

Jewish Colonisation in Russia.

AN ECONOMICAL NECESSITY?

By A. SHABAN.

There are many who claim that the Jewish Colonisation Movement has been established under the instigation of the Soviet Government, who are attempting to use the scheme for political means. They do not, however, appreciate the fact that the movement is the outcome of Jewish needs and Jewish suffering, and that it is concerned with the Jewish past and the Jewish future.

Let us therefore cast aside our every-day thoughts and concentrate on this question. One need not go back too far in Jewish history to realise that the Jew always had inclinations towards work on the land. The appeal of the land has always been great for the Jew, because it reminded him of something healthy, fresh and productive. Moreover, it brought back the memory of its ancient history.

The more oppressive the Government under whom the Jews lived may have been, the more did the Jews strive to establish themselves on the land, instead of being *luftmenshen*.

When a Government did attempt to establish Jewish colonies, it generally did so as a means of political expediency, and because of that never succeeded. There is ample evidence to prove that the present scheme is not one of mere political expediency, and is therefore succeeding.

There have been other attempts at colonisation that were not wholly successful. For instance, private bodies have made experiments which, through lack of enthusiasm and co-operation, failed. Mass colonisation of Jews can only succeed if it is supported by Government aid, and when it is the result of an economic necessity.

By way of comparison, one may stop to study the attempts at Jewish colonisation in Russia 125 years ago. At the end of the 18th century the Russian Government sent their poet and senator, Derjaven, to investigate the position of the inhabitants in the north-western area. He reported that the economic position of the peasants was shockingly poor, because of the Jews, who, by means of their petty trade, robbed them of their earnings. As a result of this, the Government decreed in 1804 that the Jews dwelling in the country districts had to leave those places.

The Government then permitted the Jews to settle upon the land in New Russia (the territory taken from Poland) and it granted them a sum of 300,000 roubles for that purpose. But this movement was still-born. In 1815 the work came to an absolute standstill. Part of the money was misdirected by Government officials. No further support was granted and 60,000 families were ruined as a result of the scheme. They left the little villages and hamlets, but did not reach New Russia. What was achieved, however, was that 600 Jewish families were settled on the land. In 1807 the colony *Sdei Menucha* was founded. This is to-day the central colony in the first Jewish district Kalenindorp.

Under the regime of Nicholas I. twenty-eight Jewish colonies were established, and they all exist to-day. In the times of Alexander II. and

Alexander III. the animosity against the Jews was increased. The question of promoting Jewish colonisation by means of Government assistance was abandoned.

Under Nicholas II. the work was set aside entirely. Many of the Jewish colonies succumbed owing to the heavy taxes that were imposed upon them. From many others the land was taken away again, and the position became a grievous one.

This was the result of the Jewish colonisation that was established with the Tsar's help, and it naturally had to be so, because it was not a genuine attempt by the Government to settle the Jews on the land, but it was a dishonest means of tempting the Jews away from the north-west, and throwing them upon the steps of South Ukraine.

Yet, notwithstanding the many set-backs that the Jew has always had in the work of colonisation, there is an inherent characteristic in the Jew that urges him to establish himself in agriculture. The Russian census of 1897 showed 179,400 Jewish land labourers, that is to say, 3½ per cent. of the Jewish population were on the land. One may question what this urge was that made the Jew push his way through the antagonism of the Government on to the land. The statistics of the year help to explain this:—

	Russians.	Jews.
Land workers ..	76.5%	3.5%
Business men ..	2.2%	38.6%
Tradesmen	10%	35.5%
Others	11.3%	22.4%

These figures show the large margin of deviation between the Jews and the non-Jews. The figures showing the non-productive workers are heavy on the Jewish side. In addition to this, it must be remembered that of the 74.1% of Jewish tradesmen and business men, a large percentage were humble tailors and bootmakers, and their earnings were exceedingly low. In many cases their incomes did not exceed 100 roubles a year. Even the business men were in no better position.

A Government Commission, with Graaf Palin at the head, gave the following report concerning the Jewish position:—

"Businesses are on the increase. Where there are many business establishments, like Berditchew, the profit decreases to 2%. In nine towns of the Charter, the Jewish shopkeepers have stock-in-trade only for about 15 roubles, and the earnings are from 2 to 2½ roubles per week."

This fact indicates that the only means the Jew had of earning a livelihood was to become a worker on the land or to own a small vegetable garden. This, therefore, was the primary urge that led the Jew to settle on the land when an opportunity presented itself.

(Continued.)

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Cape Jewish Guild.

On Sunday, 11th May, an unusual and spectacular event was staged under the auspices of the Cape Jewish Guild. It was a "Khalifa," which few of the large crowd in the Guild Hall had before seen.

On the stage the chief of the "Khalifa" sat in a gorgeously decorated ark, trimmed with elaborate embellishments and emblazoned with weird inscriptions. His ten assistants sat bow-legged in a semi-circle around him. All were dressed in white garments.

In front of the "ark" were displayed in a rack the various swords, skewers and daggers. The air was filled with an aromatic smell of burning incense, and it was truly a wonderful spectacle, with a real Oriental setting.

The proceedings started with a weird chant by the chief, which was repeated by his chorus of ten; gradually to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals the dancers worked themselves into a frenzy, and hacked at their arms with their heavy swords, or stabbed themselves with the daggers. All the time the dancers prayed in unison with the drummers in sincere and fervent devotion.

The star turn was when a dancer with two swords which had a razor-like edge, slashed at both his cheeks and also his throat.

Another performer hammered a skewer with a heavy mallet into his stomach.

The youngest performer, aged nine years, repeated the same skewer dance, but added a little variety by having skewers about two feet long driven into his cheeks, ears and also his shoulders.

At the close of the performance many were puzzled to find that the actors bore no ill-effects, in fact they were as fresh as ever.

The performance left a deep impression upon the audience. No one was able to explain the phenomena.

New Gramophone Records.

Among the latest H.M.V. recordings received from Messrs. Darter's is one by Theodore Chaliapine (D.A.993). This great Russian bass for the first time sings two songs in English. It is a rare record. On one side is "O, could I but express in song," and on the reverse is "The Blind Ploughman." Despite the language difficulty, Chaliapine renders both items in a masterly manner. Jesse Crawford has added another excellent record to his repertoire. His latest (B.2949) further enhances his reputation. It is made up with "Jeannine (I dream of Lilac Time)" and "Just a Night for Meditation." Lovers of the opera are catered for by record B.2929. Mavis Bennett has a charming voice and is delightful in her rendition of Musetta's Waltz Song ("La Boheme") and the Willow Song from Coleridge-Taylor's incidental music to "Othello." This record should be very popular. The band of H.M. Coldstream Guards have recorded nothing better than "Musical Switch" (C.1580). It is a pot-pourri of old-time melodies delightfully blended. The tunes, switching from one to the other, flow on gaily and attractively. Among the new dance records are B.5594, by Jack Hylton and his orchestra, "Where the Shy Little Violets Grow" and "Oh! What a Night to Love," both fox-trots; B.5583, by Paul White-man's combination, "Three o'clock in the Morning" (waltz) and "Love and Kisses" (fox-trot) and B.5593, by the Troubadours, "Marie" (waltz) and "All of the Time" (fox-trot).

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