

THE JEWISH PROBLEM  
HOW TO SOLVE IT

BY

LOUIS DEMBITZ BRANDEIS

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## **The Jewish Problem How to Solve It**

THE SUFFERING of the Jews due to injustices continuing throughout nearly twenty centuries is the greatest tragedy in history. Never was the aggregate of such suffering larger than today. Never were the injustices more glaring. Yet the present is pre-eminently a time for hopefulness. The current of world thought is at last preparing the way for our attaining justice. The war is developing opportunities which make possible the solution of the Jewish problem. But to avail ourselves of these opportunities we must understand both them and ourselves. We must recognize and accept facts. We must consider our course with statesmanlike calm. We must pursue resolutely the course we shall decide upon; and be ever ready to make the sacrifices which a great cause demands. Thus only can liberty be won.

For us the Jewish Problem means this: How can we secure for Jews, wherever they may live, the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by non-Jews? How can we secure for the world the full contribution which Jews can make, if unhampered by artificial limitations?

The problem has two aspects: That of the individual Jew and that of Jews collectively. Obviously, no individual should be subjected anywhere, by reason of the fact that he is a Jew, to a denial of any common right or opportunity enjoyed by non-Jews. But Jews collectively should likewise enjoy the same right and opportunity to live and develop as do other groups of people. This right of development on the part of the group is essential to the full enjoyment of rights by the individual. For the individual is dependent for his development (and his happiness) in large part upon the development of the group of which he forms a part. We can scarcely conceive of an individual German or Frenchman living and developing without some relation to the contemporary German or French life and culture. And since death is not a solution of the problem of life, the solution of the Jewish Problem necessarily involves the continued existence of the Jews as Jews.

Councils of Rabbis and others have undertaken at times to prescribe by definition that only those shall be deemed Jews who professedly adhere to the orthodox or reformed faith. But in the connection in which we are considering the term, it is certainly not in the power of any single body of Jews, or indeed of all Jews collectively, to establish the effective definition. The meaning of the word Jewish in the term Jewish Problem must be accepted as co-extensive with the disabilities which it is our problem to remove. It is the non-Jews who create the disabilities and in so doing give definition to the term Jew. Those disabilities extend substantially to all

of Jewish blood. The disabilities do not end with a renunciation of faith, however sincere. They do not end with the elimination, however complete, of external Jewish mannerisms. The disabilities do not end ordinarily until the Jewish blood has been so thoroughly diluted by repeated inter-marriages as to result in practically obliterating the Jew.

And we Jews, by our own acts, give a like definition to the term Jew. When men and women of Jewish blood suffer, because of that fact, and even if they suffer from quite different causes, our sympathy and our help goes out to them instinctively in whatever country they may live and without inquiring into the shades of their belief or unbelief. When those of Jewish blood exhibit moral or intellectual superiority, genius or special talent, we feel pride in, them, even, if they have abjured the faith like Spinoza, Marx, Disraeli or Heine. Despite the meditations of pundits or the decrees of council, our own instincts and acts, and those of others, have defined for us the term Jew.

Half a century ago the belief was still general that Jewish disabilities would disappear before growing liberalism. When religious toleration was proclaimed, the solution of the Jewish Problem seemed in sight. When the so-called rights of man became widely recognized, and the equal right of all citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness began to be enacted into positive law, the complete emancipation of the Jews seemed at hand. The concrete gains through liberalism were indeed large. Equality before the law was established throughout the western hemisphere. The Ghetto walls crumbled; the ball and chain of restraint were removed in central and western Europe. Compared with the cruel discrimination to which Jews are now subjected in Russia and Romania, their advanced condition in other parts of Europe seems almost ideal.

But the anti-Jewish prejudice was not exterminated even in those countries of Europe in which the triumph of civil liberty and democracy extended fully to Jews 'the rights of man.' The anti-Semitic movement arose in Germany a year after the granting of universal suffrage. It broke out violently in France, and culminated in the Dreyfus case, a century after the French Revolution had brought 'emancipation.' It expressed itself in England through the Aliens Act, within a few years after the last of Jewish disabilities had been there removed by law. And in the United States the Saratoga incident reminded us, long ago, that we too have a Jewish question.

