

Greetings from the President and Executive Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism

Pain, pride and hope are intermingled in our hearts as we gather here to mark the 75th anniversary of the first convention of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which was held in Berlin in 1928.

In Germany the first seeds of Liberal Judaism developed more than 200 years ago. This stream of Judaism flourished here, establishing outstanding congregational and educational institutions, developing philosophical, liturgical and cultural works, and providing leadership for many years for the German Jewish community. From here, Liberal Judaism influenced World Jewry.

The roots established in Germany have grown into the world's largest synagogue organization incorporating Reform, Liberal, Progressive and Reconstructionist Jews in some 40 countries encompassing more than 1.5 million members.

Here Liberal Judaism witnessed its sons and daughters sent to crematoria, and its institutions destroyed - beginning with Kristallnacht. The Shoah consumed in equal measure Liberal and Orthodox Jews, synagogues and institutions regardless of liturgy or minhag.

The World Union convention in 1928 reflected an aura of optimism amongst the participants in regards to the future of Judaism in Germany. The delegates did not foresee what the future would bring, nor the threat to the world, to Judaism and to the Jewish People. The world after the Shoah is not the same world, and the Jewish People who survived the Shoah are still confronting its horrors. Especially today, the message that the foremost German Jewish Liberal leader of that time, Rabbi Leo Baeck, delivered at the Berlin convention, challenges us:

The message of Liberal Judaism lay not in trying to keep Judaism current with the times, but in setting it against the times so as to help order the world for the Kingdom of God. True Liberalism was an intensive Judaism, a religion that would always have to set the messianic against the existent, the future against the present, great unrealized ideas against the ways of the world.

Progressive Judaism has flourished and spread throughout the world in the past decades, committed to advancing Judaism and contributing to "Tikkun Olam" (mending the world), emphasizing its integrating outlook, uniting the bond between Jewish historical heritage, democratic values, modern scientific findings, social justice, gender and human equality. In recent years, Progressive Judaism has reseeded itself in Germany and in re-emerging Jewish communities in Europe. Our gathering here is also to salute and support the Union progressiver Juden in Deutschland, the Geiger College, the efforts of the rabbis and lay leaders alike, to enrich Jewish life in Germany through reestablishing the Liberal tone in the Jewish rainbow, so it can once again fulfill its role in strengthening Jewish life while actively participating in the shaping of the new Germany - and our Movement's battle in Germany in ensuring its status and official recognition by both the official authorities and the Jewish community.

Just as in Germany, in the Former Soviet Union the challenge is the renewal of Jewish life amongst the many Jews who, due to the historical circumstances, were cut off from all aspects of Jewish life for many decades. The World Union is celebrating its "Bar Mitzvah", 13 years of activity in the Former Soviet Union where the community has grown from one congregation in Moscow in 1989, to over 100 congregations and groups, as well as intense youth activities, educational and

cultural programs and more. These activities, too, are of paramount historical importance, and research studies clearly indicate the preference of Jews for a modern, egalitarian and Liberal form of Judaism.

It was here in Germany, that the *Genesis* of Liberal Judaism occurred; it was here in Germany, that the *Destruction* of this form of Judaism, which had taken upon itself the leadership of German Jewry as a whole, occurred; and it is here in Germany, that we are now witnessing an era of *Renewal*. New and promising seeds have now been sown and they have already begun to bear fruit within the growing Jewish community. Rabbi Leo Baeck's words of 75 years ago have redoubled force and echo in our ears "Begin to create the future!"

Ruth Cohen

Ruth Cohen, President

Uri Regev

Rabbi Uri Regev, Executive Director

World Union for Progressive Judaism

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ZENTRALRAT DER JUDEN IN DEUTSCHLAND
Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts

Berlin, 22.06.2003
16th Siwan 5763

Greetings for the Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the First Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Berlin, July 10th, 2003

Liberal Judaism in Germany: Genesis, Destruction, Renewal

Dear Mr. Secretary, Rabbi Uri Regev,
Dear Minister, Mr. Schily,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased that the World Union for Progressive Judaism honors us here in Berlin, at the former site of the Synagogue on Fasanenstraße, the magnificent temple built in the style of the Moors, where Leo Baeck, of blessed memory, had served as a rabbi since its completion in 1912, and which was razed to the ground during the pogrom in 1938.

Dear participants and guests - today, you are witnessing the continuation of the formerly powerful tradition of liberal Jews in Germany, a tradition that was brutally interrupted by the Shoah. This is important to us.

For us Jews, and especially for the Zentralrat as the representative of Germany's Jewish community, the question of Jewish pluralism, and with it, the recognition and safeguard of the different religious streams within Judaism, is very significant, not least against the background of the history of German Jewry before 1933. I view the recent renewed growth of the stream of progressive Judaism as a positive sign. It shows that, in the wake of its liberation from national socialism in 1945 and its hesitant reemergence, the Jewish community in Germany is not an artificial object, but something alive and capable of development. I am positive that, after clarifying factual misunderstandings, we will achieve consent on how to translate pluralistic standards into institutions within the joint representational body of Germany's Jewry.

