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Jewish Resistance in Germany
The Facts and the Problems
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After the destruction of European Jewry, the image of the Jews as defenceless victims was widely accepted for many years. The fact that millions of innocent, helpless human beings were driven to their deaths is now disputed only by a minority of neo-Nazi pseudo-historians. However, the view that this horror occurred everywhere without Jewish resistance is – pace Bruno Bettelheim – a falsehood which has been convincingly refuted by authoritative sources. Thus, although my theme covers Jewish resistance in Germany, it is also essential to glance at the part played by the Jews in the military defeat of National Socialist Germany.¹

In the course of internal controversies between German historians, a certain Berlin professor has argued that world Jewry declared war on Nazi Germany in 1939.² I had always thought it was the other way round; but whatever the truth of the matter, the state of war existed and it is certain that more than 1500000 Jewish men (and many women) fought in the armies of the anti-Fascist alliance, 1200000 of them in the Red Army and the armed forces of the United States and Great Britain.³ Leaving aside the territories which were quickly overrun by Hitler, and taking into account the fact that in Palestine a proportion of the men had to stay behind to protect the threatened Yishuv**, it is clear that almost all Jews who were capable of bearing arms came forward, wherever they could, to fulfil a duty which was also a Jewish one. Hundreds of thousands volunteered for service in regular armies. Others fought in the partisan units of every European country. Even beforehand, in the International Brigades in Spain, more than fifteen percent of the 45000 Brigadists were Jews.⁴ This brief description serves to reveal the extent of Jewish involvement in the struggle against Nazi Germany and Fascism.

Within Germany itself there was virtually no armed resistance of any sort, and thus no armed Jewish resistance either. In these circumstances, only a lunatic could reproach the Jews for not embarking on desperate military adventurism under the National Socialist dictatorship. It is not necessary to waste any time on fatuous arguments of that kind. However, German Jews could certainly take up the struggle

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* The English version is based on the revised text of a lecture given on 3 November 1988 in the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, Berlin. For this revised and extended version the author received many letters and suggestions; regrettably, for reasons of space, only some of these can be taken into account here.

** Yishuv – name for the entire Jewish settlement or inhabitants of what was then Palestine and is now the state of Israel.
against Nazi Germany after their emigration — and a great many of them did so. Tens of thousands served in the Allied armies. Moreover, the fact that they came from Germany made many of them particularly suitable for dangerous and secret operations. In this connection too, it should not be forgotten that young Jews from Germany were among the first to volunteer for the International Brigades in 1936. Hundreds fought for the freedom of the Spanish people, among them doctors, airmen and generals; they included an entire group of young Jews which went from Holland to Spain. Later, activists of the Jewish resistance escaped from Germany and gravitated to the underground movements of the occupied countries. There they joined many other German-Jewish refugees who had become involved earlier. German Jews were in the French Maquis, the Belgian and Dutch resistance, the Garibaldi and Matteotti Brigades of Northern Italy, and with Tito’s partisans. Particularly in the case of the German Jews, there is a close connection between readiness to resist and readiness to fight. An entire generation of German Jews fought on all fronts against Fascism.

Alongside the falsehood of Jewish non-resistance stands the belief that in 1933 a completely unsuspecting Jewry was simply taken unawares by its implacable enemies. This view is maintained even today, despite the fact that there is now a comprehensive literature which documents the opposite. Here, of course, I know that I am pleading my own cause, since I have been working on this Jewish defence for twenty-five years. At any rate, it is proven that Jewish organisations put up bitter opposition to the Nazis in the years before the Nazi takeover and developed a camouflaged (disguised) propaganda campaign in support of the democratic parties against the overall programme of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP). Because it had to be disguised, German historians pay little attention to it even today. Of course, in this overall struggle against the NSDAP, tactical considerations played an important role. Jewish functionaries were well aware that, for pragmatic reasons, the party was playing down its antisemitism on the way to power, although they knew that the Jews could expect no mercy after a Nazi victory. This does not alter our recognition of the fact that, as early as 1930, even representatives of the bourgeois Jewish community had clearly realised that for Jews the only possible course of action was a total repudiation of Fascism.

Such conduct, of course, cannot be equated with resistance to a Fascist dictatorship despite the links between subsequent resistance and Jewish self-defence in a Germany which was still free. After the National Socialist takeover, any possibility of continuing these forms of democratic defence rapidly disappeared. Instead we must focus our investigation on two main areas: firstly, on the possibilities which remained open to the representatives of German Jewry in their efforts to defy persecution by a totalitarian dictatorship, and on the constraints imposed upon their actions; and secondly, on the political resistance of Jewish anti-Fascists in the underground and the problems this posed for the Jewish community.

Until 1970, illegal anti-Fascist Jewish resistance was virtually ignored by German-Jewish historiography. Sadly there was resistance to resistance — and I cannot exempt my own Leo Baeck Institute from this reproach. At least in part, the omission is connected with a certain reluctance to subject Jewish modes of conduct under the
National Socialist regime to critical analysis. Historical investigation thus concentrated initially on the “Aufbau im Untergang”, that is to say on areas of constructive Jewish achievement at the time of the Nazi persecutions. It is essential to understand and respect the restraints and difficulties which applied here. Some of the founders of the first German-Jewish historical institute of the post-war years were functionaries who had themselves been involved in these events. The relations between the “unfree” Jewish officials and the representatives and henchmen of the Nazi rulers were complex and can give rise to many mistaken interpretations. In my opinion, unnecessary timidity has too often left the field open to unqualified persons and their travesties of history. As a result, caricatures of Jewish conduct have been created which, unfortunately, are still circulating even today. To deal with “Aufbau im Untergang” was simply not enough. The sins of omission are also a result of the fact that political resistance to Fascism was undertaken by a youthful minority which was only loosely connected with the established Jewish community. For that reason too it was often just ignored by older Jewish historians.

