

# Culture exists

## —even in the Reich

has been said that the Jews of Germany are the one of the German society which preserves freedom of thought and freedom of opinion. Off as it is from the social intellectual life of the general community, it has devised its own cultural institutions, which is free from the mass propaganda which no "Aryan" German may escape. It may be of interest to give an account of the cultural institution, the Deutscher Kulturbund, which, with the approval of the Government of the Reich, has been established since 1933, and carries out its activities in all the towns which have a considerable Jewish population.

It was one of the special hardships of the "Aryan" legislation in Germany that those who had taken a pre-eminent part in literary, musical, and dramatic life of the republic were utterly excluded from that life in the Third Reich. Every Jewish artist in a theatre or cinema was dismissed; no German Jewish musician could play to a German audience; no Jewish actor could exhibit in a German gallery; no Jewish writer could publish a book in Germany or write an article for a German journal. Bruno Walther and Gerhard, Korda and Elizabeth Bergner, Ludwig and Gertrude were driven from their country. But German Jewry, whom things of the intellect are still precious, early set itself to provide an artistic life for its own small society. The purpose of the Kulturbund was, on the one hand, to provide intellectual recreation for the segregated Jewish communities, and, on the other, to secure a living for the hundreds of non-Aryan artists of all kinds, musicians, actors, film workers, writers, journalists who were suddenly thrown on the street. It had also a purpose of giving to the Jews in Germany a knowledge of the intellectual and artistic achievement of their people. Jewish history and Jewish tradition were in large measure unknown to German Jewry; one of the major activities of the Kulturbund from the beginning was the organisation of lectures on these themes.

There have been four principal classes of entertainment—opera, concert, drama, and lecture. In the first years the Jewish companies could play the classics of German literature and music; Goethe's "Faust"

and Lessing's "Nathan der Weise"—whose hero is a Jew—Beethoven's symphonies and Handel's quartets. But a later dispensation of the Ministry of Culture imposed a fresh restriction: "non-Aryan" Jews were not fitted to play or express the works of the Aryan German genius. Mendelssohn was allowed, but not Beethoven or Wagner, at a Jewish concert. The German Jewish theatre might play Shakespeare, Moliere, or Shaw; but not Goethe or Hauptmann. It is fortunate that music and drama are international; and if the Jewish theatre in Germany is restricted in one aspect it is enlarged in another. It can draw on the whole world except Aryan Germany, and it

and it enrolls its members in every community of Jews, large or small. Over a hundred organisations are affiliated to it. It has to-day some 70,000 contributing members in a community of less than 400,000 souls—and in Berlin it is engaged in an effort to bring up its membership to 20,000. The constant emigration of the Jews from Germany confronts it with new problems not only because it takes away subscribers but also because it drains away steadily the best artistic forces. The creation of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra last year by Huberman, for example, deprived German Jewry of 17 of its best musicians, although one of the con-

### By A Berlin Jew

can and does play the works of the greatest and most modern dramatists of the European countries, of Ibsen, Shaw, and Noel Coward, as well as of Shakespeare and Moliere.

At the same time the Kulturbund makes a point of producing plays which have a special interest for the Jewish audience, either because the theme is Jewish or because the writer is a Jew. German Jewry is gaining a fuller acquaintance than any other Jewry with the modern artistic achievement of the Jews. There is a surprising freedom about the choice of plays. Rigid as is the control over all performances in Germany, there is no pre-censorship of plays, and the Jewish theatre produces for its Jewish audience dramas which would not be possible in the general theatre. One play I saw was by a Hungarian Jew. The hero was a Socialist butler, who is elected to Parliament while in the service of the Conservative Prime Minister. He continues to serve and accompanies his master to the Chamber till, in the end, by his parliamentary powers, he defeats his master's Government. The acting was brilliant, the audience was intent, as audiences in Germany used to be, and there was a feeling of intimacy between performers and audience which gave a special character to the performance.

The Kulturbund has its branches in a number of towns,

and the director of the Kulturbund is able to combine that work with the occasional direction of the orchestra in Palestine. Berlin and Frankfurt alone among the communities have a permanent Jewish theatre. In the other places musical and dramatic performances have to be arranged by visiting companies' artists. The director of the whole organisation was formerly the director of the opera at Charlottenburg. He has had a large and varied task, forming the companies and organising the whole apparatus of the theatre and opera, planning the tours throughout the year, maintaining the proper sequence of opera, concert, drama, and lecture, the proper distribution between Jewish and world composers and authors.

The organisation of artists comprises 1,725 active members, of whom the vast majority are musicians and opera singers; 111 are actors, 170 are painters. Over 200 artists are maintained in work permanently, and a much larger number receive help. Members pay a modest monthly subscription, for which they are entitled to attend either one lecture and one opera or one theatrical performance and one concert. No person may attend a performance unless he proves that he is a Jew. The restriction applies even to visitors. The restriction may be a necessary precaution of the authorities of the Reich. If the Jewish theatre were open to the general public it might prove too attractive.

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