75 years ago, the first international conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which had been founded two years earlier, took place here in Berlin, enjoying a large public attendance. German Jews were the backbone of the Liberal Movement, so to speak, and even during Nazi rule, they played an important role for the World Union for Progressive Judaism, as far as this was still possible at the time.

Unfortunately, I myself cannot be present at today's celebration. I wish you an evening full of stimulation and inspiration so that we can reduce prejudice while dealing with the realities of Jewish life in Germany, in order to ensure a successful future for our growing Jewish community.

Paul Spiegel, President, Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland

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Greetings from the President of the Berlin Jewish Community, Dr. Alexander Brenner, on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the First International Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Berlin

It gives me great pleasure that the World Union for Progressive Judaism is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the first convention, in Berlin.

The many different Jewish streams, such as Progressive, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Reform, Liberal, Egalitarian, Modern Orthodox, Orthodox, Chabad and others, all have their place in Judaism, both in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Several of the streams are also represented within the Berlin Jewish community; and even if there is occasional, understandable friction - like anywhere else - we believe in the concept of a unified and integrating community, a concept that has been successfully tried and tested in Jewish life over history.

This applies especially in view of the fact that (as in the rest of Germany), 70% of the members in the Berlin Jewish community emigrated from the Former Soviet Union over the past 13 years.

The overwhelming majority of Jewish congregations in Germany embrace the concept of a unified community; this concept also constitutes a solution for modernity according to the spirit of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

After 1945 many Jews asked themselves, and not without reason, if following the Shoah, the systematic genocide committed in the name of Germany, it was possible and appropriate to reestablish Jewish congregations in Germany. Without intending to go into practical or moral aspects - the course of history since the war, has definitely answered this question.

I would like to emphasize that the World Union for Progressive Judaism was among the first Jewish organizations to contact Germany's Jewish communities after the war.

I am glad that the World Union for Progressive Judaism decided to hold its international conference here in Berlin, and wish all participants a successful gathering, an enjoyable stay in Berlin and all the best for the future.



A Significant Event

When in 1928 several world liberal Jewish leaders assembled in Berlin for the first conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, an existing religious and philosophical movement within German Jewry, the choice of Germany for this event was no coincidence.

Liberal Judaism was born as a formal stream within the world Jewish community in Germany during the first half of the 19th century.

Already Moses Mendelsohn, his contemporaries and disciples plant the seeds for what later became a fusion of Jewish ethical values with the awakened German culture.

Liberal Jews played leading roles in German politics, art and science as well as in the world of business and finance. Liberal interpretation of Jewish scriptures opened up Jewish learning to the majority of German Jews, who desired a Jewish life without the strictures of Orthodoxy. Only the ascent of the Nazi movement stopped the burgeoning development of Liberal Judaism in Germany.

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It is most befitting that we celebrate this important date at a time when our movement is rapidly resuming its past leading role in the German Jewish community.

As young Jews in pre-Nazi Germany we witnessed the evolution of Liberal Judaism and its growing importance in German Jewish life. 75 years later we proudly experience the recognition of our role in German Jewish history by Jews and Germans alike.

Gerard Daniel – Past President WUPJ, and Ruth Daniel - Past Treasurer WUPJ



A Survivor Remembers

The year was 1928, and I was then celebrating my 16th birthday. The place was Berlin. My unforgettable dad, Jonas Plaut, born in 1880, suggested to take the street car (we did not have an automobile) so that the two of us could participate in an international conference. The organization that ran it was the World Union for Progressive Judaism. My dad was much impressed by it, and so was I, who at that time had no worldly experience.

I have never forgotten that meeting, for it has played a great role in my life. I had been brought up as a liberal Jew, which in the Germany of those days was an exception. Now I learned that liberal Judaism was a world wide movement. I was very proud of it, and I still am.

At the time, I met English Jews who wanted to take me to London, but it was not until several decades afterwards that I made my first trip to England. I have forgotten the exact year, but I do remember what happened. At one meeting of that World Union, I sat next to the best known Reform Jew of those days. He was Rabbi Dr. Solomon Freehof, who at the time was a rabbi in Pittsburgh. My autobiography, "Unfinished Business", has this note of our conversation: Dr. Freehof said to me, "Gunther, we Reform Jews need a book that describes the beginning of Reform Judaism, and I think you can write it. I, in turn, will see to it that it will be published."

I promised that I would do it, and when it was finished, Dr. Freehof kept his word; the book was published at once and had a wide circulation ("The Rise of Reform Judaism", 1963.) For me, who is now in his ninety-first year, these are important memories that connect yesteryears with today. May our religion continue to gain in strength.

*Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Past President of the Central Conference of American Reform Rabbis,
Past President of the Canadian Jewish Congress*



Greetings from the Granddaughter of Rabbi Leo Baeck

I am the granddaughter of Leo Baeck.

