

Open Letter to the Jewish People of the United States

BY THE EDITORS

AN act, shocking and menacing, committed on July 2, is of the gravest concern to every Jew and every Jewish organization, irrespective of viewpoint.

We publish below a confidential memorandum issued by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. This document reveals that a secret meeting, not intended for the knowledge of the members of or contributors to the organizations involved, was held to work out plans for cooperation with one of the pro-fascist forces in American life. Every Jew and Jewish organization is imperiled by the action exposed in this document, which proves that certain representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish War Veterans are secretly flying in the face of the condemnation of McCarthyism that has been openly expressed by scores of Jewish organizations, periodicals and religious and communal leaders.

Does Senator Herbert H. Lehman, whose valiant denunciations of McCarthyism have won universal acclaim among Jews and non-Jews alike and who is an honorary vice president of the American Jewish Committee, know that a representative of this Committee offered use of the files of the Committee to the inquisitorial "Congressional vigilantes" whom he has excoriated?

We ask the leaders of every Jewish organization and every Jew to study this confidential memorandum and to decide if certain leaders of the ADL, AJC and JWV are to be allowed to flout the anti-McCarthyite sentiment of the entire Jewish community by engaging in private, cooperative negotiations with the carriers of fascism in American life.

FIRST LET US FILL IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE STARTLING CONFERENCE that took place on July 2, 1953, in the offices of Rep. Harold H. Velde's Un-American Committee in Washington, D.C. Present were the Washington representatives of the ADL (Herman Edelsberg), AJC (Marcus Cohn) and JWV (Ben Weitzer) and committee chairman Velde, committee chief counsel Robert L. Kunzig and assistant counsel Frank T. Tavenner. The confidential memorandum below tells what transpired at this conference.

What led these Jewish professionals to scurry to the Un-American Committee with their treacherous proposals? It was the publication in the daily press of certain statements made by Dr. Louis Harap, managing editor of *JEWISH LIFE*, in the course of a hearing of the Un-American Committee on June 29 to which Dr. Harap had been subpoenaed. Dr. Harap had given as a reason for refusing to answer many

questions, in addition to invoking the protection of the First and the Fifth Amendments, the following: "My refusal to answer is also based on the fact that as a Jew I have the obligation not to cooperate with this committee because this committee is tending to bring this country into the same conditions as those under which 6,000,000 Jews were murdered."

Without defending the committee against this charge, Rep. Kit Clardy replied by asking, "Do you shrink with the same horror from what the Soviet Union is doing to the Jews?" Dr. Harap then answered that any objective and truthful examination of the facts shows there is no discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union, that "Jews have a higher degree of equality in the Soviet Union than in any other part of the world," and that the Soviet Union, where anti-Semitism is a crime, demonstrated that "anti-Semitism would not be tolerated" there by arresting and punishing those who tried to foment anti-Semitism in the Moscow doctors' case.

PEOPLE MISINFORMED OR MISLED ABOUT THE SITUATION OF Soviet Jews may differ with Dr. Harap's statement on this matter. But there can be little dispute with his warning about the danger to the Jews from the Velde Committee and McCarthyism in general. Dr. Harap was only making more explicit what many Jewish and non-Jewish American leaders have been saying in this period of rising resistance to McCarthyism. Here are a few such expressions.

The convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis on June 23 passed a resolution condemning the "undemocratic methods used in the investigations conducted by McCarthy, Jenner and Velde."

At the annual meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly of America on June 22, its president, Dr. Ira Eisenstein, attacked the "state of terror and intimidation" created as a result of the methods used by the McCarthy and Velde committees. McCarthyism, he said, "if it succeeds, will spell the death of all that has made America great."

Speaking before the annual meeting of the Washington chapter of the AJC, Herbert B. Ehrmann, a national vice president of the AJC, said: there is good reason why "so many thoughtful and patriotic Americans should worry about the unfair treatment of Communists and fellow travelers. The answer is that we are not concerned with the accused individuals, although we know that loose and emotional procedures frequently work grave injustices. We are concerned with the preservation of the rights and liberties of us all. Once you tolerate a breakdown with respect to any group, however unpopular, you have started the destruction of the safeguards for every group." And this certainly applies to the Jewish people.

Frank Rosenblum, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and a vice president of the CIO, urged in New York on June 20 that labor and liberals should "stop McCarthyism dead in its tracks . . . The pattern followed by McCarthy is pretty much the pattern followed by Hitler and Mussolini. . . McCarthyism is only another and more dangerous extension of fascist thinking

and planning against which all men of goodwill must take a stand."

And Milton Friedman, syndicated columnist for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, wrote in his column of the week-end of June 22, that "Jewish organizations and outstanding Jewish members of Congress are rallying to defend civil liberties amidst warnings that the atmosphere created by 'McCarthyism' is breeding anti-Semitism."

