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Jewish Solidarity

Bernard Lazare

October 1,1890

A propos of Russian Jewry, whose cause some French journalists took up with too much ardor, or at the very least in too intemperate and unjustifiable a fashion, Monsieur Paul de Cassagnac, in an excellent article, said:

“Jewish writers here have an excellent occasion, by ceasing to compromise the Russian alliance by their unjust diatribes, to prove – what I have never doubted – that they are falsely accused and slandered when they are reproached for being cosmopolitans and for only making a mediocre – or at least secondary – case of what is commonly called the fatherland.”

That recent affair and these words put in question that famous solidarity of Israel that though once justifiable, wrongly persists today. A definition is capable of characterizing it in the past and the present: There was once an Israelite solidarity, there can now only be a Jewish solidarity. The first can be excused and understood; as for the second, I hope to demonstrate that it is founded on false principles and that it constitutes a danger for the Israelites of France, the only ones I am concerned with here.

For countless days the Hebrews, who bore in their souls their mourning for sacked Judea, for Jerusalem destroyed, for

the temple delivered to flames, were subject to contempt, insults, and punishments. To be sure, the prophets who called down upon Judas the fearsome fury of their God as punishment for the evil ones who ruined him didn't dream up misfortunes more horrible than those that overwhelmed him. When we read its martyrology, as it was told in tears in the 16th century by the *Avignonais* Ha-Cohen, this martyrology which extends from Akiba torn apart by iron tines, to the tortured of Ancona praying at the stake, and to the heroes of Vitry who immolated themselves, one feels oneself seized by sorrow. The Vale of Tears, such is the name of that book that "resonated for the mourning..." and whose moving grandeur the tears of the pastor of Chambrun, celebrating the proscribed Huguenots, doesn't reach. "I called it the 'Vale of Tears'," said the old chronicler, descendant of sorrowful *nabis*, "for things are exactly as in the title: whoever reads it will be breathless, tears will flow from his eyes and his on his breast he will say: How long, my God, how long?" After reading this one can understand how poignant must be the affliction of these beings and how, in these difficult hours, they should band together and feel themselves to be brothers. The ties that bind them could only become stronger, the shared rancor of these disinherited beings develop, become necessary. Who could they tell their sorrows and joys to if not to themselves, since for centuries no one wanted to listen to them. From these common desolations, from these tears was born a suffering and intense fraternity. It pleased these abandoned ones, mistreated all over Europe and who marched with their faces soiled with spittle to feel Zion and its lost hills live again, to evoke – a supreme and sweet consolation – the beloved banks of the Jordan and the Galilee: this came about through a universal solidarity. They didn't at all take account of differences; it seemed to them that all those who bear the name of Israel, and who were necessarily their friends, deserved their tenderness. Thus was formed, in groans and oppressions, that alliance which little by little,

when the earth became more clement, came apart; that alliance that clumsily inspired politicians have brought back to life in our time, when it no longer has any *raison d'être*.

Once the Jew knew that when he traveled he would only find shelter with a Jew; if he were struck by illness only a Jew would fraternally assist him; if he were to die far from his own, Jews alone could bury him according to the rites, saying over his body the customary prayers. No one condemns these necessary and just ties. The Israelites owe them their indomitable courage; thanks to that mutual affection they were able to resist implacable laws and deploy that marvelous energy that saved them. Hunted, persecuted, they embraced each other with even more love, and this preserved the tenderness and goodness that many among them have rediscovered, at the same time as they have forgotten the tortures. Are there today many Protestants who hold onto the rancor caused by the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the *Dragonnades*? Not any more than there are Israelites who remember Philippe-le-Bel.