The disease is universal and endemic. There is, of course, a wide difference between the Russian disabilities with their Pale of Settlement, their denial of opportunity for education and of choice of occupation, and their recurrent pogroms, and the German disabilities curbing university, bureaucratic and military careers. There is a wide difference also between these German disabilities and the mere social disabilities of other lands. But some of those now suffering from the severe

disabilities imposed by Russia and Romania are descendants of men and women who in centuries before our modern liberalism enjoyed both legal and social equality in Spain and Southern France. The manifestations of the Jewish Problem vary in the different countries, and at different periods in the same country, according to the prevailing degrees of enlightenment and other pertinent conditions. Yet the differences, however wide, are merely in degree and not in kind. The Jewish Problem is single and universal. But it is not necessarily eternal. It may be solved.

Why is it that liberalism has failed to eliminate the anti-Jewish prejudice? It is because the liberal movement has not yet brought full liberty. Enlightened countries grant to the individual equality before the law; but they fail still to recognize the equality of whole peoples or nationalities. We seek to protect as individuals those constituting a minority; but we fail to realize that protection cannot be complete unless group equality also is recognized.

Deeply imbedded in every people is the desire for full development, the longing, as Mazzini phrased it, 'To elaborate and express their idea, to contribute their stone also to the pyramid of history.' Nationality like democracy has been one of the potent forces making for man's advance during the past hundred years. The assertion of nationality has infused whole peoples with hope, manhood and self-respect. It has ennobled and made purposeful millions of lives. It offered them a future, and in doing so revived and capitalized all that was valuable in their past. The assertion of nationality raised Ireland from the slough of despondency. It roused Southern Slavs to heroic deeds. It created gallant Belgium. It freed Greece. It gave us united Italy. It manifested itself even among the free peoples, like the Welsh, who had no grievance, but who gave expression to their nationality through the revival of the old Cymric tongue. Each of these peoples developed because, as Mazzini said, they were enabled to proclaim 'to the world that they also live, think, love, and labor for the benefit of all.'

In the past it has been generally assumed that the full development of one people necessarily involved its domination over others. Strong nationalities are apt to become convinced that by such domination only does civilization advance. Strong nationalities assume their own superiority, and come to believe that they possess the divine right to subject other people to their sway. Soon the belief in the existence of such a right becomes converted into a conviction that duty exists to enforce it. Ways of aggrandizement follow as a natural result of this belief.

This attitude of certain nationalities is the exact correlative of the position which was generally assumed by the strong in respect to other individuals before democracy became a common possession. The struggles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both in peace and in war were devoted largely to overcoming that position as to individuals. In establishing the equal right of every person to

development, it became clear that equal opportunity for all involves this necessary limitation: Each man may develop himself so far, but only so far, as his doing so will not interfere with the exercise of a like right by all others. Thus liberty came to mean the right to enjoy life, to acquire property, to pursue happiness in such manner and to such extent as the exercise of the right in each is consistent with the exercise of a like right by every other of our fellow-citizens. Liberty thus defined underlies twentieth century democracy. Liberty thus defined exists in a large part of the western world. And even where this equal right of each individual has not yet been accepted as a political right, its ethical claim is gaining recognition. Democracy rejected the proposal of the superman who should rise through sacrifice of the many. It insists that the full development of each individual is not only a right, but a duty to society; and that our best hope for civilization lies not in uniformity, but in wide differentiation.

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The difference between a nation and a nationality is clear; but it is not always observed. Likeness between members is the essence of nationality; but the members of a nation may be very different. A nation may be composed of many nationalities, as some of the most successful nations are. An instance of this is the British nation, with its division into English, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish at home; with the French in Canada; and throughout the Empire, scores of other nationalities. Other examples are furnished by the Swiss nation with its German, French and Italian sections; by the Belgian nation composed of Flemings and Walloons; and by the American nation which comprises nearly all the white nationalities. The unity of a nationality is a fact of nature; the unification into a nation is largely the work of man. The false doctrine that nation and nationality must be made co-extensive is the cause of some of our greatest tragedies. It is, in large part, the cause also of the present war. It has led, on the one hand, to cruel, futile attempts at enforced assimilation, like the Russianizing of Finland and Poland, and the Prussianizing of Posen, Schleswig-Holstein, and Alsace-Lorraine. It has led, on the other hand, to those Panistic movements which are a cloak for territorial ambitions. As a nation may develop though composed of many nationalities, so a nationality may develop though forming parts of several nations. The essential in either case is recognition of the equal rights of each nationality.