One of my early recollections is of accompanying my mother to a Shabbat morning service at the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue in Berlin. We sat in the front of the women's gallery. Grandfather was preaching. I whispered to my mother, "Why is Grandfather wearing that long black dress, and why can't I understand what he is saying?"

As I grew older, I began to understand his words and to find them an indirect refutation to the increasing turmoil in the streets, the vociferous throngs, the angry taunts and denunciations hurled against Jewish tradesmen in what had been a tranquil neighborhood of Berlin.

My parents tried to shield me from fear of the impending storm, but when guests came to our apartment, they spoke freely of their apprehensions and grandfather's tireless efforts to restore peace to the community. Many of my parents' friends emigrated to safer countries, but it was not at all easy to win permission to do so, either from the German authorities, or those in the land in which the German Jews wanted to establish themselves, taking along whatever of their possessions they were allowed to move.

In those fearful days, I thought often of Grandfather's admonition: "We human beings do not choose the times in which we live, but it is our task to find our way in them and to be a match for them. In order to be capable of this, we must grasp the significance of the days, must, as it were, understand the law of God that is operative in them."

In days when people had almost forgotten to hope, Gandhi sent a provocative message to Leo Baeck: "My advice to German Jews would be that they commit suicide on a single day, at a single hour. Then would the conscience of Europe awake." So alien, so repugnant to him was this counsel of annihilation, that nearly to the end of his life he hesitated to disclose it. *Wir Juden wissen: es ist ein Gebot von Gott, zu leben.*

Though in 1933 he declared that the thousand-year history of German Jewry had come to its end, he willingly accepted the leadership his people conferred upon him in their greatest need. There might be lives that judicious, though perilous intercession could save; there were children to be educated and helped to find safer homes, Jewish self respect to be sustained, Jewish institutions supported, Judaism to be taught and heeded.

In 1938, just after the horrors of Kristallnacht, all Jewish children were expelled from the German school system. Let it be remembered to her credit that one of my teachers, well aware that the stigma of dismissal from the school roster would make it difficult for me to win acceptance to a university, bravely appended a comment to the official report: "This child's conduct has been impeccable." Still, in the midst of a severe worldwide recession, where could refugee children find places to live and education and training for a career?

Very active in satisfying these needs was the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which had been established only twelve years before Kristallnacht, and of which grandfather was a founder. In June 1926, Lily Montagu of London, Organizing Secretary of the Jewish Religious Union, wrote to congregational leaders throughout the Jewish world to enquire if the recipients were in general sympathy, with the formation of an international union of Synagogues and Associations "upholding a progressive conception of Judaism." Among the other replies was a letter from Leo Baeck, who warmly endorsed Miss Montagu's proposal, which he said, had often been discussed among his colleagues.

Within several years the Central Conference of American Rabbis had given its approval. Because the terms “Liberal” and “Reform” had already been invested with restrictive meanings in various locales, the new association was named, somewhat clumsily, the World Union for Progressive Judaism. It quickly became far more than a theological society for intellectuals. It advocated a Judaism that would be meaningful to Jews who no longer found relevance in many traditional practices. It concerned itself with the plight of suffering Jewish communities. It defended Judaism and Jewry against calumny. It helped to advocate and resettle Jews from the former Soviet Union and to found educational and social welfare agencies in Israel, South Africa, and South America.

I was one of the children who sailed January 18, 1939 from Hamburg to South Hampton on a Kindertransport fearful that I might never again see my family. Edna and Rabbi Israel Mattuck welcomed me into their home, together with other refugee children. A few days later, Mrs. Mattuck took me shopping for school uniforms, and sent me off to St. Margaret’s School in Westgate, Kent, where I was the only student who could not speak English and indeed the only Jewish pupil. We were studying Dickens’ Christmas Carol when I began, and then moved on to Shakespeare’s Henry V, which was not written for a novice in Elizabethan discourse. My fellow students were cordial, helpful, and to this day I remain in contact with two of them.

Eventually my parents were able to establish themselves in London, I entered University, and in July 1945 my grandfather emerged from a concentration camp to carry on his life’s work, teaching, writing, helping to restore Jewish life in Europe.

Marianne C. Dreyfus



Reflections on the World Union for Progressive Judaism *Marking the 75th Anniversary of the First World Union Conference, Berlin, 1928*

Rabbi Joel D. Oseran, Associate Director - The World Union for Progressive Judaism

When leaders from Liberal, Progressive and Reform congregations in Europe, North America and other parts of the world gathered in Berlin in August, 1928 to convene the first World Union for Progressive Judaism international conference, little could they have imagined that only 75 years later the World Union would have become the largest Jewish religious movement in the world with over 1.5 million constituents in over 40 countries.

Two years earlier, in 1926, the World Union itself was established in London, under the forceful leadership of Miss Lily Montagu, its honorary secretary, and Claude Montifiore its first President. The mandate of the newly formed organization was straightforward - to unite into a permanent Union the various progressive Jewish movements already in existence in various countries of the world and to establish a movement presence wherever there were Jewish communities prepared and committed to undertake such a challenge.