And yet in 1860 a man, with a mediocre intelligence and of questionable politics, dreaming of I know not what *gaonate*, sought to bring this solidarity back to life and organize it. I am speaking of Monsieur Crémieux and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. I have no need here of concerning myself with this man; perhaps later I will go into his role, which I consider detestable; I can perhaps say that he doesn't deserve the admiration and respect he is given by French Israelites, and that he did great evil when, in the midst of his countries reverses, he thought only of the emancipation of Algerian Jewry, sordid usurers worthy of contempt and not pity, thus provoking insurrection and war.

I come now to the *Alliance*. Founded in 1860 over the last forty years it has expanded greatly. It is led by a Central Committee, and by regional and Local Committees. In the words of one of its members, it seeks the moral unity of Israel; it watches for and prevents – insofar as it can – the oppression of

Jews in “backwards countries.” It is neither English nor French nor German: it is Jewish. On what basis is it founded?

Is it on a religious basis? I have already spoken of the lack of faith of modern Israelites. In any event, I don't see the necessity for an International in order to affirm your beliefs. Mohammedans, spread across many countries, don't act in this way and yet among them Allah and Mohammed are adored with as much energy, or even more, than Jehovah and Moses elsewhere. Are they not mistreated in certain countries, you might ask? Yes, but they don't feel the need to defend co-religionaries who are foreign to them. In any case, the Jews of Russia and Romania, are they molested because of their religion? It would be naïve to defend such a thesis. The theological tie is insufficient in explaining the *Alliance*. It is thus based on race, and so becomes false and dangerous.

One of the most generally established errors, one of the dogmas admitted by all those who have shown an interest in Semites, is their so-called stability, the ethnic persistence of the Israelites. To listen to most of these historians, they have remained what they were at the time of the Roman conquest. Nothing could be less true than this assertion. The only thing that has persisted is something that has not been noticed: it's the eternal division of the Hebrew tribes, attested to by the profound symbol of the Golden Calf. Two fractions, almost two nations constantly confront each other with every step of the exodus, on every date in history. One simple and pure, adoring with a profound piety the God that its genius conquered, by the mouth of whose prophets pure law was given and the powerful and the rich anathematized. The other eternally perverse, prostrating itself before the idols Kamosch, Milchom, or Aschera, preaching in support of luxury and wealth, sister in this to Tyre and Sidon, which were cursed by Isaiah and Jeremiah. It will later produce evil pontiffs and dry doctors; it will suffocate the flower of poetry that lay in the soul of the prodigious singer who sang the lamentations of

Israelites at least listen to Philo, let them put this in practice, especially when this hand and foot are illegitimately grafted on to them. Otherwise let them be on their guard: one possibly distant day they will be included in an anathema gone astray.

Let the Israelites of France retire then from the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* – the head rabbi first, for it is inappropriate for him to play at pope, having neither national nor theological right to it. If they can cooperate in its abolition it must be done; their consistories and their communities amply suffice for their religious needs (as long as a Jew has a synagogue he can go to on Saturday to chat about his affairs while the un-listened to prayers reverberate around him his soul is satisfied). Let him leave those of Russia, Poland, and Germany to unite amongst themselves: that's their affair. As for the moral regeneration of the Jews of these nations, let those who govern them take care of this if they think it necessary. If they think they can use this large force let them educate their Jews by tearing them from the grips of the Talmudists who deform and pollute them. On the part of French Israelites it would be more normal to stop, to dam if they can, the perpetual immigration of these predatory, crude and filthy Tatars who come unjustifiably graze in a country not theirs. This is what they should do instead of welcoming them to their own detriment.

Job, of that other who sighed of the abduction of the Shulamite and, becoming dominant, will render Israel an object of abomination when the greater part of it is worthy of respect. It alone will be seen, for it will lead this unfortunate people, and the image of captives on the banks of enemy rivers, of indomitable and worthy heroes – incarnated by Samson – the memory of the glorious soldiers who resisted Rome and who buried themselves in the city in flames, all of this will disappear. It will no longer be known, or at least it will no longer be said, that those who were called “warriors of God” – Israel – were not a horde of greedy traffickers and vile usurers. And it is of this duality that I am speaking, for they still exist, despite the transformations, the allies of Tyre and Sidon, cursed by the inspired; they still exist, the defenders and henchmen of the *nabis*, and yet the Jewish nation is dead.