A fundamental change took place when a younger generation of Jewish and non-Jewish specialist historians entered the field of German-Jewish historiography. The reorientation began in 1970 and led to the establishment of a considerable literature. Whilst this rightly celebrated the courage and achievements of the Jewish resistance, the reaction to earlier neglect produced its own blanket judgements, ranging from that of helplessness and passivity to the myth of collaboration by the official Jewish representation. This exaggerated division of Jews into heroes and weaklings is both inappropriate and questionable. Consequently, the standard work by Konrad Kwiet and Helmut Eschwege on the Jewish resistance sets out to provide a comprehensive description of all forms of Jewish opposition to the National Socialist dictatorship. For my own part, I also believe that in an assessment of the Jewish resistance the theme should not be restricted to political, anti-Fascist work.

It is an utter delusion to believe that anything resembling direct political resistance could have been embarked upon by the Jews as a group, the Jewish religious community as such, or the Jewish elite as the representatives of the German Jews. Political conditions made such a course of action impossible: Germany had been subjected to ruthless Gleichschaltung (the forcing of political and social organisations into line), and the country’s democratic movements and institutions had either failed lamentably or had been brutally destroyed. Some Jewish activity was officially tolerated, such as cultural work; and though this was later aptly described as a form of “spiritual resistance”, it cannot of course be regarded as active resistance against the Fascist regime. Yet alongside this activity there were many forms of Jewish evasion of compliance with state measures. Some of these genuinely bordered on political resistance. Moreover, the open protests and appeals to the National Socialist authorities and the national government reveal a vocabulary which is quite remarkable considering that it was used by the representatives of a defenceless minority. Beyond “Aufbau im Untergang” there is a whole chapter of admirable Jewish self-assertion in Germany under the Nazis.

It was as a result of the Nazi persecutions that Jews streamed back into the synagogues. To the rabbis fell the task of giving the community moral strength in difficult
times, and many acquitted themselves with great distinction. In the presence of the Geheime Staatspolizei (Gestapo) and other informers, rabbis even dared to preach – either openly or indirectly – against the measures of the regime. Names beginning with the initial "H" often seem fateful in Jewish history – vide the figures of Hitler, Hess, Himmler and Heydrich first and foremost amongst all the other scoundrels. The communities knew only too well what was meant by Haman and other such allusions. In the aftermath of the Nuremberg Laws, the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden (the representative body of the German Jews) dispatched a "Kol-Nidre prayer"* to be read from the pulpit of every German synagogue. This honourable protest – the text cannot be interpreted in any other way – was proscribed by the Gestapo and Leo Baeck and Otto Hirsch, President and Director of the Reichsvertretung, were arrested.15 Many other examples could be cited. I myself remember sitting in a Berlin synagogue and hearing a rabbi – I cannot give his name with absolute certainty today – change the traditional prayer for the beloved fatherland and the rule of justice which there may reign. Reflecting the fact that justice no longer existed in the Third Reich, the rabbi instead said the prayer roughly as follows:16

"Lord of the world, Father of all men. We ask you for your protection for all those countries in which Jews may go about their work free and unmolested."

That too is courage! That too is resistance!

Equally, it would be unjust to ignore the ways in which the Jewish press sought to resist a regime of oppression. The theme is extremely complex. For six years – until they were banned – Jewish newspapers had a special role to play in Germany. Though it was always closely monitored and restricted, the Jewish press enjoyed a limited freedom – a kind of foot's licence – in the Third Reich. The "inferior race", placed outside the German Volksgemeinschaft, was even permitted to espouse humanism and liberalism so long as it was kept within certain bounds and was not pronouncedly hostile to the state. Yet the study of this supervised Jewish press reveals a number of interesting points. Reading between the lines – which contemporary Jewish readers knew was essential – it is possible to detect numerous examples of disguised protest against state antisemitism and the measures associated with it. Moreover, Jewish editors and journalists took considerable risks by issuing open polemics against state propaganda which degraded Jews to the level of subhumans; these were followed with bans on newspapers and more serious punishments. This was a form of Jewish self-assertion under a ruthless dictatorship which must certainly be recognised as a contribution to resistance.17

So much on some features of Jewish self-assertion in the pre-war period.

