

The Real Fight Against Nazism

By Earl Raab
(Jewish Bulletin Special Writer)

7-2-71

A couple of self-styled Nazis showed up in the Bay Area last week. That happens every few years, and people are properly concerned when it does. A single Nazi is an abomination. They cannot be taken lightly, and have to be carefully watched — as they are.

But one wonders whether those who express concern about the Nazis are willing to do something about it. Something effective, that is. Many American Jews have learned only half a lesson from the holocaust: not to dismiss the possibility that it can happen here — or anywhere.



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But why can it happen? How can it be prevented? If all of the Jews in Hitler Germany had been armed with machine guns, it would not have changed the course of events. A Warsaw Ghetto is preferable to a Dachau — but they are both massacres.

This is the rest of the lesson: A Nazi movement (or one like it) is not created by Nazi leaders. There will always be a few of those, out of personal pathology if nothing else. Indeed, the one we know most about in the current crop has a history of commitment to a hospital for the criminally insane. But without a following no Nazi movement can develop. Would that following consist of other people with criminally insane personalities? Not at all. It would consist of quite ordinary people.

In a recent survey, at least one third of the American people freely admitted that they would vote for a politician whose platform included anti-Semitism — if the rest of the platform was acceptable to them. Please note: they said that it would not be the politician's anti-Semitism which would cause them to vote for him. They turned out to be not any more anti-Semitic than the rest of the population. But they would accept his anti-Semitism if the rest of the conditions were right.

In short, Nazi-prone conditions, not Nazi leaders, will create Nazism. Leaders will always develop if the conditions are there; they will go no place if the conditions are not there.

So those who are seriously concerned with Nazism will address themselves to Nazi-prone conditions — or else they're just engaging in a little self-indulgent flexing of the vocal cords or of the muscles.

For example, they must have a concern with the development of **democratic restraint** in our society and our population so that the anti-Semitic candidate will be rejected even if he has a platform which is otherwise appealing. Those who say they have a concern with Nazism must actively support the common public school in America — because, in statistical fact, it is the most advanced product of that system who exhibits the most democratic restraint. Those who say they have a concern with Nazism must oppose violence as a substitute for political action, whatever the cause.

In short, those who say they have a concern with Nazism must have an active and reflective involvement in building a good society and maintaining the democratic procedures in that society. To restrict themselves to a fight against a few overt Nazis, or against overt anti-Semitism, is to cop out of the fight against Nazism and anti-Semitism.

That is the political lesson of the holocaust. Is it too difficult, too demanding a lesson? If so, go ahead, just flex your vocal cords or your muscles — but don't kid yourself that you're fighting Nazism.

JOURNAL OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

*A Quarterly of Professional
Trends and Developments*

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VOL. LIV	—	No. 2

Published by the
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE