

Boycotts, Anti-Nazi

Economic actions taken by groups in many countries, especially the United States, against Nazi Germany before World War II in protest of the persecution of Jews.

The Jewish War Veterans established a boycott in the United States on March 19, 1933. In May the American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights was founded by the Yiddish journalist, Abraham Coralnik. Six months later Samuel Untermyer took charge of the organization; he soon became a leading figure in the boycott movement and was active until the United States entered the war in 1941. Untermyer changed his organization's name to the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights to emphasize that the cause did not only apply to Jews.

Untermyer and Coralnik also organized the World Jewish Economic Conference in Amsterdam in an unsuccessful effort to create an international Jewish boycott movement. The American Jewish Congress (AJC) declared a boycott in August 1933. In 1935 the AJC set up a joint boycott council with the Jewish labor committee; it developed into one of two major boycott organizations in the US. Nevertheless, Untermyer's league and the joint council did not succeed in joining forces.

Despite the fact that much support was expressed for the boycotts, many important organizations and leaders (both Jewish and among the American public) did not back the movement. Some, such as the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith in the US, the Board of Deputies of British Jews in England, and the Alliance Israelite Universelle in France, even opposed the movement. In Britain, a group of board members under the leadership of Lord Melchett (Henry Mond) broke away to form their own movement. However, the group soon split up. The Jewish Agency could not support the boycott movement because of the transfer agreement it had made with Germany, allowing them to help German Jews leave for Palestine, but forfeiting their right to protest Germany's activities.

The boycott was somewhat successful: it stopped the fur trade between Germany and Britain; several American department stores stopped buying

German goods; and some leading Nazis even showed concern about the boycott's effects on the economy.