There is little wonder that the World Union’s first international conference took place in Berlin. Germany was the birthplace of Reform Judaism, having nourished, since the 18th century, pre-eminent Jewish thinkers such as Mendelssohn, Zunz, Beak, Geiger and others who laid the foundations for a respected and recognized Progressive Movement in Judaism.

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Out of Germany went the pioneer leaders of Progressive Judaism who were to spread the message of the Movement to the far corners of the world. The Reform Movement in North America, having been built upon German roots, has, from its inception, been a stalwart constituent of the World Union. The North American Reform Movement is today the largest and most dynamic Jewish movement on that continent and has contributed generously, both materially and through leadership, to the success of the World Union over the decades.

Through the organizational efforts of the World Union and outstanding rabbinic emissaries it sent across the world, Progressive Movements were established beyond America and Europe on the shores of India, China, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, South America and the Caribbean, and, of course, in the Jewish Homeland, Israel.

The World Union's commitment to building a strong and effective Progressive Movement in Israel led to the establishment of the World Union's international headquarters in Jerusalem, in 1973. The impressive success of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism has resulted in the creation of synagogue-community centers, kibbutzim, kindergartens and schools, a youth movement and a religious action center which has championed the cause of social justice and equal rights for all Jews and non Jews in the State of Israel.

The need for a strong, internationally recognized umbrella body to promote the ideological/spiritual message of liberal Judaism and to provide institutional and financial backing for emerging Jewish communities seeking to identify with Progressive Judaism is no less important today than it was nearly a century ago. One of the most dramatic examples of the World Union's raison d'être can be seen in the renewal of Jewish life in the countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU). After a century of oppression, denigration and extermination, Jews in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States and other countries of the FSU emerged into the light of a new world with the fall of communism.

The World Union, recognizing the historic imperative to bring the message of liberal Judaism, of Jewish hope and continuity, to the second largest Jewish Diaspora, undertook the establishment of Progressive Judaism in the FSU. The year 2003 not only recognizes the 75th Anniversary of the first World Union conference, but it also celebrates the 13th Bar/Bat Mitzvah year of activity in the former Soviet Union - activity which has resulted in the establishment of approximately 100 congregations, a dynamic Netzer Olami Zionist Youth movement, academic training institutes, seminars and camps, and a growing number of indigenous rabbis trained by the Leo Baeck College, the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, and the newly established Abraham Geiger College.

A further example of the critical support and international backing which the World Union provides for local Progressive Jewish Movements in need, can be seen in Argentina today. Confronting an economic crisis of devastating proportions which forced the closure of synagogues and schools and left tens of thousands in the Jewish community in poverty, the World Union, in partnership with the local Progressive Movement, has rallied world Progressive Jewry to render vital humanitarian and educational assistance. The World Union stands, as one, with Progressive Jewish communities around the world.

History seems to flow full circle as the Union for Progressive Judaism in Germany, the German affiliate of the World Union, convenes for its annual conference in Berlin. Could the World Union leaders who gathered in Berlin in 1928 have even begun to comprehend the march of Jewish history through the 20th century and its return to Germany? Who could have predicted that in 2003, Germany would be the country with the fastest growing Jewish population in the world? Once again, the World Union is called upon to bring its respected international presence to bear, in support of the local German Progressive Movement's critical struggle for recognition and support.

We are privileged to pay tribute to the men and women all along the way, from Berlin 1928 to Berlin 2003, whose dedication has ensured the survival of our precious heritage and people. May this proud moment in our Movement's history fortify our resolve to continue the noble work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism and may we ever be mindful of the tremendous honor and responsibility which is ours as the messengers of God's word.



Religious Characteristics of Jewish Life in Germany *Sample Results of a Survey Conducted in the Jewish Community of Berlin*

These are the findings of a survey initiated in 2002 by the Berlin Jewish newspaper "Jüdisches Berlin" and published in the September 2002 to January 2003 issues.

The survey was conducted among members of the Berlin Jewish community. 426 people participated in the survey, and completed the questionnaire, 305 in German and 121 in Russian. 23% of them were German born, 40% were born in the Former Soviet Union and 11% elsewhere in Europe. Of those who filled out the questionnaire, 200 were men and 218 women.

- 45% identify with the Liberal or Reform movements, 14% with Conservative -Traditional, and 8% with Orthodox. 16% do not identify with any stream and 12% define themselves as atheists.
- The overwhelming majority of those asked, close to 80%, state that they were raised in families that were not at all, or only slightly religious. Only 14% name religion as the reason for their membership in the Jewish Community.
- 28% of the people asked stated that they attend synagogue between once to several times a week, more than half said they went only on High Holidays, and 8% never attend.
- Close to a third think that attending synagogue would be more appealing if sermons were more interesting. One of the main complaints was that services were not geared towards young people and were not relevant to current life.
- General comments that were expressed include a demand for mutual respect between the various religious movements, or streams and moving from existing prejudice toward greater solidarity. Many also expressed the need for greater involvement of women and girls in Jewish and community life.

