



The Transfer Agreement: The Dramatic Story of the Secret Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine

Edwin Black

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In 1933, the Zionist movement concluded a secret and controversial pact with the Third Reich transferring some 60,000 Jews and \$100 million to Jewish Palestine. In return, the Zionists halted the worldwide Jewish-led anti-Nazi boycott that threatened to topple the Hitler regime in its first year. The debate tore the pre-War Jewish world apart. Ultimately, the Transfer Agreement saved lives, rescued assets, and seeded the infrastructure of the Jewish State. In 1984, Edwin Black broke the story. Black's *The Transfer Agreement* (Macmillan 1984) consumed five years heading a team of researchers digging through archives in the US, England, Germany, and Israel, accessing thousands of previously sealed documents. Written in tense, dramatic style. *The Transfer Agreement* became an immediate best-seller. Quickly, it became the subject of massive TV, radio, and print coverage. Macmillan nominated the book for a Pulitzer: and it received the Carl Sandburg Award for the best nonfiction of the year. *The Transfer Agreement* stunned its readers precisely because the topic was ahead of its time. The world was not ready to comprehend complicated asset transfer discussions between the Zionists and Nazis.

Now that the world has confronted the issue of pilfered Holocaust-era Jewish assets, vanquished insurance claims and slave wages, the *Transfer Agreement* stands out as the sole and still controversial example of a Jewish asset rescue that occurred before the genocidal period. The terrible choices its negotiators undertook can now be viewed in a new light.

This special updated paperback edition includes a new author's introduction, a new foreword by esteemed WWII book editor Edward T. Chase and new afterword by Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

The Transfer Agreement: The Dramatic Story of the Secret Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine Details

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D. Ennis says

Edwin Black has brought incredible clarity to this murky subject. Occasionally Black can mail it in with books that are partially regurgitated previous works. However, when he tackles a new subject (IBM and The Holocaust, War Against the Weak) as he does with The Transfer Agreement he will not miss a single detail. The complex politics behind this story are fascinating and compelling. There are no good guys and no bad guys. Just various responses to a world on the brink and the future of Palestine and world Jewry on the line.

Julie Chandler says

Wow, what an interesting flood of knowledge about what the Jews of the world did and did not do to save each other from Hitler's terror.

Karen says

The Transfer Agreement was a fascinating and yet heartbreaking book for me to read. It revealed an unknown layer of Nazi and Jewish history that I was completely ignorant of. It involves a highly secretive deal made by Zionists with the Reich after Hitler came to power and he and his minions began dismantling the lives of German Jews. We all know that Jews were kicked out of their professions, lost their citizenship, and many were tortured and even killed in those early months of the Third Reich. The response of the rest of the world, both Jews and non-Jews, was to boycott German goods in hopes of starving the people and bringing an end to the antisemitic regime. As more atrocity stories leaked out, the boycott movement grew. As German industry and banking watched with growing consternation the unraveling of the German economy, there were some efforts to restrain the mistreatment of Jews. Zionists, who had been trying to achieve a Jewish state, saw an opportunity to move forward dramatically in this endeavor, by emigrating German Jews to British controlled Palestine, where there was already a fledgling Jewish community of Zionists. Trouble was, Germany had blocked the bank accounts of all Jews, and Britain required money to enter so immigrants had something to start with when they got there.

Enter the German Zionists and some less than altruistic businessmen who saw an opportunity to transfer some German Jews along with much of the wealth of German Jews to Palestine to jump start the creation of Israel. The Reich was interested in getting rid of the Jews, but also in enhancing the economy to create jobs for Germans growing impatient with the new regime. Boycotting would hurt the Transfer, because it would diminish the Jewish wealth along with that of Germany. So the deal was, squelch the boycott, and deal with the Reich, or no immigration, and no transfer of wealth. This was the deal which became the Transfer Agreement. It tore the Jewish world apart, as you hear of the wrangling around the world over which avenue to take. Starve Germany and sacrifice the German Jews and their accumulated wealth, or deal with the devil. Ultimately the deal was sealed.

Would Germany, especially Nazi Germany, have collapsed if the boycotts being called for around the world at the time, been allowed to continue? How ironic it is that the transfer, or Ha'avra, necessitated the Germans

and World Jewry to actually help stabilize the German economy, so as to protect the wealth of German Jewry so there was something to transfer! We all know what happened to European Jews, some 6 million killed. Would this have happened if the German economy collapsed via boycotts? Heavy must have been the hearts and minds of those who envisioned and carried out the work of the "Transfer Agreement" as they watched Jews be slaughtered. Heartbreaking!

