The major American Zionist organizations in 1933 claimed a combined membership of slightly over sixty-five thousand. In the midst of a major depression, Zionists vainly fought to convince American Jews to join a movement that seemed to be doing little to uplift the Jewish condition either at home or abroad. Slow-paced development would also provide Zionists with time to forge a peaceful relationship with the Arab residents of Palestine. While Palestine’s Arab majority might be uncomfortable with Jewish settlement in 1933, most American Zionist leaders optimistically looked forward to the time when the Arabs would realize that the Zionist experiment in the Holy Land was serving their own best interests, as well as those of the Jews. The American Jewish organizational response to Nazism was conditioned by Jewish leaders’ fear of rising American antisemitism -- the fear that America would “go antisemite.”

This book tries to explain why. The history of the Jews in modern Germany is usually told as the tale of outstanding individuals, completely immersed in German society and disproportionately contributing to its culture. This book focuses, however, on the story of ordinary German Jews, concerned not merely with being like other Germans, i.e. assimilated, but with upward social climbing and achievements as well. The American Zionist response to Nazism also shaped the political turmoil in the Middle East which followed Israel’s creation. Concerned primarily with providing a home for Jewish refugees and fearing British betrayal, Zionists could not understand Arab protests in defense of their own national interests. Instead they responded to the Arab revolt with armed force and sought to insure their own claim to Palestine. Aaron Berman does not apologize for American Jews, but rather tries to understand the constraints within which they operated and what opportunities—if any—they had to respond to Hitler. In surveying the latest scholarship and responding to charges against American Jewry, Berman’s arguments are reasoned and reasonable. The Other Side: the Secret Relationship Between Nazism and Zionism (Arabic: al-Wajh al-Akhar: al-‘Alaqat as-Sirriya bayna an-Naziya wa’s-Sihyuniya) is a book by Mahmoud Abbas, published in 1984 in Arabic. It was re-published in 2011. It is based on his CandSc thesis, completed in 1982 at Patrice Lumumba University (now the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia) under the title The Connection between the Nazis and the Leaders of the Zionist Movement, and defended at the Institute of Oriental Aaron Berman. Aaron Berman takes a moderate and measured approach to one of the most emotional issues in American Jewish historiography, namely, the response of American Jews to Nazism and the extermination of European Jewry. Berman does not apologize for American Jews, but rather tries to understand the constraints within which they operated and what opportunities—if any—they had to respond to Hitler.