One particular contribution of Israeli historians has been to confirm the will to opposition of those who were persistently decried as "assimilationists" in internal Jewish arguments. In their reconstruction of the archives of the Reichsvertretung/Reichsvereinigung, Otto Dov Kulka and Esriel Hildesheimer will demonstrate how many efforts were made to circumvent orders from the Gestapo and to distribute illegal

* Prayer which begins the religious service on the evening of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).
material, especially after the November pogrom in 1938. An article in the SS newspaper "Schwarzes Korps", predicting every stage of the Final Solution, was secretly mimeographed by the Reichsvertretung in December 1938 and distributed among the Jews of Germany. Protests were made against the first deportations and there were vain endeavours to prevent or obstruct them. These many courageous actions will be impressively documented in a forthcoming study.18

I have already explained why a militant anti-Fascist resistance was completely impossible for the Jewish community in Germany and why opposition took the forms it did. Like the overwhelming majority of German Jews, the Reichsvertretung repudiated the anti-Fascist underground activity of Jewish youths, where it took note of it at all. Officially the Reichsvertretung simply ignored such activity, at least until the outbreak of war, and later it sought to curb or contain it. There were a number of reasons for such an approach:

1. The Jewish community was completely isolated and utterly defenceless. In this respect it occupied a special position with which no "German" group could be compared. Jewish communities in their entirety were hostages against the good behaviour of individuals; later in the war, it is they who were made to pay the price for the conduct of their young people. (Previously, the Reichsausschuss der jüdischen Jugendverbände, the representative central body of all the Jewish youth associations, had been their guarantor vis-à-vis the National Socialist authorities.)

As many Berliners are now aware, 500 Jews were arrested in retaliation for the attack by the Baum group on the Nazi propaganda exhibition "Das Sowjetparadies" (Soviet Paradise) in Berlin's Lustgarten. Half of them were shot immediately by the SS and the remaining 250 were later "liquidated" in the Sachsenhausen Konzentrationslager (concentration camp). Jewish functionaries had made a futile attempt to put a stop to this action by the Baum group.19 It was in its Communist-Jewish combination not precisely a brilliant idea.20 Moreover, from the point of view of an overall anti-Fascist strategy, the action should be regarded as a major tactical mistake. It would have been more appropriate for a Jewish group to have blown up Julius Streicher's "Stürmer" newspaper, although of course such advice is easy to give with hindsight and an action of that type may well have been impossible at the time. In any case, some group members themselves had opposed the attack. (They withdrew from the operation in time and are among the few survivors of the Baum group.)21

Since Germany's remaining Jewish leaders could not be certain in 1942 that all Jews were already under sentence of death, their critical approach is understandable. This does not diminish our admiration for the heroism of these young Jews, almost all of whom were executed in Berlin in 1942 and 1943.

2. Anti-Fascist activism was mostly undertaken by Jewish youths whose chief loyalty was to the German workers' movement rather than the Jewish community, although gradually a more Jewish orientation began to emerge. Many of these young Socialists and Communists were agnostics or atheists and might be described as "peripheral Jews" (Randjuden). The German Jews, on the other hand, formed a community which was generally liberal in religious and political matters.
3. The main contingent of the Jewish resistance was composed of young Communists. At first they stood completely outside the Jewish community, ninety-five percent of whose members had rejected Communism in the Weimar Republic and could certainly not be won over by any appeals for a revolutionary transformation of the existing order of society. It was the Communists more than others who infiltrated the Jewish youth groups and used them for their own ends.

4. Finally, it is essential to examine the overall nature of Communist Party (KPD) propaganda in Nazi Germany. During the Weimar Republic the KPD had developed its own hackneyed and stereotyped treatment of the “Jewish question”. This approach was maintained, at least until the so-called Kristallnacht and the pogrom of 1938. (The situation improved later.) In addition, Jewish and non-Jewish underground fighters alike were forced to swallow the Moscow Party line until well after the Nazi-Soviet pact, which posed a particular problem for the Jewish comrades. At any rate, Communist propaganda continued the stereotypes of the Weimar period for some six years. Its approach involved drumming anti-Zionism into Jews and non-Jews as a matter of course. However, I have no wish to exaggerate the significance of this factor, since most German Jews had not become Zionists even during the Nazi dictatorship. Moreover, not even the Communists could surpass the anti-Zionism displayed by the Association of German National Jews (Verband nationaldeutscher Juden) or that of the veterans’ organisation, the Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten. More deplorable was the eager KPD exploitation, for propaganda purposes, of clumsy and dangerous variants on slogans such as “whether he’s Jew or Christian, a capitalist is a capitalist”. These were maintained until there were finally no Jewish capitalists left in Germany.22

Such circumstances must increase our understanding of the problems facing the official representatives of German Jewry and the many reservations they were bound to hold. It is precisely the propaganda of the KPD which must be examined under the microscope. Despite its grotesque bad taste, this may have been comprehensible in the Weimar Republic for tactical reasons; under National Socialist rule, however, it could scarcely have been acceptable to a single Jew. All this must be said and naturally enough, it will diminish somewhat our appreciation of this anti-Fascist Jewish activity. On the other hand – and it should never be forgotten – after the Kristallnacht the Communist underground press demonstrated exemplary solidarity with the persecuted Jewish population. “Against the disgrace of the Jewish pogroms!” ran the headlines of the “Rote Fahne” (Red Flag), the party paper pushed under the doors in the working-class districts of Berlin during the nights of November 1938. Furthermore, though critical examination of the Jewish issue in Communist propaganda is necessary, I have no desire to give succour to those who dispute the anti-Fascist merits of a “non-democratic” KPD after the event. Admittedly, the conspiratorial structure of the Party and the often reckless sacrifice of cadres fitted it best for fighting within a totalitarian state. If alone on account of the enormous sacrifices they made, the Communists are and will remain the heroes of the German resistance.