W. Allison Philips recently defined nationality as, 'An extensive aggregate of persons, conscious of a community of sentiments, experiences, or qualities which make them feel themselves a distinct people.' And he adds: 'If we examine the composition of the several nationalities we find these elements: race, language, religion, common habitat, common conditions, mode of life and manners, political association. The elements are, however, never all present at the same time, and none of them is essential. . . . A common habitat and common conditions are doubtless powerful influences at times in determining nationality; but what part do they play

in that of the Jews or the Greeks, or the Irish in dispersion?’

See how this high authority assumes without question that the Jews are, despite their dispersion, a distinct nationality; and he groups us with the Greeks or the Irish, two other peoples of marked individuality. Can it be doubted that we Jews, aggregating 14,000,000 people, are ‘an extensive aggregate of persons’; that we are ‘conscious of a community of sentiments, experiences and qualities which make us feel ourselves a distinct people,’ whether we admit it or not?

It is no answer to this evidence of nationality to declare that the Jews are not an absolutely pure race. There has, of course, been some intermixture of foreign blood in the 3000 years which constitute our historic period. But, owing to persecution and prejudice, the intermarriages with non-Jews which occurred have resulted merely in taking away many from the Jewish community. Intermarriage has brought few additions. Therefore the percentage of foreign blood in the Jews of today is very low. Probably no important European race is as pure.

But common race is only one of the elements which determine nationality. Conscious community of sentiments, common experiences, common qualities are equally, perhaps more, important. Religion, traditions and customs bound us together, though scattered throughout the world. The similarity of experience tended to produce similarity of qualities and community of sentiments. Common suffering so intensified the feeling of brotherhood as to overcome largely all the influences making for diversification. The segregation of the Jew was so general, so complete, and so long continued as to intensify our ‘peculiarities’ and make them almost ineradicable.

We recognize that with each child the aim of education should be to develop his own individuality, not to make him an imitator, not to assimilate him to others. Shall we fail to recognize this truth when applied to whole peoples? And what people in the world has shown greater individuality than the Jews? Has any a nobler past? Does any possess common ideas better worth expressing? Has any marked traits worthier of development? Of all the peoples in the world those of two tiny states stand preeminent as contributors to our present civilization, the Greeks and the Jews. The Jews gave to the world its three greatest religions, reverence for law, and the highest conceptions of morality. Never before has the value of our contribution been so generally recognized. Our teaching of brotherhood and righteousness has, under the name of democracy and social justice, become the twentieth century striving of America and of western Europe. Our conception of law is embodied in the American constitution which proclaims this to be a ‘government of laws and not of men.’ And for the triumph of our other great teaching, the doctrine of peace, this cruel war is paving the way.

While every other people is striving for development by asserting its

nationality, and a great war is making clear the value of small nations, shall we voluntarily yield to anti-Semitism, and instead of solving our 'problem' end it by noble suicide? Surely this is no time for Jews to despair. Let us make clear to the world that we too are a nationality striving for equal rights to life and to self-expression. That this should be our course has been recently expressed by high non-Jewish authority. Thus Seton-Watson; speaking of the probable results of the war, said:

'There are good grounds for hoping that it [the war] will also give a new and healthy impetus to Jewish national policy, grant freer play to their splendid qualities, and enable them to shake off the false shame which has led men who ought to be proud of their Jewish race to assume so many alien disguises and to accuse of anti-Semitism those who refuse to be deceived by mere appearances. It is high time that the Jews should realize that few things do more to foster anti-Semitic feeling than this very tendency to sail under false colors and conceal their true identity. The Zionists and the orthodox Jewish Nationalists have long ago won the respect and admiration of the world. No race has ever defied assimilation so stubbornly and so successfully; and the modern tendency of individual Jews to repudiate what is one of their chief glories suggests an almost comic resolve to fight against the course of nature.'