ONE COULD GO ON AT GREAT LENGTH CITING MANY LEADERS OF all kinds of Jewish organizations and eminent Jewish individuals like Senator Lehman and Dr. Albert Einstein to show what must be quite obvious, that Jews, as well as non-Jews, are alarmed by the threat to American democracy from McCarthyism in its many forms, particularly the inquisitorial congressional committees of McCarthy, Jenner and Velde. Jews have especially good reason to resist this trend because, as everyone knows, the disintegration of democratic freedoms also accentuates the dangers of anti-Semitism. Dr. Harap was only spelling out the implications for the Jewish people implicit in a statement like that of Arthur Eisenhower, brother of the President, who said on July 24: "When I think of McCarthy, I automatically think of Hitler."

Those involved may take refuge in the argument that they are helping Congress to "fight communism" with this memorandum. Irrespective of one's views of communism, however, the blunt fact is that such actions as the conference with Velde contributes to undermining democracy.

McCarthyism is represented not only by the activities of the Wisconsin would-be *Fuehrer*. The menace is also manifested in the activities of other committees in Congress headed by McCarthyites like Jenner and Velde. Under cover of "fighting communism" these committees have been curbing and undermining freedom of speech and the press, intimidating and driving from their jobs independent-minded men and women in the schools, the arts and sciences and professions. McCarthyism and the forces behind it are responsible for widespread arrests and persecutions that have thrown a blanket of fear over the land. They are responsible for book-burning, for the racist McCarran-Walter act, for the unconstitutional Smith act, for the growing anti-Semitism and racism in the country. McCarthyism, in short, is fascism. To collaborate with it is to help the onset of fascism.

The Velde Committee is certainly one of the strong forces that are breeding an American form of nazism. What did the representatives of the ADL, AJC and JWV say to the Velde group? Did they protest the fascist aims of the committee, did they urge on the committee the necessity for an investigation of growing overt anti-Semitism so that the committee could recommend legislation to meet this un-American danger?

No, they offered to serve the reactionary purposes of the committee, to *inform* on other Jews—in short, to become *Mosrim*, informers, a volunteer research agency for Velde.

Read the confidential memorandum. You will see that these "defenders" of the Jews

- offered to help the Velde Committee stave off out-

spoken criticism of the committee's nazi-like activity;

- offered with staggering presumption to call the press "for an accounting" in case the press should print "bad stories," that is, material exposing the committee;

- urged the committee to make empty, self-serving statements against anti-Semitism;

- offered to make the research files of their organizations available to the committee in order the better to handle uncooperative witnesses.

The Velde Committee graciously accepted these disgraceful offers.

SOME LEADERS OF THE ADL, AJC AND JWV HAVE APPARENTLY learned nothing from the experience of Hitlerism. This offer of collaboration with the American equivalents of the nazis should shame every Jew. Those responsible have shown themselves more ready to betray the interests of the Jewish people than to defend them. Instead of fighting against the inquisitorial committees, as many Jewish organizations and individuals have done, these "leaders" have offered to become the partners of Velde.

This conference with Velde was not the first instance of collaboration with the Inquisitors. On December 27, 1951, top officers of the ADL met with Joe McCarthy to work out a deal with this aspirant to the role of an American Hitler. The ADL was so furtive about this betrayal of Jewish and democratic interests that they first denied the story but subsequently had to admit its truth.

Although the secret conference described in the memorandum below was apparently initiated by the ADL, the

American Jewish Committee was not so secretive about its collaboration with the Velde Committee. On July 1, Velde read into the committee record a letter sent to him by the AJC expressing its "outrage" at Dr. Harap's testimony. This letter was a whitewash of the anti-Jewish implications of the Un-American Committee and by the same token a treacherous act against democracy and the Jewish people.

The Jewish people of the United States must squarely meet the issue presented by this conference with Velde. The issue is whether Jews or anyone devoted to democracy can in any manner cooperate with these inquisitorial committees, which are destroying democracy and consequently endangering the Jewish people. The memorandum goes even farther than appeasement of pro-fascism: it *offers* collaboration with pro-fascist forces.

We cannot believe that the Jewish people will remain silent before such treachery. We call upon the Jewish people to preserve the integrity of their organizations as fighters for democratic rights. We call upon them to repudiate this shameful agreement and to call to account the leadership responsible for this act of collaboration with pro-fascism. The Jewish people will have nothing to do with *Mosrim* who are abettors of the threat against democracy by Velde and his like.

And finally, we call upon all Jews, organized and unorganized, to join actively in the fight against McCarthyism, which constitutes the most profound threat to our democracy since its founding.

The full text of the ADL memorandum follows.

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