The Jewish youth movement was a particularly favourable seedbed for promoting an anti-Fascist spirit and developing anti-Nazi activity. On the other hand, it would be totally inaccurate to claim that this was in any way its main purpose. The Jewish youth
organisations reflected every trend within Jewry in their outlook. They ranged from the German-orientated “Schwarzes Fähnlein”; and the Vortrupp, which was pronouncedly right-wing, almost Fascist, in terms of German politics, through the right-wing Zionist Betar, to the extreme left. Most of them were either Jewish-liberal or Socialist-Zionist in outlook. However, the Zionist youth movements were constantly increasing in strength and the work of preparing young Jews for emigration to Palestine began to play an ever larger role.

Though the Jewish youth movement has been the subject of detailed research, aspects for which there is no documentary evidence have inevitably been omitted. In addition, such imponderables as moods and mentality remain very difficult to document. Besides, the Jewish youth movement had a number of other outstanding features. It led a unique existence in the Third Reich; in a society otherwise subjected to Gleichschaltung, all the traditions of the German youth movements lived on within it, those of the elite Pfadfinder (scout) groups as well as the Socialist youth associations. Into these movements flowed many groups of young Jews who had belonged to the disbanded German youth organisations or the youth associations of the left-wing parties. However, their “German” past was not so easily shaken off. Yet despite the leadership cults and other authoritarian tendencies also deriving from the German environment, the Jewish youth groups provided an oasis of free thinking in totalitarian Germany for a number of years, until they were banned. The strongly Socialist orientation of many of the Zionist youth groups, dating from the Weimar Republic, must be stressed once again. Though these aims were not espoused by all of the Jewish youth movement, it is true to say that many thousands of young people received not only a Jewish and Zionist education within it but many – and this under the very noses of the Gestapo – a Socialist and anti-Fascist education as well.

These tendencies were also vigorously expressed in the movements’s repertoire of songs, which were “Jewish” whilst also remaining “German”. Landsknecht (lansquenet) and peasant songs continued to be sung, with contemporary amendments where appropriate. For example, I recall that the line “auf die Reichskanzlei die rote Fahn” was sung in place of “Setzt aufs Klosterdach den roten Hahn” (a rough approximation in English might be replacing “Red flames! Burn down the abbey walls” with “Red banners! Hoist in Hitler’s halls”). Also popular were the songs of the German workers’ movement, from “Brothers to the sun, to freedom” to the most revolutionary anthems. The “Internationale”, of course; it was sung, on principle, only in Hebrew in the Zionist-Socialist youth groups. The emotive power of songs should not be under estimated and helped to encourage a conscious anti-Nazism which went way beyond reaction to our fate as Jews. In 1936 – during the attack by Fascist Italy on Abyssinia – my own Werkleute youth group sang a song of Abyssinia in quasi-Italian, containing the following verse:

“Adrigat, Djibouti, Adua
Ras Nasibu, Graziano
La vittoria in Addis Abeba
Morte peste Badoglio.”

* Betar = Brith Trumpeldor – named after the Zionist leader and pioneer Josef Trumpeldor.
Its author was the youth leader Fritz Aronstein, later head of a school in Israel. He was also (in a rather curious combination) co-editor of the Zionist *Hechaluz* anthology "Israel–Volk und Land". Later we took the song with us to the youth village of Ben Shemen in Palestine, where a much more radical Hebrew version emerged.24 Only a few months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the formation of the International Brigades, young Jews in Germany were singing (perhaps softly) to their guitars:

"Spaniens Himmel breitet seine Sterne
über unseren Schützengräben aus."
("Spain’s heaven shines its stars
Above our trenches.")

and

"Zu den Waffen, Arbeiter Europas,
zu den Waffen, Bürger von Madrid."
("To arms, workers of Europe
To arms, citizens of Madrid.")

Such was the spirit which could be encountered within sections of the Jewish youth movement.25

As far as the Zionist youth groups are concerned – including much of the *Werkleute*, the *Haschomer Haszair***, the *Habonim*** and the *Borochov-Jugend**** – we were indoctrinated roughly along the following lines. Of course, we sympathised with the illegal anti-Fascist struggle of the German working class, but this was no longer our task because we were no longer Germans. Our cause was now to emigrate to Palestine and establish a Socialist *Eretz Israel*****: There were, however, those who thought that the one need not necessarily preclude the other.

And there is more than enough evidence of anti-Nazi propaganda from Jewish youth groups, however sporadic. Naturally much of it emanated from Communists and Socialists who had infiltrated the Jewish youth movement, but there were other, independent actions.26 I recall myself at the age of fifteen being innocently and rather unwisely equipped with anti-Hitler stickers and thus, it would seem, being "recruited". Today, I can only try to account for this youthful zeal and the motives which must have inspired me.27 In any case, there is no need for further explanation of the fact that camouflaged Communist and other left-wing groups could operate in the Jewish youth movement; and there are, of course, distinct parallels to illegal work within the Hitler Youth.

One particular problem surrounded every political act of resistance by German-Jewish anti-Fascist activists: as their self-sacrifice testifies, they were uniquely

* *Hechaluz* = The Pioneer – world Jewish organisation aiming to prepare and give vocational training to young Jews for a worker’s life in Palestine.