Standing against this broad foundation of nationality, Zionism aims to give it full development. Let us bear clearly in mind what Zionism is, or rather what it is not.

It is not a movement to remove all the Jews of the world compulsorily to Palestine. In the first place there are 14,000,000 Jews, and Palestine would not accommodate more than one-third of that number. In the second place, it is not a movement to compel anyone to go to Palestine. It is essentially a movement to give to the Jew more, not less freedom; it aims to enable the Jews to exercise the same right now exercised by practically every other people in the world: To live at their option either in the land of their fathers or in some other country; a right which members of small nations as well as of large, which Irish, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, or Belgian, may now exercise as fully as Germans or English.

Zionism seeks to establish in Palestine, for such Jews as choose to go and remain there, and for their descendants, a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life, where they may expect ultimately to constitute a majority of the population, and may look forward to what we should call home rule. The Zionists seek to establish this home in Palestine because they are convinced that the undying longing of Jews for Palestine is a fact of deepest significance; that it is a manifestation in the struggle for existence by an ancient people which has established its right to live, a people whose three thousand years of civilization has

produced a faith, culture and individuality which enable it to contribute largely in the future, as it has in the past, to the advance of civilization; and that it is not a right merely but a duty of the Jewish nationality to survive and develop. They believe that only in Palestine can Jewish life be fully protected from the forces of disintegration; that there alone can the Jewish spirit reach its full and natural development; and that by securing for those Jews who wish to settle there the opportunity to do so, not only those Jews, but all other Jews will be benefited, and that the long perplexing Jewish Problem will, at last, find solution.

They believe that to accomplish this, it is not necessary that the Jewish population of Palestine be large as compared with the whole number of Jews in the world; for throughout centuries when the Jewish influence was greatest, during the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman Empires, only a relatively small part of the Jews lived in Palestine; and only a small part of the Jews returned from Babylon when the Temple was rebuilt.

Since the destruction of the Temple, nearly two thousand years ago, the longing for Palestine has been ever present with the Jew. It was the hope of a return to the land of his fathers that buoyed up the Jew amidst persecution, and for the realization of which the devout ever prayed. Until a generation ago this was a hope merely, a wish piously prayed for, but not worked for. The Zionist movement is idealistic, but it is also essentially practical. It seeks to realize that hope; to make the dream of a Jewish life in a Jewish land come true as other great dreams of the world have been realized, by men working with devotion, intelligence, and self-sacrifice. It was thus that the dream of Italian independence and unity, after centuries of vain hope, came true through the efforts of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour; that the dream of Greek, of Bulgarian and of Serbian independence became facts.

The rebirth of the Jewish nation is no longer a mere dream. It is in process of accomplishment in a most practical way, and the story is a wonderful one. A generation ago a few Jewish emigrants from Russia and from Romania, instead of proceeding westward to this hospitable country where they might easily have secured material prosperity, turned eastward for the purpose of settling in the land of their fathers.

To the worldly-wise these efforts at colonization appeared very foolish. Nature and man presented obstacles in Palestine which appeared almost insuperable; and the colonists were in fact ill-equipped for their task, save in their spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. The land, harassed by centuries of misrule, was treeless and apparently sterile; and it was infested with malaria. The Government offered them no security, either as to life or property. The colonists themselves were not only unfamiliar with the character of the country, but were ignorant of the farmer's life which they proposed to lead; for the Jews of Russia and Romania had been generally

denied the opportunity of owning or working land. Furthermore, these colonists were not inured to the physical hardships to which the life of a pioneer is necessarily subjected. To these hardships and to malaria many succumbed. Those who survived were long confronted with failure. But at last success came. Within a generation these Jewish Pilgrim Fathers, and those who followed them, have succeeded in establishing these two fundamental propositions:

First: That Palestine is fit for the modern Jew.

Second: That the modern Jew is fit for Palestine.

Over forty self-governing Jewish colonies attest to this remarkable achievement.

This land, treeless a generation ago, supposed to be sterile and hopelessly arid, has been shown to have been treeless and sterile because of man's misrule. It has been shown to be capable of becoming again a land 'flowing with milk and honey.' Oranges and grapes, olives and almonds, wheat and other cereals are now growing there in profusion.

