leo Plaut and the Gestapo Chief Diels in Berlin in the YEARS 1933/34" (YWA 01/229), all in German.

[4] These statistics are compiled according to Esta Bennathan. "Die demographische und wirtschaftliche Struktur der Juden," Entscheidungsjahre, 1932 . Zur Judenfrage in der Weimarer Republik ("The demographic and economic structure of the Jews," The Crucial Year, 1932, Concerning the Jewish Question in the Weimar Republic), Tubinger, 1966, p. 89, 95.

[5] Dr. Alfred Wiener, Juden und Araber in Palastina (Jews and Arabs in Palestine), Berlin, p, 36

[6] According to Wiener, op. cit., 36

[7] Quoted from Kurt Lorwenstein, Die innerjudische Reaktion urf die Krise der duetschen Demokratie (The Internal Jewish Reaction to the Crisis of German Democracy), in "The Crucial Year 1932," p. 30.

Rejection of Zionism

Corresponding to this fundamental position, the CV also declared its sharp rejection of Zionism. Thus a resolution passed by the main council of the CV on April 10,1921, concluded with the words: *"If the work for settlement in Palestine were nothing more than a task of aid and assistance, then from the point of view of the Centralverein nothing would be said against the promotion of this work. However, the settlement in Palestine is in the first place an object of national Jewish policy and hence its promotion and support should be rejected."***8** Consequently, it was the CV above all which, in the years prior to Hitler's assumption of power, stood in the forefront of the progressive parties and organizations in their fight against anti-Semitism. Regarding this attitude the Jewish author Weener E. Mosse remarked: "While the leaders of the CV saw it as their special duty to represent the interests of the German Jews in the active political struggle, Zionism stood for… systematic Jewish non-participation in German public life. It rejected as a matter of principle any participation in the struggle led by the CV," **9**

The attitude of the Zionists towards the encroaching menace of fascist domination in Germany was determined by some common ideological assumptions; the fascists as well as the Zionists believed in unscientific racial theories, and both met on the sane ground in their beliefs in such mystical generalizations as "national character (Volkstum) and "race", both were chauvinistic and inclined towards "racial exclusiveness." Thus the Zionist official Gerhart Holdheim wrote in 1930 in an edition of the Suddeutsche Monatshefte, dedicated to the Jewish question(a publication in which, amongst others, leading anti-Semites aired their views): "The Zionist programme encompasses the conception of homogeneous, indivisible Jewry on a national basis. The criterion for Jewry is hence not a confession of religion, but the all-embracing sense of belonging to a racial community that is bound together by ties of blood and history and which is determined to keep its national individuality."**10** That was the same language, the same phraseology, as the fascists used. No wonder then that the German fascists welcomed the conceptions of the Zionists, with Alfred Rosenberg, the chief ideologue of the Nazi party, writing: "Zionism must be vigorously supported so that a certain number of German Jews is transported annually to Palestine or at least made to leave the country,"**11** With an eye on such statements, Hans Lamm later wrote: "..it is indisputable that during the first stages of their Jewish policy, the National Socialists thought it proper to adopt a pro-Zionist attitude:"**I2**

Hitler-Push: Anti-Zionist Jews to the arms of Zionism

With considerable perspicacity the CV remarked that the recognition by the Zionists of "certain postulates of the German nationalists" provided the anti-Semites with ammunition, and in a declaration of policy made by the CV, there was even talk of Zionism having dealt the movement a "stab in the back" in the struggle against fascism.**13** But the Zionists saw that only the anti-Semitic Hitler was likely to push anti-Zionist German Jews into the arms of Zionism. Robert Weltsch who was then editor-in-chief of the German Zionist paper, Judische Rundschau, declared on January 8, 1933 (three weeks after Hitler's assumption of power) during the meeting of the local ZVFD Council. "The anti-liberal character of German nationalism [i.e., the reactionary tendencies of the German bourgeoisie — K.P.] meet with the anti-liberal position of Zionism and here we are faced with the chance of finding, not a basis for understanding but one for discussion." **14**

The call to Hitler on January 30, 1933 to become the head of government was followed by the take-over of all positions of authority by the National Socialist Party, which meant that sworn anti-Semites were now in power. The German Jews contemplated these happenings with deep misgivings, for the programme of the Nazi party included the demand to strip the Jews of citizenship (Point 5) and the removal of all Jews from public offices (Point 6) as well as the expulsion all the Jews who had emigrated to Germany after August 2, 1914 (Point 8). Only the Zionists saw some benefit in this turn of events. (The British historian Christopher Sykes, certainly no anti-Zionist, gives as his opinion "that the Zionist leaders were determined at the very out-set of the Nazi disaster to reap political advantage from the tragedy".**15** The first public expression of this came from the Berlin Rabbi, Dr. Joachim Prinz, who was a committed Zionist and who directly after January 30, 1933, described the Hitler takeover as the "beginning of the Jew's return to his Judaism."**16** In reference to the mounting Fascist terror against the German Jews, Prinz wrote; *"No hiding place hides us any longer. Instead of assimilation, we wish for the recognition of the Jewish nation and the Jewish race."***17** This was definitely not the view of an isolated individual. The Judische Rundschau, the official organ of the ZVFD, wrote on June 13, 1933:

Zionism recognizes the existence of the Jewish question and wants to solve it in a generous and constructive manner. For this purpose, it wants to enlist the aid of all peoples; those who are friendly to the Jews as well as those who are hostile to them, since according to its **59** *conception, this is not a question of sentimentality, but one dealing with a real problem in whose solution all peoples are interested."* **18**

> By employing this argument, Zionism was adopting the same political line as the fascists.

June 21, 1933: Zionist open declaration of fascism

On June 21,1933, there was finally an official Zionist declaration of policy regarding the fascist takeover of power: *"The Declaration of the Zionist Union for Germany in Reference to the Position of the Jews in the New Germany,"* In one section of this extensive document, it was emphasized that *"In our opinion one or the principles of the new German state of national exaltation would make a suitable solution possible."***19** The ZVFD, in its document, then cast a historic glance back at the position of the Jews in Germany, using such fascist terms as "ties of blood and race" and exactly like Hitler, postulating a "special soul" for the Jews. Then the Zionists stated: *"For the Jew, too, origin, religion, common destiny and self-consciousness must be of crucial significance in shaping his life. This calls for the surmounting of the egoistical individualism that arose in the liberal age, and this should be achieved through the acquisition of a sense of common unity and a joyful assumption of responsibility."***20**

After this avowal and reiteration of fascist theses there followed open recognition of the fascist state: *"On the soil of the new state (i.e. fascist Germany), which drew up the race principle, we want to arrange the whole structure of our community in such a way, that for us, too, a fruitful application for the fatherland can be made possible in the sphere allotted to us."***21** In conclusion, the Zionists condemned the struggle against the Hitler regime of the anti-fascist forces, which in the spring of 1933 had called for an economic boycott against Nazi Germany. *"The boycott propaganda which they are making against Germany is in its very nature un-Zionist, since Zionism does not want to fight, but to persuade and to build,"* **22**

In order to grasp the full significance of this declaration by the ZVFD. **60**

one must again remember what had preceded it. The persecution of the Jews had already started and reached its first climax in a big pogrom on April 1, 1933, that encompassed all Germany. In the first days of March 1933, German Jewish citizens were mistreated in German cities for example, Jewish shops in Brunswick were ransacked on March 11, 1933, and on March 13, Jewish lawyers were manhandled in front of the Hall of Justice in Breslau). The fascist authorities issued the "Law for the Restoration of the Character of Vocational Professions," which, amongst other things, led to the removal of 2,000 Jewish scientists and scholars from German universities. The Eighteenth Zionist Congress, which convened in the summer of 1933, was nevertheless cool about this when, during the session of the Zionist Congress taking place on August 24, 1933, the position of the German Jews was to be discussed, the Congress Presidium moved to prevent the discussion.**23** It also strenuously and successfully attempted to prevent the introduction of a resolution calling for the boycott of German goods, and placed great emphasis instead on the need to arrange the emigration of the German Jews. Protests against the events in Germany were kept to an absolute minimum..

Facists reward the Zionists

The fascists rewarded the Zionists for their “restraint” and allowed the ZVFD to go on with its work unhindered. (This was at a time when all democratic and anti-fascist parties and organizations in Germany were subject to the most rigorous persecution, with their officials and members behind bars in prisons and concentration camps). At the same time, the fascists placed all kinds of obstacles in the path of the non-Zionist organizations. These hindrances struck at the CV above all, for prior to 1933, the fascists had already seen the CV as “their chief Jewish opponents,” is indicated by numerous examples from the Nazi press.**24** The CV had always charged the Zionists with showing little interest in the “struggle [against fascism] … and that [Zionism] followed policy of indifference [in the face of the encroaching fascist danger] because it did not feel itself involved.”**25**

On March 1, 1933 the SA fascist terror troops occupied the central office of the CV and closed it. On March 5, 1933, the CV in Thuringia was banned because of “high treasonous intrigue”. At the same time, **61** the Nazi state turned against other non-Zionist Jewish organizations, which, like the “Reich League of Jewish Veterans,” for instance, represented a Jewish German nationalist position. Also banned was the “Union of National German Jews.”