** *Haschomer Haszair* = Young Watchman – Zionist left-wing Socialist youth movement.

*** *Habonim* = Socialist-Zionist youth movement.

**** *Borochov-Jugend* = Youth group named after the Zionist-Socialist politician Ber (Dov) Borochov.

***** *Eretz Israel* = Land of Israel.
endangered as Jews. Moreover, because of the increasing isolation of the Jewish population, they also brought their German comrades into more danger. After the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, it therefore became Communist Party policy to keep Jewish resistance cells separate. Young Jewish Communists followed Party instructions by joining Jewish organisations, while their non-Jewish comrades attached themselves to German groups. Nor were the Communists the only ones to adopt this as systematic policy. Entry into Jewish organisations served two purposes: firstly that of concealment, and secondly the recruitment of young Jews for anti-Fascist propaganda. There is extensive testimony for this infiltration of Jewish youth and sporting organizations. If we name here the Ring-Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend, the Schwarzer Haufen, the Werkleute, the Haschomer Hazair, the Habonim, the Makkabi* and Bar Kochba**, we have not exhausted the list. There is no lack of evidence that “Anti-Fascist” cells also existed in the Schwarzes Fähnlein. Probably, apart from Vortrupp and Betar (the non-Zionist and Zionist Jewish right), the only Jewish youth associations to “escape” this infiltration were those which adhered strictly to Jewish religious laws, Orthodox youth groups into which secular or a-religious Jews could not integrate for obvious practical reasons. Particularly subject to infiltration was the non-Zionist Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend; as late as 1988 its former Bundesführer (leader), now resident in the United States expressed his indignation at the idea of such activity and assured us that he had not suspected its existence. The truth is that there were hundreds of Jewish boys and girls who chose to lead a double life of some sort during the Third Reich.

Some years ago, historians of the resistance of German Jews to the National Socialist dictatorship calculated that about 2000 German Jews, mainly young people, must have been active in the direct anti-Fascist underground at various times (it is possible to detect “waves” of activity in this respect). Bearing in mind that the Jewish population fell from 550,000 in January 1933 to 200,000 on the outbreak of war in September 1939, that Jewish total would correspond to a mass movement of between 600,000 and 700,000 German anti-Fascists. As we are all aware, no such non-Jewish mass movement existed, and this should give us some cause for reflection. Thus there existed a significant Jewish anti-Fascist fighting force, and I suspect that the estimates of its size have been too low. The resistance research of recent years gives a clear indication of this. Hundreds of Jewish activists were arrested during the discovery and destruction of resistance groups, and many continued their work even in the concentration camps. In the Communist resistance, the proportion of Jews appears to have been considerably larger than was previously thought. There were Jewish comrades in cells throughout the other left-wing resistance groups from the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) and Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (SAP) to the Kommunistische Partei Opposition (KPO) and the Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund. Moreover, the ideologists and organisers of the biggest Social Democratic resistance movement Neu Beginnen (New Beginning) were Jews. Only recently has more attention been paid to the

* Makkabi = Deutscher Makkabikreis – member of the Maccabi World Association of Jewish Sporting Clubs.
** Bar Kochba = Sporting club named after Bar Kochba – son of the stars – Messianic name given to Simon bar Koseba.
participation of Jews in the resistance of the Liberals, though this should not come as any surprise. (The relationship of some "more conservative" leading Jews with the emerging Conservative German resistance seems to me to be more problematic, but must also be mentioned in this context.) Even the Hamburg group of the Weisse Rose (White Rose) had Jewish members. Details of numerous individual manifestations of resistance have been recorded and we have reliable information about the activity of independent Jewish groups. It is therefore clear that there was in Germany a highly impressive Jewish resistance to National Socialism.\textsuperscript{37}

In recent years, the individual acts of the German-Jewish resistance have aroused increasing interest and have become themes of academic research and political journalism. Within the framework of this short paper, I must restrict myself to giving a few examples. The Herbert Baum group, as the biggest Jewish resistance organisation, has been the subject of many studies. Almost all of these deal only with the war years. Recently, however, a great deal of information about its earlier activities has been uncovered, including its operation within the Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend until 1938. This has been the work of a tenacious young American author eager to honour Jewish anti-Fascism. He based his research on personal accounts from former members of the group who had managed – sometimes with help from Baum – to emigrate to the United States before the outbreak of war. These erstwhile Jewish anti-Fascists and present-day American citizens are now only too happy to give interviews, though they could scarcely have offered their recollections in a McCarthyite America. The 32nd volume of the "Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute" provides detailed information about the lives of these Jewish boys and girls in Nazi Germany and their inventive efforts to distribute leaflets (for example, against "Hitler, Germany’s gravedigger") in 1934 and 1936.\textsuperscript{38}

One other notable resistance group was rounded up by the Gestapo in 1936. Though not a separately organised Jewish cell of the Communist underground movement, it still deserves to be described as Jewish since it had emerged from a largely Jewish KPD Agitprop troop of the Weimar Republic. Alongside "Kolonne Links" and "Roter Wedding", the "Rote Sprachrohr" (Red Megaphone) was the most famous propaganda choir in the KPD. Immediately after the ban on the Party its members organised illegally under the leadership of Jonny Hüttner, alias Nathan Hirschtritt. Hüttner, whose family came from the Berlin Eastern Jewish proletariat, joined the Werkleute for camouflage purposes, later survived the concentration camps, and is remembered as the ringleader of a revolt in Sachsenhausen. His sister Helene Hüttner was arrested at the same time and also survived. Today she is married to an Englishman who was a doctor in the Clement Attlee Battalion of the International Brigades and has recently written the history of the group.\textsuperscript{39}

