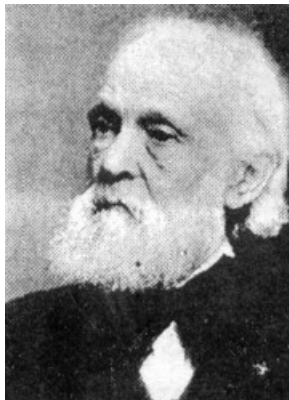# Jewish Abolitionists: Rare as Snail Darters

The *Jewish Forward* of New York has never shied away from its role as bulwark for the American Jewish Racism Movement led by Abraham "Bull" Foxman over at the ADL. Any anti-Black sewage, uttered or scrawled, will gain prominent placement in that pernicious two-ply rag.

Page 7 of the July 31st edition is case in point. The *Forward* has recently been running a column by The American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) based at Brandeis University. This latest installment is entitled "The Jew Who Fought Beside John Brown" and is designed to give the impression that three Jews named August Bondi, Theodore Wiener and Jacob Benjamin were abolitionists who joined the legendary Brown in his efforts to free the Black man. American Jews have been reeling since the publication of the Nation of Islam's *Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, which, using Jewish scholarship (much of it from the AJHS), definitively linked Jews with the basest horrors of the African Holocaust. The book irreparably shatters the well-honed but fully mythical image of Jewish friendship to suffering Black slaves. The *Forward* article provides a clear view of how the mythology is spread.

Despite the deceitful presentation of the "prestigious" Society, it is a fact that the three "abolitionist" Jews in question-Weiner, Bondi and Benjamin-*had* all *deserted* John Brown well before the infamous Harper's Ferry Raid of October 1859, at which Brown and 21 followers attempted to spark a massive insurrection of enslaved Blacks. Their reason for associating with Brown in the first place has only the slightest connection to Brown's anti-slavery activities.

The three Jews, posthumously promoted to saviors of the Black race, were actually merchants who settled in Kansas with the intention of monopolizing trade in the region. In his memoir (a copy of which resides at the Society), August Bondi describes his partner Theodore Wiener as "a rank *pro-slavery* man" who considered reports of mob violence against abolitionists as "fakes and lies." Described as a "big, savage, bloodthirsty Austrian," Wiener's customers, "were, nearly to a man, pro-slavery." When they pressed him to choose sides in the escalating slavery feud, Wiener refused, "alleging that he had come to Kansas to trade and not for politics." Hardly the stock of ideological abolitionism. Wiener's association with John Brown came, not in the cause of Black emancipation, but when he asked the neighboring Brown family to help him oust a man who had squatted on his claim-which they did.

With their store becoming a central supplier and target in the battle between pro- and anti-slavery forces, the three Jews only then chose to join the Brown's troops as a means to retaliate against the pro-slavery bullies. A 1970 Jewish publication states that Weiner's motive

in that alliance "may have been vengeance." It should be noted here that most white abolitionists were no lovers of Black people. To them, the presence of slavery meant that wages of the white working class were severely depressed, causing white resentment and poverty. Twentieth century historians, the AJHS among them, have immensely amplified the bizarre notion that the term "abolitionist" meant some abiding affinity toward Blacks. Bondi himself makes the distinction: "It was not sympathy with the negro slave; it was antipathy against the degradation of labor" which dictated his actions.

CHAPTERS IN AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY.
Presented by the American Jewish Historical Society

The Jew Who Fought Beside John Brown

'I guess we're up against it.'

August Bondi

The *Forward's* re-constructed August Bondi is described as merely a "Jewish speculator" and a liar by Prof. James Malin of the Kansas Historical Society. In the words of the professor: "there is little if anything in [Bondi's] story that is true." But by 1858, even John Brown had no use for August Bondi. Bondi himself describes an incident in the fall of that year when Brown camped nearby with eleven former slaves he was moving to Canada:

He would not let me know of his presence and instructed all to whom he applied for supplies...to be closedmouthed and never inform me...of his presence, as he well knew that we, Free State men, did not sanction an increase in the colored population [in the north], and I suppose he never forgot my opposition to his negro insurrection plans...

But even while the *Forward's* fake "abolitionist" *shlepped* through his quixotic adventures, more substantial Jewish figures were weighing in with Jewry's official position on the issue of African slavery. New York's **Rabbi Morris Raphall**, the highest paid clergyman in America, proclaimed slavery to be sanctioned by the God of the Jews. He condemned the real abolitionists and was honored by the Confederacy. **Rabbi** Isaac **Mayer Wise**, the *founder of Reform Judaism*, would have made Hitler proud. Blacks, he said, "represent all that is debased and inferior in the hopeless barbarianism of six thousand years." Other Jews like **Judah Benjamin**, enslaver of at least 140 Black Africans, was the Secretary of State and Vice President of the Confederacy! Those few Jews who actually stood up

for the humanity of the Black man, like **Rabbi David Einhorn** of Baltimore, had to flee in the night, not from violent Gentile mobs, but from their own pro-slavery Jewish congregations.

