

In a letter to Shanghai, dated 24 September 1941, Max Schöenberg from Cologne describes the impact of the new anti-Jewish measures¹

Letter from Dr Max Schöenberg, Cologne, to Julius Kaufmann, Shanghai, dated 24 September 1941²

My dears, dear Julius³

I'm sure you can't wait to hear from us right now. Firstly, it's our autumn holiday period,⁴ which is bound to cause you concern after the experiences of recent years, and you'll also want to know how the new regulations are affecting us.⁵ They have completely fulfilled our needs for New Year surprises this year; they cut very deeply into our life. There will be no more holidays or visits to relatives, as group travel permits can only be obtained on special occasions. This is particularly hard for Hedwig, who has often sought refuge with us in her loneliness. We won't be able to visit Regina and the Tützes so easily either.

The impact of being restricted to the city limits varies, depending on how big the town or city is. We can go on outings to the municipal woods and even to the edge of the Königsforst. I doubt whether all places offer such possibilities.

Wearing the yellow Star of David, or Jewish star, certainly has the desired effect of reinforcing the segregation. The first days went by well enough. The population of Cologne was tactful. A few silly schoolboys did not diminish this impression. The yellow Jewish symbol has not made people's blood boil. It is unlikely that events such as those of November 1938 will occur as spontaneous outbursts.⁶

Luckily, we Jews are showing a decent attitude and demeanour, almost without exception. I see men, women, and children walking the streets with their heads held high. We know that we do not need to feel ashamed of our Jewishness. We know that our tribe, our history, and our intellectual history do not compare unfavourably to others. We know that the stains on our image are no greater or darker than those on the image of others. We know that a large number of the faults we are accused of are the consequences of our political fate. And that is why I'm glad that our boy⁷ in Palestine is among those helping to change the course of Jewish destiny. What I fought against as a student – building a Jewish national homeland – is what I long for today, and moreover, I have the audacious idea that within a consolidated Jewish state lies the opportunity for Jewry to liberate itself from the shackles that have paralysed it through its endless laws and bans.

It has been very interesting for me to observe different types. I have seen a striking number of people wearing the Star of David – both old and young – whom I would

1 NS-Dokumentationszentrum Köln, Briefe Max Schöenberg. Extracts published in Rüter, *Köln*, p. 552. This document has been translated from German.

2 In the original, '25.XI.' was written by hand.

3 'Dear Julius' was written by hand.

4 In 1941, Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) all fell in Sept./Oct.

5 See Docs. 212 and 222.

6 See PMJ 2, pp. 53–59. PMJ 2 contains numerous documents about the November pogroms.

7 Leopold, also Reuwen, Schöenberg.

never have thought were Jews had it not been for this symbol. On the other hand, I have also seen a large number of people and been surprised because they were not wearing the yellow patch.⁸

⁸ The letter ends abruptly at this point, without a valediction.