Take a Jew from China, a B'nei Israel from Hindustan, a Polish or Russian Jew, a German Jew, A Spanish Jew, or a French, an Italian, an Algerian Jew, an Abyssinian Jew; put them one next to the other and see if a serious ethnologist could draw from this exhibit the theory of a permanent race that is so complacently professed. That this Celestial, this Hindu, this Hun, this Kalmuk, this Negro and this half-Latin have points of contact is undeniable – we can find them between a Samoyed and a Parisian – but what is especially palpable and obvious are the divergences.

Let us consider just the Europeans. Between a lorgnette merchant of Frankfurt – this lorgnette merchant who is the inevitable chrysalis of a journalist or a stock market agent, if not of a politician – and the humblest of Jewish shop owners of France or Italy, and I'm not speaking of those who were naturalized: the most violent anti-Semites have themselves noted the difference, entirely to the advantage of the latter group. How did these differences come about? The Israelist, who they like to show as perpetually withdrawn into himself, holding his neighbors in horror and refusing to mix with them was,

on the contrary, always devoured by proselytism; and by generally attributing to him the idea of his confining himself to closed off practices and scrupulously reserved rites, they formulate the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Talmudists, who were often fought against but who, alas, emerged victorious in the 18th Century. The Essenes, those communists preaching the contempt of worldly goods, living ascetically in the candor of perpetual prayer, these Essenes, persecuted by Phariseism traversed the Orient in order to spread their doctrine. In Rome their proselytism was so ardent that in 538 the Republic expelled them. The measure was temporary, and in Imperial Rome we see them attracting matrons and slaves. The number of these God-fearers was considerable, and the situation was the same in Alexandria, as attested to by Philo. It was among these Judaizers that nascent Christianity conquered souls with such ease. Is not one of the most striking evidences of this propaganda the apostle Saint Paul? With the arrival of Christianity these tendencies did not weaken. From this time on in every country the Jews lived they Judaized, and thus mixed, and foreign elements were incorporated into them. What was then produced? In certain cases the mix of nationalities was favorable, in others not. The great separation of European Israelites is the proof of this: the German Jews (Ashkenazim) and the Portuguese Jews (Sephardim), the former in the German Empire, Austria, Poland, Russia; the latter in Spain, Portugal, France, England and Holland. Some colonies even crossed the Rhine, notably in Hamburg. To believe that this division is founded on an arbitrary geographic factor would be an error: rather it is based on profound differences in ethnic constitution, in character, and in morality. The Portuguese, who allied themselves with peoples of the Latin race (those in Holland and England come from émigrés) belong to the type that the anthropologists call dolicocephalic. The Germans, who it would be more correct to call the Tatar, belong to the brachycephalic type. In the first centuries of our era he met with the great

it is forgotten that we have inhabited France for almost two thousand years; two thousand years, like those Franks who invaded this country and made of it a fatherland: the ancient Hebrews didn't tread the land they defended with such well-known energy for as long a time as this. And yet, when one has spent twenty centuries in a country, when one has prospered there and suffered loved, profound ties form and nothing can break them. French Israelites have buried many of their fathers in France; the very blood they have spilled there, this blood that militates in their favor and must redeem many faults, this blood ties them even more to the soil that receives it, and this soil, they have defended it and they will defend it again, for it is their soil. Some polemicists, sometimes ill-inspired, cry: Gaul for the Gauls! If Gaul were only for the Gauls it would certainly belong to few people. Others say: Long Live the French Race! But this French race, how many different races have cooperated in forming it? Do we know how many molecules a nation is composed of? Did the Gauls not energetically fight the Franks who despoiled them? And does anyone believe that the Goths, the Romans, the Avars, and the Germans left nothing in this country that they inhabited one after the other?