Liberal Judaism in Germany

Dr. Jan Mühlstein, President, The Union for Liberal Judaism in Germany

When the first conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which had been founded in 1926, took place in Berlin in 1928, Germany was the center of a flourishing Liberal Judaism, which had begun to evolve with the establishment of the Seesen boys' school in 1801.

Only five years after this conference, the tragedy began: millions of Jews in Europe were deprived of their rights, expelled, displaced and murdered in the Nazi death camps. Germany's liberal Judaism can also be counted among the victims of the Shoah. Those who reestablished Jewish communities in Germany, following their liberation by the Allies, were predominantly survivors of the camps or refugees who came from Eastern Europe and who brought with them their Orthodox traditions. Only the synagogue on Pestalozzi Street remained an island of German liberal liturgy.

Those among the supporters of the ideas of Germany's Liberal Judaism, who were able to escape or survive Nazi persecution, found new homes, especially in Great Britain, North America and in what would become the State of Israel. There, they kept alive and further developed a tradition, to which, in the mid-nineties, Germany's newly established liberal Jewish communities could connect.

These communities, whose number has now grown to thirteen with over 2,000 members, have formed the Union for Progressive Judaism in Germany and joined the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and they are a sign of change. They were established by people who wished to reconnect to their liberal family roots or to continue the liberal Jewish traditions of their home communities in the United States or Great Britain, and by those who searched for access to modern Jewish traditions. Within these communities, Russian-speaking immigrants from the Former Soviet Union form an important group and even constitute, in some places, the vast majority.

Germany's new liberal communities are egalitarian, young and family-oriented. They are sustained by their members' commitment, members who - thanks to the support given by the World Union for Progressive Judaism - have achieved a great deal. In spite of physical conditions - often crowded - and a lack of funds - the communities are mostly self-funding through membership dues and donations and they have developed a rich Jewish life. Although most communities cannot afford a rabbi's visit very often (currently, one female and two male rabbis are available part-time to liberal communities), there are regular services, holiday celebrations and family events. There are educational activities for adults and children; Jewish cemeteries to be tended (these are often situated in public cemeteries). Great efforts are made to absorb immigrants who, unfortunately, have a hard time finding work and depend on social aid.

In addition, these small communities are very active in the areas of social education and inter-religious dialogue. One of the liberal movement's achievements is the founding of the Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam. It is the first rabbinical seminary founded in central Europe since the Shoah and has been training rabbis since 2001 (both men and women).

Thus, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of its first conference, the World Union for Progressive Judaism once again meets with liberal German Jewry on German soil; a Jewry which is an active and integral part of the international progressive Jewish movement. However, the integration of these new communities and the Union - as equal partners - into the Orthodox-dominated organizational structure that evolved in Germany after the war, and allocation of government funding, are issues that still need to be resolved.

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Liberal Judaism in Germany and The World Union for Progressive Judaism – A Brief Historical Outline

Michael A. Meyer, Professor of Jewish History

Liberal Judaism

Long before the Nazi period, German Jewry had become predominantly Liberal in its approach to Judaism. In virtually all of the major united Jewish communities, the Liberal faction held the governing role in community affairs. Similarly, in Austria, especially in Vienna, most Jews were Liberal in their religious orientation, as they were in Prague. In France the governing body, the Consistoire was officially Orthodox, but had adopted various synagogue reforms and there was a small Liberal congregation in Paris. Throughout Central Europe, Liberal Jews were among the most affluent and they generously supported cultural and welfare institutions both general and Jewish. They included prominent leaders of their communities and were the principal supporters of communal activities. With the rise of Nazism to power in 1933, a Liberal rabbi, Leo Baeck, was chosen to be the leader of a united German Jewry during its darkest hours. Five years later he also became president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

The Association of Liberal Rabbis in Germany (Vereinigung der liberalen Rabbiner Deutschlands), had been founded as early as 1898. Its rabbis served in the largest synagogues throughout the country. The Liberal Lay Association (Vereinigung für das liberale Judentum) was established in 1908. Its efforts were directed to furthering the cause of Liberal Judaism in the various Jewish communities in Germany. During the Weimar years and part of the Nazi period it published a newspaper called Jüdisch-Liberale Zeitung. It had its office at Wilhelmstraße 147 in Berlin. By far the largest Jewish organization in Germany, The Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens), was composed in its vast majority of Liberal Jews. In 1927 it had 70,000 members. The Jüdisches Jahrbuch for 1932 lists its paper, the C.V. Zeitung, under “Jewish Liberal newspapers and periodicals”.

The Example of Berlin

Within German Jewry of the Weimar period, Berlin was far and away the largest Jewish community. In 1925 it had 171,912 Jews. Second in size was Frankfurt/Main with 29,658, followed by Breslau (23,452) and Hamburg (16,885).

