

[Einstein 1921h]

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[1] Until one generation ago, Jews in Germany did not consider themselves as mem-
bers of the Jewish people. They merely considered themselves members of a reli-
gious community, and many still retain this point of view today. They are indeed
[2] far better assimilated than Russian Jews. They have attended mixed schools and
have adapted to the German people and to their cultural life. Yet, in spite of the
official equal rights they enjoy, there is a strong social anti-Semitism. And it is
especially the educated circles who support the anti-Semitic movement. They
[3] have even established a “science” of anti-Semitism, while the intellectuals of Rus-
sia, at least prior to the war, usually were philo-Semitic and frequently made hon-
[4] est attempts to fight the anti-Semitic movement. This is rooted in diverse causes.
To some extent, this phenomenon is due to the fact that Jews exert an influence on
the intellectual life of the German people that far exceeds their numbers in the
population. While, in my opinion, the economic position of the German Jews is
grossly overestimated, Jewish influence on the press, literature, and science in
[5] Germany is indeed very strong and impresses even a superficial observer. Very
many are not anti-Semites, however, and are honest in their argumentations. They
consider Jews to comprise a nationality different from that of the German and,
therefore, feel themselves threatened in their national identity by growing Jewish
[6] influence. While perhaps the percentage of Jews, for example in England, is not
much less significant than in Germany, English Jews certainly do not have the
same influence on English society and culture, even though they have access to
the highest official positions there, and a Jew can be nominated—something that
[7] is unthinkable in Germany—to be Lord Chief Justice or Viceroy of India.

[8] Anti-Semitism frequently is a question of political calculation. Whether or not
somebody admits to his anti-Semitism is often merely a question of which party
he belongs to. A socialist, even if he is a convinced anti-Semite, will not confess
or act on his conviction because it does not fit into the program of his party. For

conservatives, however, anti-Semitism often stems from the desire to exploit instincts that already exist in the population. In a country like England, where Jewish influence is smaller and the reaction of non-Jews is therefore much less, it is the existence of old, deep-rooted liberal traditions that hinder the rapid growth of anti-Semitism. I say this without personal knowledge of the country. I was never in England.¹ Nevertheless, the attitude of English science and the media toward my theory was already quite characteristic. Whereas in Germany, in general, the evaluation of my theory depended on the political orientation of the papers, the attitude of the English scientists has proven that their sense of objectivity cannot be muddled by political points of view. The English have—as I want to add here—quite generally influenced the development of our science to a high degree, and have approved the testing of the theory of relativity with great energy and with remarkable success. While anti-Semitism in America takes on only social forms, in Germany political anti-Semitism is much more noticeable than its social form. The way I see it, the fact of the Jews’ racial peculiarity will necessarily influence their social relations with non-Jews. The conclusions which—in my opinion—the Jews should draw is to become more aware of their peculiarity in their social way of life and to recognize their own cultural contributions. First of all, they would have to show a certain noble reservedness and not be so eager to mix socially—of which others want little or nothing. On the other hand, anti-Semitism in Germany also has consequences that, from a Jewish point of view, should be welcomed. I believe German Jewry owes its continued existence to anti-Semitism. Religious forms, which prevented Jews in the past from mixing with, and integrating into their environment, are now dwindling away under growing prosperity and better education. Thus, there remains only this contrast to their environment, called anti-Semitism, that leads to social separation. Without this contrast, the mixing of Jews in Germany would happen quickly and unhindered.

I observed this in myself. Until seven years ago I lived in Switzerland, and as long as I lived there I did not become aware of my Jewishness, and there was nothing in my life that would have stirred my Jewish feeling or stimulated it. This changed as soon as I had taken residency in Berlin. There I saw the predicament of many young Jews. I saw how the anti-Semitic environment prevented them from pursuing orderly studies or struggling for a secure basis of existence. This is especially true for Eastern European Jews, who are continuously subjected to harassment. I do not believe they constitute a large number in Germany. Only in Berlin are there, perhaps, a great many. Yet their presence has become a question that oc-

¹ The article was written during Professor Einstein’s stay in America, and thus prior to his visit in England. — Editor’s note.

cupies the German public more and more. Meetings, conferences, newspapers press for their quick removal or internment. The housing shortage and economic depression are used as arguments to justify these harsh demands. Those facts are deliberately overstated in order to bias public opinion against Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Eastern European Jews are made the scapegoats for certain defects in present-day German economic life, things that in reality are painful after-effects of the war. The confrontational attitude toward these unfortunate refugees, who have escaped the hell that Eastern Europe is today, has become an efficient and politically successful weapon used by demagogues. When the government contemplated measures against Eastern European Jews, I stood up for them in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, where I pointed out the inhumanity and irrationality of these measures.

[17] Together with a few colleagues, Jews and non-Jews, I held university courses for Eastern European Jews, and I would like to add that our activity met with the official recognition and full support of the Ministry of Education.

[18] These and similar experiences have awakened my Jewish-national feelings. I am not a Jew in the sense that I would demand the preservation of the Jewish or any other nationality as an end in itself. I rather see Jewish nationality as a fact, and I believe every Jew must draw the consequences from this fact. I consider raising Jewish self-confidence necessary, also in the interest of a normal living together with non-Jews. This was the major motive of my joining the Zionist movement. Zionism, to me, is not just a colonizing movement directed toward Palestine. The Jewish nation is a living fact in Palestine as well as in the diaspora, and Jewish national feelings must be kept alive everywhere that Jews live. Members of tribes or peoples must—under today's living conditions—have a lively tribal awareness in order not to lose their dignity and moral rectitude. It was the unbroken vitality of American Jewry that made clear to me how sickly German Jewry is.

[19] We live in an age of exaggerated nationalism and, being a small nation, we have to take this into account. But my Zionism does not preclude cosmopolitan conceptions. Starting from the reality of Jewish nationality, I believe that every Jew has duties toward his fellow Jews. The significance of Zionism is of course manifold. It opens the possibility of a dignified human existence to many Jews who presently suffer in the hell of Ukraine or decay economically in Poland. By repatriating Jews to Palestine and giving them a healthy and normal economic existence, Zionism is a productive activity that enriches human society. But the main point is that Zionism strengthens the self-confidence of Jews, which is necessary for their existence in the diaspora, and that the Jewish center in Palestine creates a strong bond that gives Jews moral support. The undignified mania of adaptive conformity, among many of my social standing, has always been very repulsive to me.

The founding of a free Jewish community structure in Palestine will again put Jewish people in a position where they can unencumbered fully unfold their creative capabilities. The establishment of the Hebrew University and similar institutions will not only lead the Jewish people to its own national renaissance, but also give Jews the opportunity of contributing to the spiritual life of the world on a freer basis.

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