

# 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 für 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 Staatsbürger jüdischen 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 innerjüdische Reaktion urf die Krise der duetschen Demokratie* (The Internal Jewish Reaction to the Crisis of German Democracy), in “*The Crucial Year 1932,*” p. 30.

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