This material development has been attended by a spiritual and social development no less extraordinary; a development in education, in health and in social order; and in the character and habits of the population. Perhaps the most extraordinary achievement of Jewish nationalism is the revival of the Hebrew Language, which has again become a language of the common intercourse of men. The Hebrew tongue, called a dead language for nearly two thousand years, has, in the Jewish colonies and in Jerusalem, become again the living mother tongue. The effect of this common language in unifying the Jew is, of course, great; for the Jews of Palestine came literally from all the lands of the earth, each speaking, excepting those who used Yiddish, the language of the country from which he came, and remaining, in the main, almost a stranger to the others. But the effect of the renaissance of the Hebrew tongue is far greater than that of unifying the Jews. It is a potent factor in reviving the essentially Jewish spirit.

Our Jewish Pilgrim Fathers have laid the foundation. It remains for us to build the superstructure.

Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with Patriotism. Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent. A man is a better citizen of the United States for being also a loyal citizen of his state, and of his city; for being loyal to his family, and to his profession or trade; for being loyal to his college or his lodge. Every Irish American who contributed towards advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so.

Note what Seton-Watson says:

‘America is full of nationalities which, while accepting with enthusiasm their new American citizenship, nevertheless look to some centre in the old world as the source and inspiration of their national culture and traditions. The most typical instance is the feeling of the American Jew for Palestine which may well become a focus for his *déclassé* kinsmen in other parts of the world.’

There is no inconsistency between loyalty to America and loyalty to Jewry. The Jewish spirit, the product of our religion and experiences, is essentially modern and essentially American. Not since the destruction of the Temple have the Jews in spirit and in ideals been so fully in harmony with the noblest aspirations of the country in which they lived.

America’s fundamental law seeks to make real the brotherhood of man. That brotherhood became the Jewish fundamental law more than twenty-five hundred years ago. America’s insistent demand in the twentieth century is for social justice. That also has been the Jews’ striving for ages. Their affliction as well as their religion has prepared the Jews for effective democracy. Persecution broadened their sympathies. It trained them in patience and endurance, in self-control, and in sacrifice. It made them think as well as suffer. It deepened the passion for righteousness.

Indeed, loyalty to America demands rather that each American Jew become a Zionist. For only through the ennobling effect of its strivings can we develop the best that is in us and give to this country the full benefit of our great inheritance. The Jewish spirit, so long preserved, the character developed by so many centuries of sacrifice, should be preserved and developed further, so that in America as elsewhere the sons of the race may in future live lives and do deeds worthy of their ancestors.

But we have also an immediate and more pressing duty in the performance of which Zionism alone seems capable of affording effective aid. We must protect America and ourselves from demoralization, which has to some extent already set in among American Jews. The cause of this demoralization is clear. It results in large part from the fact that in our land of liberty all the restraints by which the Jews were protected in their Ghettos were removed and a new generation left without necessary moral and spiritual support. And is it not equally clear what the only possible remedy is? It is the laborious task of inculcating self-respect, a task which can be accomplished only by restoring the ties of the Jew to the noble past of his race, and by making him realize the possibilities of a no less glorious future. The sole bulwark against demoralization is to develop in each new generation of Jews in America the sense of *noblesse oblige*. That spirit can be developed in those who regard their people as destined to live and to live with a bright future. That spirit can best be developed by actively participating in some way in furthering the ideals of the Jewish

renaissance; and this can be done effectively only through furthering the Zionist movement.

In the Jewish colonies of Palestine there are no Jewish criminals; because everyone, old and young alike, is led to feel the glory of his people and his obligation to carry forward its ideals. The new Palestinian Jewry produces instead of criminals, scientists like Aaron Aaronsohn, the discoverer of wild wheat; pedagogues like David Yellin, craftsmen like Boris Schatz, the founder of the Bezalel; intrepid *Shomrim*, the Jewish guards of peace, who watch in the night against marauders and doers of violent deeds.