In Berlin in 1926, as noted in the Berlin Yearbook for that year, the Jewish community was a public corporation (Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts). All Jews living in Berlin were automatically members unless they chose to withdraw. The responsibility of the community included the maintenance of all institutions dealing with religious life. It received most of its funds from special taxes, which were based on an additional amount added to the national income tax. It also administered various privately funded endowments, some of which were intended for specifically religious purposes, most for social welfare.

The planned Berlin community budget for 1926 was set at 8,328,018.50 Marks to be paid by 67,000 taxpayers. Of this total budget, the community was planning to spend 2,441,426.60 Marks on religious matters (Kultus und Ritualwesen), of which all but 638,226.60 was expected as income from sale of High Holiday seats and the like, and the rest to be covered by Jewish tax revenues. Expenses for the maintenance of rabbis and cantors was estimated at 348,105 Marks. Expenditures for religious education were expected to come to 1,002,022.50 Marks, of which 688,702.50 was expected to come from tax revenue. 22 Pfennig of every Mark of community expenditures went to religious institutions (synagogues and the like) and 18 Pfennig to Jewish education. Liberal Jews were the largest contributors, both in terms of tax payments, voluntary donations, and endowments. The semi-independent “Reform Congregation” (Reformgemeinde) had its own substantial private endowments and owned two buildings in Berlin.

In the Berlin Jewish community, the Liberals were in office at least since the beginning of the 20th century except 1926-1931 when an opposing coalition gained power, but Liberals continued to be largest bloc with 45.9% (10 out of 21 seats in the governing body). In the 1930 election they regained a dear majority (53.9%) in an election with an extraordinarily high turnout 77,398 Berlin Jews voted. In that election the Liberals gained 24 seats in an enlarged body of 41. Most of the remaining seats went to the Zionists (who were generally non-Orthodox in their religious orientation), with the Orthodox party getting only 2.3% of the vote.

Berlin had a local Liberal lay association called Liberaler Verein für die Angelegenheiten der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin E. V., with offices located at Hallesche Straße 1. In addition some of the individual Liberal synagogues in Berlin had their own “Synagogenvereine” which planned special activities and aided poor congregants. One example is the Verein Synagoge Fasanenstraße, which had its offices down the street from the synagogue, at Fasanenstraße 69.

The Berlin community supported nine Liberal community synagogues and four Orthodox community synagogues. The Liberal synagogues were the following:

- Liberale Synagoge (“Neue Synagoge”), Oranienburger Straße 30 (Berlin-Mitte)
- Liberale Synagoge Lindenstraße 48-50 (Kreutzberg)
- Liberale Synagoge Lützowstraße 16 (Tiergarten)
- Liberale Synagoge Rykestraße 53 (Prenzlauer Berg)
- Liberale Synagoge in der Fasanenstraße 79/80 (Charlottenburg)
- Liberale Synagoge in der Levetzowstraße 7-8 (Moabit)
- Liberale Synagoge Pestalozzistraße 14-15 (Charlottenburg)
- Synagoge Markgraf-Albrecht-Straße 11-12 [“Friedenstempel”] (Wilmersdorf)
- Synagoge Prinzregentenstraße 69/70 (Wilmersdorf)

In 1926 the Berlin community employed 13 rabbis, most of whom were Liberals. For the High Holidays halls were rented and rabbinical students employed to lead additional services. 34 such supplementary services were held in 1926. Of these, 25 used the “Neue Ritus,” i.e. the services were Liberal in character, employing a mixed choir.

The World Union for Progressive Judaism

As early as 1914, the leaders of the German Liberal Association turned to Rabbi Israel Mattuck in London and suggested the formation of an international body that would include Liberal Jews from Germany, England, America and France. However, on account of the war, this initiative had to be postponed until 1926. In that year an initial, organizing meeting, at which German Jews played a large role, was held in London. The first official international gathering of the World Union for Progressive Judaism then took place in Berlin in August 1928. During this well-publicized event, Liberal rabbis from outside Germany spoke at various German synagogues and fundamental

theological and ideological issues were discussed. To the extent that it was able, German Jewry continued to play a major role in the WUPJ even during the Nazi years. Scholars at the Liberal seminary in Berlin, the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, such as Ismar Elbogen and Max Wiener, were among the World Union's enthusiastic supporters. In 1938, following the death of Claude Montefiore, Rabbi Leo Baeck became the second president of the World Union, an indication of the centrality of German Jewry for the World Union. He continued to serve until 1953. Since the war, the World Union has occupied itself intensively with reestablishing Liberal Judaism in Central and Western Europe and creating new congregations in Eastern Europe and Israel. From its beginnings more than seventy years ago, the WUPJ has both served as the important connecting link among the European Liberal Jewish communities and provided them with a sense of common purpose. On a worldwide basis, it has represented the ideals to which Liberal Judaism in Central Europe was devoted in the years before the Holocaust destroyed so many of its adherents.





