

BETTAUER'S PROPHETIC FANTASY

The Amazing Similarity Between the Events In "The City Without Jews" and the Events Under Hitler

By **LESLIE KUHN**

WHICH came first? The hen or the egg? Nazism or Hugo Bettauer's prophetic fantasy, "The City Without Jews?"

There is considerable evidence, as Nazism goes into its sixth year, that the National Socialist movement of Germany was created in the image of the then highly imaginative novel from the Protestant pen of Bettauer, an American citizen, who was simultaneously an editor of the Vienna "Tag" and a correspondent for the New York "Staats-Zeitung."

Two things stirred Vienna in 1925, when Bettauer's provocative peek into the future inspired unprecedented demands upon Austrian book-stalls. One, to be sure, was this daring tome which presumed to deal with a Jewless Vienna and the consequences thereof. The other, by far the object of less attention, was an obscure house painter, yclept Adolph Hitler. While both Hitler and Bettauer's book quickened the pulse for the fleeting moments in which they were beheld, neither was regarded as a force with which to reckon.

Hitler carried on in much the same manner as many another suffering from delusions of grandeur. Bettauer impudently set himself up as a prophet. Both the shrieking painter and the strange novel were entertaining; and thus, apparently, they were to be condoned.

But Hitler's fever had already begun, albeit negligently, to infect isolated sections of a youth, hungering for new ideals. One of these, 20-year-old Otto Rothstock, a student of dental surgery, had become quite enamoured of German Kultur. Every inch Aryan, a precocious defender of his yet-unborn faith, Otto Rothstock found in Bettauer's novel a challenge to his loyalty.

He joined issue on the one prophecy in "The City Without Jews" which still awaits translation into reality. Rothstock was enraged at Bettauer's warning that Vienna would degenerate into rack and ruin six months after it was purged of its last Jew.

Seeing his duty, even as it is seen to-day under official Nazi rule, Rothstock armed himself with a pistol and appointed himself a one-man committee to rid Aryan-Germany of the man with the effrontery to write "The City Without Jews." Rothstock invaded the newspaper office where Bettauer was employed, located the author's desk and opened fire. Shot on March 10, 1925, Bettauer died 16 days later, the first victim of the Nordic hysteria he depicted so vividly in "The City Without Jews."

SUSCEPTIBLE of no challenge to his objectivity, Bettauer himself measured up to the most exacting requirements of a hundred per cent. Aryan. Of Protestant parentage, he had no axe to grind when he penned "The City Without Jews." One who seldom fraternised with Jews, he wrote his book with the detachment to be expected of a reporter.

As a reportorial student of neo-Nazi aspirations, he peopled and depeopled "The City Without Jews" with what he visualised as the logical conclusions of a creed that earned his objective scorn. Arresting indeed are the parallels between the fantasy that found, in 75 editions, one quarter of a million German and Austrian readers, and the German-Austrian history of the past half-decade. Certainly, if Bettauer, whose book was subsequently published in English and other languages, were alive to-day, he would have the basis of a first-class plagiarism suit.

Compare, fourteen years after the date of publication, Bettauer's "liberator," the Christian-Socialist chancellor, Dr. Karl Schwertfeger, with the Nazi fuhrer, Adolph Hitler, and you'll be astonished at the likeness. Compare with the present Nazi dogma the decree in "The City Without Jews" that only third generation Christians on both parental sides were to be recognised as Aryans. Compare with the present Nazi salute the salutation between hundred per-centers in Bettauer's book, "Hail." Compare with common diplomatic knowledge

that Jew-purged Vienna was visited with a financial crisis. Compare with events still fresh in the world's memory the manoeuvre which finds the fuhrer of "The City Without Jews" ordering the League of Nations to grant to Austria annexation to Germany, or a free hand in the expulsion of Jews. Hitler went the book one better in this instance. He got both. Compare with Nazi history the decree in the book giving every Jew three months in which to leave the country. Compare and you find the forerunner of Hitler's programme a fantasy matched and even exceeded by the events in its wake.

Only in one respect does Bettauer's book differ from the history of recent years. When Vienna lost its last Jew, he found it too weak, morally, culturally and economically to endure any longer. When the last Semite departed, "The City Without Jews" reached finis. Time will tell whether Bettauer's final prophecy shall come to pass.

One thing is certain. Either Bettauer was an amazing prophet or Hitler is a brazen plagiarist.

Port Elizabeth's Interest in Palestine Symphony Orchestra

At the inaugural meeting held at the Palmerston Hotel on Tuesday, June 17, Col. Kisch addressed between thirty and forty ladies and gentlemen, explaining the ideals and aims of the Palestine Orchestral Society.

A society was forthwith formed in Port Elizabeth with Mrs. B. Smulian, chairman; Mrs. J. Gabriel, treasurer, and Mrs. Sam E. Bennun, secretary; also subscribers were enlisted. Each subscriber present promised to try and get as many members as possible, the subscription being one guinea per annum.

Bloemfontein Activities

Herzlia Association.—An exhibition of models and photographs depicting the progress made in the up-building of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, was opened on Thursday afternoon, the 8th June, at the Communal Hall. The exhibition, while not on an elaborate scale, was a most interesting display of the work which has been done in founding the many Jewish settlements. Among the models shown was a Jewish settlement complete with watch-tower and a model of the recently constructed harbour at Tel-Aviv.

In the evening the public were invited to see the film "Tirat-Zvi," which deals with the establishment of a modern Jewish colony in Palestine.

Before the presentation of the film Mr. W. Rubin, chairman of the Herzlia, called upon Mr. J. Blesovsky to deliver a short lecture on the "History of Palestine."

Pretoria Activities

Zionist Society.—The concert arranged by the society on the evening of June 21 was well attended and proved an outstanding success. Among the artists who contributed to the programme were Signor Alberto Terassi, of Johannesburg, Mary Goldberg (pianiste), Fanny Sugarman (the popular singer), Mr. Holland (cellist), and Miss J. Gladwell (violinist). Other items were dances by pupils of Miss Phyllis Katzenellenbogen, and two orchestral trios (Miss J. Gladwell, and Messrs. Meltz and Holland). The organising committee

consisted of Messrs. L. Meltz, M. Ginsberg, and P. Davidowitz, who are to be congratulated on their effort.

Jewish Guild.—Features of the function arranged by the Pretoria Jewish Guild on Sunday night, 25th June, were the addresses delivered by Mr. M. Franks, K.C., on "The South African Scene Through Jewish Eyes," and Mr. A. Shacksnovis on "The Duty of South African Jews to South Africa and Palestine." Mr. P. Yutar was in the chair, and Mr. Ivan Solomon, M.P.C., proposed a vote of thanks to the speakers.



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