And the Zionist movement has brought like inspiration to the Jews in the Diaspora, as Steed has shown in this striking passage from 'The Hapsburg Monarchy':

'To minds like these Zionism came with the force of an evangel. To be a Jew and to be proud of it; to glory in the power and pertinacity of the race, its traditions, its triumphs, its sufferings, its resistance to persecution; to look the world frankly in the face and to enjoy the luxury of moral and intellectual honesty; to feel pride in belonging to the people that gave Christendom its divinities, that taught half the world monotheism, whose ideas have permeated civilization as never the ideas of a race before it, whose genius fashioned the whole mechanism of modern commerce, and whose artists, actors, singers and writers have filled a larger place in the cultured universe than those of any other people. This, or something like this, was the train of thought fired in youthful Jewish minds by the Zionist spark. Its effect upon the Jewish students of Austrian universities was immediate and striking. Until then they had been despised and often ill-treated. They had wormed their way into appointments and into the free professions by dint of pliancy, mock humility, mental acuteness, and clandestine protection. If struck or spat upon by 'Aryan' students, they rarely ventured to return the blow or the insult. But Zionism gave them courage. They formed associations, and learned athletic drill and fencing. Insult was requited with insult, and presently the best fencers of the fighting German corps found that Zionist students could gash cheeks quite as effectually as any Teuton, and that the Jews were in a fair way to become the best swordsmen of the university. Today the purple cap of the Zionist is as respected as that of any academical association.

'This moral influence of Zionism is not confined to university students. It is quite as noticeable among the mass of the younger Jews outside, who also find in it a reason to raise their heads, and, taking their stand upon the past, to gaze straightforwardly into the future.'

Since the Jewish Problem is single and universal, the Jews of every country should strive for its solution. But the duty resting upon us of America is especially insistent. We number about 3,000,000, which is more than one fifth of all the Jews

in the world, a number larger than comprised within any other country except the Russian Empire. We are representative of all the Jews in the world; for we are composed of immigrants, or descendants of immigrants coming from every other country, or district. We include persons from every section of society, and of every shade of religious belief. We are ourselves free from civil or political disabilities; and are relatively prosperous. Our fellow-Americans are infused with a high and generous spirit, which insures approval of our struggle to ennoble, liberate, and otherwise improve the condition of an important part of the human race; and their innate manliness makes them sympathize particularly with our efforts at self-help. America's detachment from the old world problem relieves us from suspicions and embarrassments frequently attending the activities of Jews of rival European countries. And a conflict between American interests or ambitions and Jewish aims is not conceivable. Our loyalty to America can never be questioned.

Let us therefore lead, earnestly, courageously and joyously, in the struggle for liberation. Let us all recognize that we Jews are a distinctive nationality of which every Jew, whatever his country, his station or shade of belief, is necessarily a member. Let us insist that the struggle for liberty shall not cease until equality of opportunity is accorded to nationalities as to individuals. Let us insist also that full equality of opportunity cannot be obtained by Jews until we, like members of other nationalities, shall have the option of living elsewhere or of returning to the land of our forefathers.

The fulfillment of these aspirations is clearly demanded in the interest of mankind, as well as in justice to the Jews. They cannot fail of attainment if we are united and true to ourselves. But we must be united not only in spirit but in action. To this end we must organize. Organize, in the first place, so that the world may have proof of the extent and the intensity of our desire for liberty. Organize, in the second place, so that our resources may become known and be made available. But in mobilizing our force it will not be for war. The whole world longs for the solution of the Jewish Problem. We have but to lead the way, and we may be sure of ample cooperation from non-Jews. In order to lead the way, we need not arms, but men; men with those qualities for which Jews should be peculiarly fitted by reason of their religion and life; men of courage, of high intelligence, of faith and public spirit, of indomitable will and ready self-sacrifice; men who will both think and do, who will devote high abilities to shaping our course, and to overcoming the many obstacles which must from time to time arise. And we need other, many, many other men, officers commissioned and non-commissioned and common soldiers in the cause of liberty, who will give of their efforts and resources, as occasion may demand, in unflinching and ever strengthening support of the measures which may be adopted. Organization, thorough and complete, can alone develop such leaders and the

necessary support.

Organize, Organize, Organize, until every Jew in America must stand up and be counted, counted with us, or prove himself, wittingly or unwittingly, of the few who are against their own people.