If the Jewish religion, that religion that is crumbling, decomposing, and falling into ruin were to disappear along with the external practices that alone preserve it today, in a hundred years the Jewish element would be so incorporated into the elements that surround it that we would no more recognize the Israelite than we do the Visigoth existing in a few Frenchmen. In any case, what I want to proclaim is that we have nothing in common with those constantly thrown in our face, and that we should abandon them. In place of that stupid and false solidarity preached by the *Alliance Universelle* we should ourselves expel them from among us when they are tainted. "If your hand or your foot is an occasion for your fall, cut it off and throw it far from you," said the gospel. Philo said this too. Let French

if they were to adore Jehovah three times and venerate Moses ten times I wouldn't feel my sympathy grow for all that; the Christians of Crete also have the right to move me, as would so many others who are pariahs on this globe without being Israelites. And besides, what does such an association lead to? To welcoming among us contemptible beings, to helping them, favoring them, implanting them in a soil that isn't theirs and which shouldn't nourish them, in facilitating their conquest. Who does this serve? The cosmopolitan Jew who has ties to no nation, affection for none, who is a Bedouin transporting his tent with complete indifference. It is precious to the sons of Kalmuk invaders, most of them vile and predatory, for those Talmudists who, according to the words of Ernest Renan, are "unsociable, strangers everywhere, without a country, without any interest but that of their sect, plagues on the countries where fate has carried them." It serves the Jews of whom I have spoken, who find among them valiant recruits for evil, faithful acolytes without prejudices and without morals, ignorant and holding in contempt a law that isn't theirs. Bankers will find there the courtiers and straw men they need, the journalists, the blackmailers, the provocateurs that are necessary to them; the politicians will find the unscrupulous electoral agents, the perverters of consciences so useful to their goals. And these courtiers, these provocateurs, these agents will in their turn, by a dynastic and serious vocation, become the bankers, the journalists, the politicians of tomorrow.

To whom is the *Alliance* harmful? To the Israelites of France who are duped and dishonored by their so-called brothers. What also occurs? Open an anti-Semitic book to any page and you will hear shouted – and justly so most of the time – words against the Frankfurters, the Galicians, the Romanians, the Russians who are descending upon us like grasshoppers. The Israelites of France suffer from their depredations, their immorality, their lack of faith, their indifference to the public good. Thanks to these hordes with which we are confused

lirachycephalic emigration, and the Caucasus was the center of the fusion. It is also there that we find the greatest number of documents for the studying of these transformations. The Jews established in Anape, in Olbia and the surrounding areas converted the Uro-Altai peoples to Judaism, and the memory of the most powerful of these tribes that became Israelites has been preserved in history: the kingdom of the Khazars. The Hebraic element, sustained by currents arriving from Baghdad and Jerusalem, mixed with the Huns and Kalmuks. It was thus that that hybrid and small yet noble race was formed that, in the Sixth century, invaded Russia and then Poland and Germany, submerging in its passage the purer Semitic groups. As for the Jews of the south, in Rome itself, from which many left to found settlements in Europe, they had assimilated to themselves men of the people, the fearful, who, sensing the arrival of a new day, tired of a polytheism that left their hearts thirsty and their hearts empty, and so they went over to the jealous God. In Spain and France the repeated prohibitions of the Councils of the Fourth to the Seventh centuries bear witness to how numerous mixed marriages were. It should not be forgotten that upon their arrival in these countries the Jews found themselves in the presence of pagan populations, and perhaps they were on the peninsula before Jesus Christ. The Semitic type predominated among them; they are most often quite large, the nose firmly outlined, their hair fine and curly, the eyes beautiful. The German is generally small, with pale skin, he has dirty red hair, or dirty yellow as is the case in Bohemia, a sparse beard and a distracted gaze. In the lower classes in Poland, Russia, and Galicia and among the ghettos of Germany, one finds oneself in the presence of an unwashed being, in tattered clothes, of a viscous and repugnant aspect, speaking a bizarre idiom, a Judeo-German patois. Look now at the smallest Israelite peddler of a Provencal village: in costume, language and attitude he is the same as the peasants of the different confessions that surround him. The German is vain, ignorant, greedy, low, grov-