Miss Lily Montagu
delivering the sermon

Two years after the initial meeting in London, in 1928, the World Union held its first official conference in Berlin. In retrospect, it stands out as the high point in the World Union's early history. Attired in formal dress, the delegates gathered for their opening session in the ornate chamber of the one-time Prussian Herrenhaus (House of Lords). They worshiped together in the grand old Neue Synagoge and saw Lily Montagu ascend the pulpit of the Berlin Reform Congregation to deliver the first sermon ever given by a woman in a German synagogue. The highlight of the conference was the remarkable lecture by Leo Baeck entitled: "The Message of Liberal Judaism for Today's Jew" - "Begin to create the future" he urged the delegates, and they long remembered his words.

From: Response to Modernity - A History of the Reform Movement, Professor Michael A. Meyer



C.G. Montifiore chairing
the proceedings

Excerpts from Proceedings of the First Conference of The World Union for Progressive Judaism, Berlin 1928.

“We, English representatives of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and of the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism, desire to thank you, our German colleagues and friends, for the kind and gracious way in which you have received us all...we have been strengthened in our determination to do all we can for our common cause... For here, on German soil, we feel that Liberal Jews should be most especially at home.

We remember, and are grateful for, all that we owe to German thinkers and leaders. The founders of Liberal Judaism were men of your country. To Geiger, Holdheim and several others how great is our debt! And the flame, which they kindled, has never died out.

May Liberal Judaism and Judaism as a whole, be the better and the stronger for your efforts and your care. We shall take away with us most happy memories of Berlin and our German hosts and hostesses.”

Mr. C.G. Montefiore (page 152-153)

"Our work has resulted in the establishment of a close bond between the Liberal Jewish organizations in the different countries, and has increased our knowledge of each other's work. It has also included a survey (limited in scope but nevertheless very instructive) of the religious condition of Jews in Poland, Holland, Italy, Belgium and Palestine. Your Secretary has also had correspondence with Jews in South Africa and Australia, who are interested in the spread of Liberal Judaism. In all these countries, in varying degrees, the need for Jewish teaching on liberal lines, seems unquestionable. If men and money had been available, there is no doubt that already great progress would have been made."

Miss Lily Montagu (page 94-95)

"Frau Ollendorf (Breslau) began by thanking Miss Montagu in the name of the German Jewish women who regarded her as an example and an inspiration. Asking what practical conclusions women might draw from the conference, she dwelt on the work of American Jewish Women, who were at once idealistic and practical. In the first place every American Liberal Congregation had formed a Sisterhood to foster Jewish life in general, e.g., attendance at Synagogue, etc. One of their main tasks is the religious instruction of the young."

Summary of Frau Ollendorf's speech (page 111)

"The Union of American Hebrew Congregations extends greetings and best wishes for the success of the ... Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. The large number of American delegates is a proof of our great sympathy for the newly created Union and we sincerely hope that the next Conference of the World Union will be held in the United States of America. We join with the Central Conference of American Rabbis in extending to you an invitation and assure you of a most hearty welcome. ... We believe, with you, that modern man requires an enlightened interpretation of the faith as developed during the centuries, and we rejoice in the thought that this Conference takes place in the country in which Jewish emancipation and Reform was born. We honor the

memory of the philosophers and preachers in Germany who by their noble inspiration and unflinching Jewish loyalty paved the way for the advance and development of Liberal Judaism in America."

Mr. Ludwig Wogelstein, Chairman of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (page 16-17)

"Let me first refer and give thanks to Dr. Baeck for his address. I want to repeat the words, which were said by a previous speaker. I have traveled over 4,000 miles, but had I come here to hear nothing but this address, I would have been amply repaid. I think the chief value of a speech rests not so much in the thoughts, which the speaker himself formulates, as in the thoughts, which he awakens in the minds of his hearers. And it must be said that Dr. Baeck's speech was remarkably stimulating and fruitful."

Dr Julian Morgenstern (Cincinnati) (page 113)



A Message of Liberal Judaism for Today's Jew

Excerpts from the Keynote Address Given by Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck at the First World Union Conference, Berlin 1928

“...Yet one thing can be absolutely clear to us today: We must not want to be up-to-date, to be of today. But if this is so, what then do these words mean, which, and with good reason, are our subject to explore: "A Message for today's Jew", and what, accordingly, does the term "Liberal Judaism" mean, which claims to define our entire status? The answer is the following: The required target is not people nor a form of Judaism merely interested in the present day and serving the present only. The term aims at something different, something upon which everything depends: A form of Judaism and a type of people understanding history, seeing the course of history, recognizing what has transpired and what will transpire....

This was therefore the double task that history now gave the Jews: To live in this European world, to come to terms with its respective conditions, requirements and problems, and still not become a part of it, not become separated from his own; to be an individual concerning religion and all things Jewish and still remain within the context of his own history and the community created by it. It is liberalism's historic function to resolve this undertaking: In this, it finds its legitimacy and its duty, its way and its directive. We have the Reform Movement's best men to thank for having recognized this task....