In Breslau, a KPO group which had emerged from one of the major Jewish youth movements, the Kameraden, survived until 1937. When the Kameraden divided into Zionists, non-Zionists and Communists, one section of the Breslau Freie Deutsch-Jüdische Jugend (Free German-Jewish Youth) chose not to join the union with the Stalinist Communist Party. Instead it participated for four years in the illegal work of the KPO, which was destroyed across the whole of Germany by the Gestapo in 1937. The moving story of the young Breslau anti-Fascist Helga Beyer has recently been
published: active in the underground between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, she was arrested in 1937 and died in Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1942. Her story may serve as an example of the many Jewish resistance groups which operated outside the KPD.40

Finally, I would like to draw attention to another illegal group which — as far as we can deduce from the names of its members — can be described as an anti-Fascist Jewish girls’ group in Berlin. This, too, developed from within the Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend. For ideological reasons these girls did not join the Baum group, apparently because they did not accept its Communist objectives. Their commander, Eva Mamlok, had already been caught distributing anti-Fascist propaganda before the war. Like so many other Jews the members of the group were made to do forced labour in the years 1939 till 1941, when they concentrated on disseminating anti-war propaganda. They were denounced in September 1941, put on trial for corrupting the military strength of the German people, and sentenced to death. In fact, the death sentences were not carried out, as a result of the bribing of German officials, and the girls were instead deported to Riga. With only one exception, these courageous and honourable young women were destroyed in the concentration camps of the East. The sole survivor of the group, Inge Gerson-Berner, contacted me at the Leo Baeck Institute in 1971 in order to bear witness. It is only as a result of her testimony that names such as Eva Mamlok and Inge Levinson have not been completely forgotten.41

At this point it is necessary to say a few words about the concept of “bearing witness”. Historians raise justified objections to reconstructions which are based solely on the memories of participants or the testimony of witnesses. Where resistance groups were not arrested and liquidated by the Gestapo, documentary evidence such as treason trials and death sentences are just not available. This certainly creates a historiographical problem and makes some reservations inevitable. Nevertheless, most of us who are concerned with the history of the resistance have found eye witness accounts (which can be compared one with another) to be relatively reliable.

These examples of the anti-Fascist activity of young German Jews must suffice to indicate the deeds of many more. Lack of space unfortunately makes it impossible for me to detail the many other forms of resistance — sabotage, involvement in assassination attempts, helping Allied prisoners-of-war to escape,42 continuation of the struggle in concentration camps and even participation in uprisings there. Instead, readers are directed to the extensive literature of the resistance.

In this short survey I have — apart from giving some essential facts — attempted to explain the problems of a Jewish resistance in Germany. The question of how to distinguish between “resistance by Jews” and “Jewish resistance” cannot be dealt with in detail here, but my remarks should be understood as a contribution to clarifying the issue. I have also tried to show why it is not appropriate for Jewish historians to restrict themselves to the political anti-Nazi activity of young Jewish anti-Fascists; all forms of Jewish opposition, Jewish self-assertion, Jewish protest and Jewish rejection must be taken into account if historians are to do justice to the extraordinary position of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Of course it is my own view — strengthened by personal conviction and the memory of many friends — that the Jewish men and
women of the political anti-Fascist resistance have a special place of honour in the history of Germany and the German Jews. Nevertheless, it remains true that the courageous conduct of many representatives and officials of the Jewish community is deserving of the highest praise. Many of these people, too, paid for this commitment with their lives.43

For this aspect of Jewish life in Germany, for research into resistance as in other areas, adherence to the Jewish religious community and even an avowal of Jewish nationhood cannot be the sole yardstick of judgement. As Jewish historians, all of us — some hesitantly, others even with reluctance — have come to accept that academic research into the history of German Jewry must include all those who came from Jewry, who suffered the Jewish fate, or who were regarded as Jews by the outside world. It is also quite clear from the recollections of survivors that specifically Jewish motives became more significant even among anti-Fascist atheists.44 In any case, not even the self-perception of the actors in this often terrible drama can be the yardstick. Official representatives of Jewry certainly tried to prevent or sabotage Gestapo measures, but they would scarcely have described themselves as anti-Fascists. On the other hand, the boys and girls of the Baum group, along with members of many other Jewish cells in the anti-Fascist resistance, felt an affinity with the German workers and did not identify themselves as Jews in any national sense.

Now that half a century has passed, we may claim and honour them all: the Zionist official who voluntarily remained in Hechaluz work after the outbreak of war and was murdered with his comrades;45 the rabbi who refused the path of emigration and took the dreadful road to the extermination camps with what remained of his flock;46 a liberal Jewish representative such as Otto Hirsch, Director of the Reichsvertretung, who tried to obstruct the first deportations and lost his life in Mauthausen;47 the Communist activist Herbert Baum, martyr of the German and the Jewish resistance, who was tortured to death in Plötzensee.48 All of these died for the Jewish people; every one of them fell in the struggle against German Fascism!
Footnotes

1 The notes have been kept to a minimum and the reader is directed to the copious literature of the resistance. The few studies cited here give details of all further sources. I am most grateful to Kerstin Wachholz, London, for her help in the preparation of the lecture and manuscript. My thanks also go to Dr Louise Willmot for her sympathetic translation of the German text.

2 Ernst Nolte's remarks about the "declaration of war" by Chaim Weizmann or the World Jewish Congress cannot and should not be interpreted in any other way.