eling, insolent. Cerf Beer of Medelsheim, who knew them well, said this in 1847. He has never produced anything, if not clipplings of ducats, tunesmiths, vaudevillians of a doubtful intelligence, vague chroniclers. If some, like Heine, have stood out, then likely they were descendants of Spanish émigrés, of those who, expelled in 1492, took refuge in the countries of the Rhine: Heine's appearance, his air of a young God, the purity of his features seems to prove this. As for the Portuguese, before the Babylonian or German Talmudists broke their spirit and abolished the independence of their thought they developed and flourished in a very high civilization. Of a proud allure and a purified taste they feel reborn in their hearts the poetical soul of their forefathers, of those who told the touching stories of Ruth and Suzanne. They always held the Germans in contempt, and the Germans gave them hatred in return: as recently as forty years ago a Portuguese or Comtadin Israelite would not have wanted to ally himself with a Prussian Jew. In Spain the Jews were detested, not held in contempt: at the battle of Zalaca 40,000 fought with Alfonso VI of Castille, and the skillful lance blows given and received rendered them capable of elevated thoughts. It is the same in southern France. And so they don't deserve the just disdain felt for the Germans and Russians, those semi-Huns and semi-Tatars. They didn't take on those vile attitudes that are still assumed today by the usurer of a Polish hamlet when he receives a blow with a riding crop. And let it not be said that the intellectual and morale debasement of these Ashkenazim, that their inability to produce literarily and scientifically are caused by their repeated proscriptions and martyrdoms, since in Poland, where they lived for many years under a favorable domination, they produced nothing but false, dried out, detestable Talmudic literature. Those unfortunates, for whom we must feel the pity owed to those who suffer, but not any kind of esteem, have remained under the rule of narrow old rabbis who imposed upon them a ridiculous dialectic, forever striking their brains – already con-

secrated to decrepitude- with imbecility. It was in vain that in Germany larger spirits wanted to tear them from these evils: in vain did Mendelsohn and the editors of the *Measef* attempt this; they only succeeded in converting their children to Christianity, who came to this from disgust with those who surrounded them.

External circumstances, the influence of the milieu, historical causes, and the climate don't suffice to explain such differences in beings issued from the same social stratum. Only modifications due to mixing, a change in constitution, a modification in the cerebral substance justify them, and we can say that the pure Jewish race no longer exists, except among a handful of Karaites, and even this is not proven.

Russian Jews and French Jews, German Jews, English Jews and Polish Jews are separated by the same distances that separate Slavs from Germans, Latins, and Saxons. This being so, the second reason that the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* can invoke, and which is in reality its primary reason, disappears and cannot be sustained. Nevertheless, let us understand each other! You Israelites, you protest when you are told: you have no fatherland; you are vagabonds who have stopped for a moment. You reject- and often sincerely – these accusations and, on the word of people having an interest in this arbitrary assimilation you accept as brothers people who, amongst themselves have as much resemblance as a Fuegian and a Hottentot. What do they matter to me, a French Israelite, those Russian usurers, Galician money lenders, Polish horse merchants, stock jobbers of Prague and money changers of Frankfurt? By virtue of what so-called fraternity am I to be concerned by measures taken by the Czar towards subjects who seem to him to do harm? Should I, in defending them, in supporting them, assume a part of their responsibility? What do I have in common with the descendants of Huns? If they suffer I have for them the natural pity due to all those who suffer, whoever they might be, since on earth punishment is always disproportionate to the crime. But