

"The New World owes Them a Great Deal"

MORE ABOUT THE JEWS OF POLAND

Impressions of a Recent Visit Overseas

EVERY Jew from Poland, irrespective of party affiliation, pays tribute to the honest determination of the Polish Government to root out anti-Semitism. The Government knows full well that Jew-baiting is one of the weapons of the most reactionary elements in the country. It may well be assumed and hoped that following the elections, and the consequent stabilisation of the Government organs, attacks on Jews will be considerably reduced, although nobody knows how long it will take to wipe out the underground terrorist bands.

These terrorist bands assassinate Government officials as well as Jews, and whenever there is a victim among the Jews he described as "a martyr on the altar of the new Progressive Poland." Those who are opposed to the emigration of Jews from Poland go to the extent of taking pride in the fact that Jews are staying on, to fight it out, in order "to lead to a better world." The others say, "No, thank you! We have made plenty of sacrifices for the new Europe, as well as for the new Poland. The life of the remnant is far too precious to us. The world, the new free world owes us a lot; we owe the world nothing; we paid all our debts to humanity for the next ten generations."

They Didn't

Think It Funny

Furthermore, the suppression of physical attacks on Jews does not do away with the hatred which is still rampant amongst the population. The slaughter at Kielce was not carried out only by Fascist bands. The populace, including workers, took part in the massacre. A "shaliach" who was recently in Poland told me that in the tram he had witnessed the following incident: A Polish woman was holding a baby. The child burst out crying and disturbed the passengers. The mother tried to stop it and said, in all seriousness: "If you don't keep quiet, I'll hand you over to the Jews." The passengers all heard it and didn't even think it funny.

A man who lived through the Nazi occupation of Poland described how during the occupation he had gone to a peasant to ask for shelter. The peasant was known to be a dealer on the black market. He tried to persuade the peasant that in return for payment he should offer him a hiding place in his house. He said: "If the Germans catch you dealing on the black market they will shoot you without trial. If you let us stay we will make it worth your while so that you will not even have to engage in illicit trade."

The peasant said: "Oh, well, I am not worried. If they catch me selling a pig illegally and shoot me for it, that'll be hard luck. But if they catch me sheltering Jews, not only will I suffer, but there will remain a black spot on my family for generations to come."

These small episodes are considered typical of the spirit of the

By C. Gershater

people. It does not always come to the surface, because they are afraid to voice anti-Semitic feelings. There are no anti-Semitic newspapers in Poland to-day. Yet even in the press there is an occasional outburst of a poisonous remark. For example: Early in December there appeared in the Socialist organ "Kurier Popularny," an article entitled "On the Eve of the Elections." The article was written by Henrik Wachowicz, member of the executive committee of the Socialist party "P.P.S." He said that the war of Polish Democracy must be directed not only against the Polish Capitalist, but also against the "Zionist merchant and speculator." Zionist papers reacted sharply to this remark and a couple of days later "Kurier Popularny" published a second article in which it asked who gave the Jews "the right to intervent in the internal affairs of the Polish Socialist party."

Skeleton In A Glass Case

On the other hand, it should be noted that "Robotnik," the main organ of the Polish Socialist party, carries on a relentless fight against anti-Semitism. Wachowicz is, however, known as an anti-Semite. The Government organ "Rzeczpospolita" is similarly out to expose every sign of anti-Semitic activity. In a copy of the paper which I saw in Basle they published a complaint from a reader about something that he saw in a church at Lencicz, a town between Lodz and Kutno. Inside the church there was a glass case displaying a skeleton of a child. Next to it was a description saying that the child was kidnapped in 1639 "at the instigation of Jews" and that later his body, full of wounds, was found in a forest. Next to the inscription was a picture of a group of Jews wrapped in *taleisim* holding dripping knives in their hands. The paper was horrified at this report.

I discussed the matter with some Polish Jews. A friend from Germany who was present remarked that such a thing could not possibly happen to-day in Germany or in Austria; not because Streicher has remained heirless, but because a clergyman would endanger his life by displaying such a piece of obscenity in his church. He would immediately be apprehended and brought before a Denazification Court. How then could it happen in Poland? The answer is that for political reasons a great deal of tolerance is being shown in Poland to the Catholic Church. That is why the notorious Cardinal who had justified the Kielce pogrom went off scot-free.

Human Mathematics

Nevertheless, it should not be supposed that the Jews are in daily fear

of their lives. On the contrary, there seems to be a tendency towards stabilisation. People who had undergone the Nazi regime are not too easily frightened. Polish Jews were in any case hardened to the anti-Semitic feeling of the population. To-day they have the advantage of knowing that the Government, if not the minor security officials, is intent on protecting them. Thus, it is pointed out that in Kielce where 50 Jews out of a population of 120 were killed in the terrible massacre last July, there are now again 100 Jews. Truly a stiff-necked people! The calculation is as follows: seeing that the Chief of Police and others responsible were duly punished by the authorities, the security forces in Kielce will now

be on the alert, and Kielce might now be the safest of all Polish provincial towns! It is a grim calculation, but the will to live has no bounds.

Asked To Change Names

That is why a new Jewish committee has now been formed in Kielce to replace the Chairman Dr. Kahaha and the other members who had been slaughtered in cold blood. The people continue to live, and with the normalisation of economic life they find employment. Many of the big concerns are now Government-controlled and there is no discrimination whatsoever in the employment of Jews. On the contrary, their energy, experience and training are very much in demand. In many cases, however, employees in key positions are asked "for their own sake" to change their names. Also this *dobry wyglad* (good looks), to which I referred last week, is a very good recommendation for good posts. On the whole, the people find employment and many others are doing brisk business. Some have even become rich as a result of the inflation. In many instances the new wealth is expressed in paper money.

(Continued on page 23)

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