If people, be it individuals, groups, nations or communities, place their emphasis first of all on appearances, they will always look at themselves and compare themselves with others. In other words: They will spend too much time in front of the mirror, trying to convince themselves of themselves. Judaism in the nineteenth century often had the tendency to ask how it could present itself the best way. Those, who by contrast want to amount to something, they do not face themselves, they face the world as they want to be for this world. They look at their history and their future and therefore check first and above all, their essence and their path. When only the decorative aspect is of value, people and their religion become easily petty; in times past, the Jewish people had to experience this a number of times. When the constructive aspect is the main issue, the big tug sets in, since only then, big ideas can lead to answers and bring about solutions.

What is important for all, and for us first of all, are these big ideas and this big tug. Only in them and through them can Liberal Judaism's message be given, a message that is realized in people, in individuals, in people of today. Only if we cover the mirror, if we push the question of how we want to look aside and direct serious understanding, all our requests, towards the question of who we are and who we should be, only then will we become certain of the large, the constructive, the lines of our essence and our quality. Then, based on this certainty, and only on it, we will also gain the spiritual and emotional connection to the world around us, completely understand what this world is to us and what we are to it. This way alone, genuine universalism which does not pay lip service but which is one of personality alone, will become ours.

Today, we are all out there in the world, whether we want to or not. Historically, the time of the ghetto is over. Our task is as significant and difficult as no other posed by history, and it means standing out there in the world, with a humanism that is alive and that has been formed by millennia, with the will to stand by the world and completely by oneself, and to take part in the best it has to offer, and thus to live in it not only in terms of space but also in terms of emotion, and spirit, not only socially, but religiously as well, fully conscious therefore that we live for it (the world).To us Jews of today, especially to the liberals among us, this task speaks with total sincerity. Those who do not accept it, can not be Jews of today, can not be liberal Jews...

True liberalism is a maximum of Judaism, a maximum of piety, in the largeness of thought, in the certainty of our place in the world.”



L-R
Rabbi Israel Mattuck,
Miss Lily Montagu,
Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck

The Task of Progressive Judaism in the Post - War World

Excerpts from a Presidential Address Given by Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck at the Fifth International Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism on Sunday, July 28, 1946 in London

“Since the last Conference of our World Union, a terrible ordeal has swept over the Jewish people and over humanity; it has once again proved true that the Jewish People and humanity are inseparable from one another...

During the time of horror, not only Jewish communities were destroyed as before, but whole Jewish regions. All and everything of the manifold forms of Jewish life has been hit by the severity of the loss and of the suffering. We must never forget what we have lost or whom we have lost. We must conserve this emotion within us – “lest we forget, lest we forget”...

Furthermore, on new soil, new seed was sown to ripen towards days of harvest; in South Africa and in Australia, in Canada and South America and in age-hallowed India. And deeply moved we stand watching how, on the martyred soil of the European Continent, in spite of everything, Jewish willpower is active, Jewish life, as in all forms thus also in that of our Progressive Judaism, endeavors to and will revive...

This is what we must hold on to, what we must become ever more sure of: that Progressive Judaism can have its significance only in the midst of the whole of Judaism, of all Jewish life, only with a strong feeling for the common tasks, for the whole, that is before and above all the parts, for the “K’lal Israel”. We do not want to be a mere party, great or small, but a movement; not a sect, but an energy in Judaism...

Judaism must not stand aside, when the great problems of humanity, which are reborn in every new epoch, struggle in the minds of men to gain expression, battle in the societies of mankind to find their way... We are Jews also for the sake of humanity; we should be there, quite especially in this world after the war; we have our questions to raise and have to give our answer.

We know what history has spoken to us and what we have to say. We fight the Jewish fight for the world of men, the world of God’s children; fight for it with the strength of what is ours...”

Präsidenten der World Union for Progressive Judaism

Ruth Cohen	2001- heute	(Großbritannien, Israel)
Austin Beutel	1995-2001	(Kanada)
Donald S. Day	1988-1995	(USA)
Gerald Daniel	1980-1988	(USA)
Rabbi David H. Wice	1973-1980	(USA)
Maurice Eisendrath	1972-1973	(USA)
Bernard J. Bramberger	1970-1972	(USA)
Jacob K. Shankman	1964-1970	(USA)
Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof	1960-1964	(USA)
Lily Montagu	1954-1959	(Großbritannien)
Rabbi Leo Baeck	1939-1953	(Deutschland, Großbritannien)
Claude G. Montefiore	1926-1938	(Großbritannien)

Presidents of The World Union for Progressive Judaism

Ruth Cohen	2001- present	(Great Britain, Israel)
Austin Beutel	1995-2001	(Canada)
Donald S. Day	1988-1995	(USA)
Gerald Daniel	1980-1988	(USA)
Rabbi David H. Wice	1973-1980	(USA)
Maurice Eisendrath	1972-1973	(USA)
Bernard J. Bramberger	1970-1972	(USA)
Jacob K. Shankman	1964-1970	(USA)
Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof	1960-1964	(USA)
Lily Montagu	1954-1959	(Great Britain)
Rabbi Leo Baeck	1939-1953	(Germany, Great Britain)
Claude G. Montefiore	1926-1938	(Great Britain)

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