3 Approximately ten percent of all Jews (i.e. 1.6 million of the 16 million Jews in the world at the outbreak of war) fought against Hitler's Germany. This estimate is accepted by most historians. More than half a million Jews served in the Red Army and at least 700,000 in the armies of the two main Western allies. In Palestine, 35,000 Jews volunteered for the British Army, 10,000 of whom later formed the Jewish Brigade.


5 The Leo Baeck Institute is preparing a series of articles on the efforts made by German Jews in the war against Fascism. Two have already appeared in Year Book XXXV of the Leo Baeck Institute, London 1990: Arno Lustiger, German and Austrian Jews in the International Brigade, and Yoav Gelber, Central European Jews in the British Forces, pp. 297–332. Two further essays now follow in Year Book XXXVII of the Leo Baeck Institute, London 1992: Guy Stern, In the Service of American Intelligence. German-speaking Jewish Exiles in the War Against Hitler, and John P. Fox, German and Austrian Jews in Britain's Armed Forces and British and German Citizenship Policies 1939–1945. Among the issues it is hoped to cover in the future will be the contribution of former members of the German-Jewish youth movements, a number of whom fought behind the lines as Allied officers and soldiers and, in some cases, were killed in action or executed after being captured. Former members of the Germany-orientated Jewish youth movement Schwarzes Fähnlein (see below) were for instance very much a presence in the United States Units of the Office of Strategic Services and the
British Special Services; from Palestine those formerly in the Zionist Socialist youth groups enlisted in similar units.

6 The estimate made by Kwiet and Eschwege (op. cit., 1984), pp. 101, 400–500, mainly in the Thälmann Brigade but in other units as well, is certainly not too high. For example, many volunteers from Palestine were Jewish emigrants from Germany. See the chapter “Deutschland. Österreich” in Lustiger (op. cit., 1989), pp. 223–259; also Lustiger, German and Austrian Jews (loc. cit., 1990).


8 The participation of German and Austrian Jews in the Maquis is well documented in the literature. My cousin Eugen [Jenical] Strassberg was decorated with the Légion d’Honneur for his courage in the struggle against the German occupants; after the liberation I myself met German Jews in the North Italian partisan movement. The involvement of German Jews in the Italian partisan brigades will be depicted by Klaus Voigt in the second volume of his work “Zuflucht auf Wider- ruf. Exil in Italien 1933–1945” (Vol. 1, Stuttgart 1989). There were also many “foreigners” in the large partisan formations of the left-liberal Giustiza e Libertà, amongst them German Jews (which corresponds, in fact, to the political orientation of German Jewry).


10 Typical of the minimisation of the Jewish role in the German resistance is the entry in the “Lexikon des Judentums” (Gütersloh, 1967, col. 868) which states that there were also “members of Jewish origin who had gone underground” in the Baum group and that “five” of the seventeen people condemned to death were Jews. This is a curious compound of ignorance and definition of „Jewish- ness”. Of course all those executed were Jewish.


12 Helmut Eschwege’s Resistance of German Jews against the Nazi Regime, in Year Book XV of the Leo Baeck Institute, London 1970, was the first longer study within “established” German-Jewish historiography.


14 Ernst Simon, Aufbau im Untergang. Jüdische Erwachsenenbildung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland als geistiger Widerstand, Tübingen 1959 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 2).
15 The incident has been described on a number of occasions. See for example Paul Sauer, Otto Hirsch (1885–1941) – Director of the Reichsvertretung, in Year Book XXXII of the Leo Baeck Institute, London 1987, pp. 359–360.

16 I suspect that it was either Rabbi Dr Max Nußbaum or Rabbi Dr Joachim Prinz. Prinz apparently had a complete repertoire. See Joachim Prinz, A Rabbi under the Hitler Regime, in Herbert A. Strauss/Kurt R. Grossmann (eds.), Gegenwart im Rückblick. Festgabe für die Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin 25 Jahre nach dem Neubeginn, Heidelberg 1970, pp. 231–238.


18 Of Otto Kukla’s trailblazing work see: The Reichsvereinigung and the Fate of the German Jews, 1938/9–1943. Continuity or Discontinuity in German–Jewish History in the Third Reich, in Die Juden im Nationalsozialistischen Deutschland/ The Jews in Nazi Germany 1933–1943, edited by Arnold Paucker, with Sylvia Gilchrist and Barbara Suchy, Tübingen, 1986 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 45), pp. 353–363; also idem, The Central Organisation of German Jews in the Third Reich and its Archives, in Year Book XXXIV (op. cit., 1989), pp. 187–203. The opening up of the “Jewish” archives in the former GDR will provide much additional information. It must be emphasised here that the original German paper was delivered three years ago. Such forthcoming books as that by Wolfgang Scheffler (Berlin) on the Jewish deportations, based on the now available ex-GDR files of the Reichsvereinigung may again go some way to modifying our views.

19 Here, and for the Baum group overall, see Kwiet/Eschwege (op. cit., 1984), pp. 114–139, esp. pp. 128–130; also Eschwege in Year Book XV (loc. cit., 1970); Kwiet and Eschwege list the entire literature on the Baum group up to 1984; for subsequent years see the bibliographies in the Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute.

20 German comrades in the illegal KPD should have sabotaged this display. After all every resistance fighter was conscious of the constant danger of arrest with the inevitable consequences – here with the additional result of providing the Nazis with more ammunition in support of the theory of “Jewish bolshevism”. Nevertheless, I am grateful to my friend Helmut Eschwege (letter of 19th December 1989) for the important information that the Lustgarten exhibition was also an anti-Jewish propaganda display and that the Baum group had probably intended to destroy this section in particular.