The Liquidation banks created to receive this wealth actually purchased shares in German railroads to assist the German economy. The same trains used to deport German Jews to death camps? Barter deals in oranges were made in 1933: Palestinian oranges for German products, no exchange of money. This while the world was trying to starve Germany over its treatment of German Jews! And Palestine was dealing with the Germans, taking German products. Suchchutzpah!

The transfer focused on rescuing German Jews wealth much more so than rescuing German Jews. Zionists were not interested in protecting European Jews, just in establishing a Jewish state!
The Zionists created not an economic boycott, but an economic bond between Germany and Palestine.

Some quotes from the book:

"There was a time to be a Zionist, and there was a time to be a Jew. Only one issue could make any of them understand the difference. That issue was the recently revealed, but little understood, Transfer Agreement."
"But now the Zionist Organization was willing to betray the boycott in exchange for the same economic stimulus many in the world were being urged to relinquish. In the minds of the boycotting Jews, the Transfer Agreement was an unthinkable breach of the boycott"

"It is playing into the hands of the enemy, and destroying the only opportunity...to liberate their victims by bringing about the certain economic downfall of the Hitler regime." "It is simply inconceivable that we should ever become parties to such an unholy compact." Quote from Untermeyer, a boycott organizer.

"Why, the very idea of Palestinian Jewry negotiating with Hitler about business instead of demanding justice for the persecuted Jews of Germany is unthinkable."
Rabbi Silver of Cleveland

"Some compared the confrontation with Hitler to the confrontation with the Egyptian pharaoh. Then, too, it was a question of freeing a stubborn and reluctant people from captivity, freeing them with their cattle and goats and possessions. Was Moses to refrain from negotiating with the pharaoh? If he had, the Jews would never have made an exodus to Israel with possessions needed to establish themselves. Hitler was the new pharaoh, pro-transfer people argued.....these well-meaning men forgot that Moses would not compromise and that freedom for the children of Israel was secured not by prizes but by plaques."

" Mapai members(labor party) ..defended the transfer. They maintained that the boycott, even the German crises itself, was secondary to the needs of Palestine."

So, this agreement, after much shock around the world, especially among Jewish leaders, was carried out.

We know the rest of the story.....

My criticism of the book, and the reason for the 4 stars, is that it got bogged down in details for me between the warring factions, Mapai, versus Revisionists and other Zionist groups. I am not Jewish, and did not feel the need for mountains of details, but I understand that others might.

This is an important piece of history which should be brought out of darkness into the light of day. I am grateful to the author for his work.

Quratulain says

GB

Lewis Weinstein says

Edwin Black tells a piece of history which is not well known, perhaps purposely kept from public view because it is so embarrassing to the participants.

In 1933, the worldwide Jewish community began a protest versus the antisemitic Nazis who had just come to power by organizing a huge and successful boycott versus German goods. This action inflicted severe damage on the German economy and threatened to create so much chaos that the Hitler government was expected by many to fall before winter.

However, a group of Zionist leaders (but far from all Zionists) undermined the boycott in order to carry out a Transfer Agreement with the Nazis that allowed some wealthy Germans to emigrate to Palestine with some portion of their wealth. Working against the boycott was part of that deal. The motivations of these Zionists varied from a fervent desire to bolster Palestine's chances to survive to personal financial gain. The motivations of the Nazis were clear. Terrified by the prospects of the boycott to destroy the German economy, they made a deal with Jews they had sworn never to accommodate.

In addition to the economic impact of the boycott, it served as a focal point of moral outrage against the Nazis that evoked worldwide sympathy among Jews and Christians alike. Had it continued, that moral outrage might have become even more important than the economic devastation it caused the Nazis.

Rabbi Stephen Wise, the most important American Jewish leader of the time, spoke for the boycott but in the end failed to support it. Wise's motivations were never clear, since he worked hard to keep his actions hidden, but my reading of Black's detailed presentation is that Wise was far more interested in his personal power and prestige than he was in bringing down Hitler. Wise said he supported the boycott but when the moment came, he did not; it is this duplicity which I find far more disgusting than his decision.

Without Wise's support, the boycott failed, the western countries (US, Britain & France) failed to effectively oppose Hitler, and the worst demagogue in history stayed in power. While nobody in 1933 could have predicted the Holocaust, in the end the result was that 60,000 Germans got to Palestine via the Transfer Agreement, 3,000,000 Jews were murdered, and 60,000,000 lives were lost as a result of Hitler's aggressive wars.

In hindsight, my conclusion is that the decision to favor the Transfer Agreement over the boycott was a horrible one. At the time, the decision was excruciatingly difficult, and I hope I am able to show those difficulties by having my characters struggle with it in the sequel to A FLOOD OF EVIL.