The *Forward* can almost be discounted in this instance, having never been a slave to literal truth in matters concerning the *shvartse* (nigger), but the **American Jewish Historical Society at Brandeis University** has now resorted to Black Holocaust Revisionism on a grand scale. The most brutal chapter of World history finds the majority of the Jewish community siding with the enslaver. Historian Oscar Williams was plainly correct when he wrote "Jews were everything in the Old South *except* Abolitionists." We say to the *Forward* and the AJHS: "Can the Devil fool a Muslim? No, not nowadays."

Jacob Rader Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865* (Philadelphia, 1955).
James C. Malin, *Kansas Historical Quarterly* (February, 1940), Vol. 9, #1.
Maxwell Whiteman, Introduction of *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed* (Philadelphia, 1970).
Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown* (Boston, 1910).

CHAPTERS IN AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

Presented by the American Jewish Historical Society

The Jew Who Fought Beside John Brown
John Brown (1800-1859), the radical abolitionist, remains one of the most controversial figures in American history. Some see him as a principled freedom fighter, others as an outlaw. Brown led Free State forces in Bloody Kansas, which many historians see as a rehearsal for the Civil War, and reached the height of his notoriety in a raid on the Federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in 1859.

Not well known is that three immigrant Jews were among Brown's small band of anti-slavery fighters in Kansas: Theodore Wiener, from Poland; Jacob Benjamin, from Bohemia; and August Bondi (1833-1907), from Vienna. Of the three, August Bondi left the most significant mark on history.

In contrast to Brown, whose ancestors arrived in America on the Mayflower, Bondi's family emigrated to St. Louis in 1848 in the wake of an unsuccessful democratic revolution in

Austria. Bondi had been a member of the student revolutionary movement in Vienna, and his idealism carried over to his adopted country. In 1855, he emigrated to Kansas to help establish the Free State movement there.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 decreed that in 1855 the settlers in the Kansas Territory would decide by vote whether Kansas would be a slave or free state. Pro-slavery "Border Ruffians" and anti-slavery Free Staters poured into Kansas Territory, hoping to capture the election.

Anti-slavery forces appeared to hold the upper hand, but on election day some 5,000 heavily armed pro-slavery Missourians swarmed into the territory, overwhelmed the polling places, captured the ballot boxes and elected a pro-slavery legislature. Once in control of state government, the pro-slavery forces launched violent attacks against anti-slavery settlers.

John Brown moved to Kansas in 1855, and his anger rose at the mistreatment of the anti-slavery majority. In May 1856, Brown led a raid on a company of Border Ruffians at Pottawatomie Creek and massacred more than a dozen of its leaders. The next day Brown and his men; captured 48 pro-slavery fighters at the Battle of Black Palmyra.

Bondi, Benjamin and Weiner all fought with Brown Black Jack. In Bondi's account of the battle, which can be found in his papers at the American Jewish Historical Society, he recounts marching up a hill beside Brown, ahead of the other men:

We walked with bent backs, nearly crawled, that the tall dead grass of the year before might somewhat hide us from the Border Ruffian marksmen, yet the bullets kept whistling....Wiener puffed like a steamboat, hurrying behind me. I called out to him, 'Nu, was meinen Sie jetzt' (Now, what do you think of this?). His answer, 'Sof odom muves' (a Hebrew phrase meaning 'the end of man is death' or in modern phraseology, 'I guess we're up against it').

Bondi later wrote of Brown's leadership:

We were united as a band of brothers by the love and affection toward the man who, with tender words and wise counsel...prepared a handful of young men for the work of laying the foundation of a free Commonwealth....He expressed himself to us that we should never allow ourselves to be tempted by any consideration, to acknowledge laws and institutions to exist as of right, if our conscience and reason condemn them.

John Brown left Kansas to take his quixotic last stand at Harper's Ferry. Captured, Brown was tried and hanged for treason. Benjamin only lived until 1866, and Weiner died in obscurity in 1906. But August Bondi remained true to his convictions and continued to support the anti-slavery cause in Kansas. When the Civil War broke out, he was among the first to enlist, serving as a first sergeant in the Kansas Cavalry. After the war, Bondi settled in Salina, Kansas, where he served as land clerk, postmaster, member of the school board, director of the state board of charities, a local court judge and a trustee of the Kansas Historical Society. He was known for his political integrity and idealism.

Bondi, who died in 1907, described himself as a consistent Jew throughout his life, although Salina was too much a frontier

community to support a synagogue. When his daughters married, the family traveled to Leavenworth, Kansas, so that a rabbi could officiate. Although his funeral was held at the Salina Masonic Hall, a rabbi from Kansas city officiated at the service.

August Bondi's life traced a remarkable path from guerrilla fighter against slavery to distinguished elected official and plilar of his community. Even in an age and place that could be inhospitable to Jews, Bondi always identified publicly and proudly with his Judaism.