Both versions in the author’s private archive. The Hebrew version comes from Asriel Blumberg, who became an airman and was lost on active service as a navigator in the RAF in the war against Nazi Germany, and Arnold Paucker. Further information from Günter Engel, Wittlich, and Etlan Hakerem (Felix Katz), Freiburg/ Haifa, who were in my group of the Berlin Werkleute.

I emigrated at the end of 1936. In Ben Shemen we sang the International Brigade songs in many languages (in the Jewish workers’ movement in Palestine they were of course sung in Hebrew). Young people who came to us from Germany in 1937 were already familiar with the German versions.

See Kwiet/Eschwege (op. cit., 1984), and Eschwege (loc. cit., 1970), passim.

I last saw my recruiter, who shall remain nameless for understandable reasons, as a South African (I) officer in Cairo in 1942.

Claims that the KPD was thus applying the Nuremberg Laws to the resistance movement should be dismissed as fatuous.

Among the Werkleute (and the Schwarzes Fähnlein) the “infiltration” should also be linked to the split of the Kameraden in 1932, which is mentioned further below. The Communists often had friendly relations with former fellow members; this – as I know from my own experience – facilitated the organisation of some cells in the Berlin Werkleute.

As far as the Haschomer Hazair is concerned, Heinz Primo recalls “four or five such [resistance] groups in Berlin”. See Günther Bernd Ginzel, Jüdischer Widerstand. Anmerkungen eines Nachgeborenen, in Die Neue Ordnung 5, Oktober 1988, p. 349; idem, Jüdischer Alltag in Deutschland 1933–1945 (Düsseldorf 1984), pp. 240–247, esp. note 37.

In a letter of 12th January 1990, my friend Franz Efraim Wagner, Jerusalem, provided information on an anti-Fascist underground cell of three members of Habonim (and Hechaluz), two of them pupils of the Frankfurt Philanthropin. Apart from himself he names Fred Forchheimer and Ernst Bär.


Though this information was anonymous and confidential there is no reason to doubt it. The historian Werner T. Angress, former member of the Schwarzes Fähnlein, is firmly convinced of its accuracy. To his knowledge, in the two years before this youth association disbanded itself at the end of 1934 – to forestall a ban – there were links with organised anti-Fascists in some Gaue (district organisations) in the Schwarzes Fähnlein (interview with the author, London, September 1988). The former leader of the organisation, Yogi Mayer, confirms that individual members were involved with disseminating illegal anti-Fascist propaganda and was himself one of the participants (interview with the author, London, October 1988).
34 In a further memorandum of 5 November 1990, Dr Henry J. Kellerman, Bethesda, Maryland, maintains his arguments against this form of infiltration of the Jewish youth movement and doubts that it was possible at all in his organisation because of constant Gestapo surveillance. But his admittedly balanced and sober judgment is in sharp contrast to the testimony of many earlier members of this organisation.

35 See, for instance, Konrad Kwiet, Problems of Jewish Resistance Historiography, in Year Book XXIV of the Leo Baeck Institute, London 1979, pp. 37–57, which is essential reading for anyone concerned with the problematics described in my paper. I wholly agree with him that 2000 is "no mean number... when one considers the size of the German resistance", ibid., p. 52. With all due respect to the memory of all those Germans who fought and died in opposing the Nazi regime, a figure of some 800,000 men and women "who offered resistance" (cf. Hanna Elling, Frauen im deutschen Widerstand 1933–45, 3. verbesserte Auflage, Frankfurt am Main 1981, p. 71) seems a gross overstatement. Here active anti-Fascists are lumped together with the many who were persecuted for having belonged to the democratic and left-wing parties, or who later "offended" against the regime. By such a computation the number of "resisting" Jews could be infinitely multiplied.

36 In 1935 more than 100 Jewish activists were interned in Dachau alone. Most were Communists (interview with Dr Alfred Laurence – himself in the camp at this time – on 2nd June 1985 in London).


41 Arnold Paucker, Some Notes on Resistance, in Year Book XVI of the Leo Baeck Institute, London 1971, pp. 239–247. Inger Berner, Reston (Virginia), has convincingly described how this "mercy" was obtained by corruption of officials (letter to the author of 15th August 1990).

42 See here the memoirs of my Berlin cousin Ilsetotte Themal, who went underground during the war, "Mother and Child", in Murray Mindlin with Chaim Bermant (eds.), Explorations. An Annual on Jewish Themes, London 1967, pp. 191–192. She was one link in an organised escape chain. There is growing
documentation on numerous acts of individual Jewish resistance in war-time, and of deeds of defiance before 1939.


46 Here I am thinking, for example, of the Hamburg Chief Rabbi Dr Joseph Carlebach, the father of my friend Julius Carlebach, now Rector of the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien, Heidelberg.


48 Herbert Baum either died under torture or committed suicide to avoid further torture.

The author wishes to express his particular thanks to Helmut Eschwege, Dresden; Professor Werner Jochmann, Hamburg; and Yogi Mayer, London, for their valuable corrections and suggestions which were incorporated in the English version.
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Publications in English of the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand

The German Resistance Memorial Center (short guide), Berlin 1990

Inge Deutschkron, Berlin Jews Underground, Berlin 1990

Ilse Rewald, Berliners Who Helped Us to Survive the Hitler Dictatorship, Berlin 1990