

February 20, 1937

POLISH JEWS FACE DISMAL FUTURE

"Oust the Jew" Cried as Wholesale Migration Is Talked

The old-style *pogroms* which made the life of Polish Jews a nightmare under the Czars have died out, yet the terror of anti-Semitism still haunts their three million men, women and children—one-tenth of the country's population.

Historically, Poland emerged as the first country to welcome the wanderers. Driven from Judea in ancient times, the race had trailed migratory Arabs across Asia Minor and through North Africa. By the early middle ages they had crossed narrow Gibraltar and established themselves in Spain. Crusaders, fired by the desire to rescue the Holy Land from the infidels, suddenly realized that even on the Continent they had non-believers among them. Expelled from Spain, the Jews fled to France, then Germany. There, too, persecution flared, and the tormented people did not know where to turn until King Boleslav, thirteenth century ruler of Poland, offered them a charter of social and economic opportunity. Later rulers permitted them to run a nation within a nation, with their own judges and governing councils.

Yiddish— For hundreds of years, under the Poles' benevolent rule, Jewish life flourished there far better than in any land where they had sought refuge after leaving Palestine. Unlike the Jews in the Germanic States, who became Germans, they retained their racial habits and costumes. They kept their own Hebrew language which, interspersed with Low German, became the Yiddish of to-day.

The partition of Poland in the eighteenth century abruptly annihilated their privileges, as indeed it destroyed the liberty of their long-time protectors. In the

Boycotted Polish Jews can find no sanctuary



west, thousands of Jews found themselves under the Prussian flag, and Prussian oppression; in Galicia and throughout the south they went to Austria-Hungary. The picture of the Czar's Cossacks riding with sword and knout into the Jewish villages symbolizes their fate in Old Russia.

After Versailles, 2,700,000 Jews from the original Polish group fell to Soviet Russia, where, poor as they are, they are no poorer than the rest of the population and enjoy full equality. Some went to Rumania, but the majority went to Poland.

DISMAL FUTURE

Race Apart—From the start, the new Republic begrudged the Jews freedom from the restrictions that had been placed upon them by the Czars. It never accorded them equal rights. Yet, before Poland fell under the influence of Nazi Germany, and before the economic depression reduced the mass of the Poles themselves to dismal poverty, the Jews fared no worse than their neighbors.

Now they are a race apart, isolated, according to Sholem Asch, a Yiddish writer who recently visited the country, like lepers. Young women in the Warsaw Ghetto look like dried skeletons, he says. Rickety children save scraps of bread from their free school lunches to feed their parents at night.

Unemployment hit the Poles so hard that just over half of them have jobs. Conditions among the Jews are worse: Only one in three works. A million of them, American Jewish investigators insist, live on the verge of starvation.

Boycott—The deadly weapon against the Jew is the boycott. Entirely unofficial, it was spread by the Endeks—National Democrats of an extreme nationalistic tinge. Jews once carried on the trade of the country, through their stands at the market-places and their shops in the villages. Now, by means of the boycott, revocations of licenses, violence, and every means available to the Endeks, shops are being taken from Jews and given to Poles. In western Poland and Pomerania, 350 municipalities are reported to have stopped Jews entirely from trade on the market-place. In 1,500 Polish villages the number of Jewish shops has dropped 35 per cent, from the 1914 figure.

Jews used to outnumber native artisans four to one. Now the boycott has forced them out of work, and other occupations are closed to them. They can get no government jobs. In all of Poland, the *Manchester Guardian* reports, there is not a single Jewish postman or cab driver.

In the meat industry, Jewish butchers who slaughter in the *kosher* manner had built up a virtual monopoly, serving both Jews and Gentiles. The first of the year, a new law went into effect which forbade them to sell wholesale, and limited the number of Jewish butchers to that necessary to supply their own trade.

Professions—The professions, too, have taken up the "oust the Jew" slogan, and a move is under way to reduce the number of lawyers to 10 per cent. Jews constitute only 2,000 of the 80,000 teachers in the country, and the *New York Times* estimates that not more than twenty-five of them are professors.

More than 1,000 Jews were injured in anti-Semitic disturbances last year, with forty killed and 350 seriously hurt. More than 400 cases of window-smashing, usually accompanied by looting of Jewish shops, were reported.

To solve the problem, Foreign Minister Josef Beck suggested to the League of Nations that the entire three millions be "evacuated." There has been vague discussion of moving them to the French colonies, but how many could be absorbed there remains even vaguer. Polish Jews, for centuries forbidden to work on the land, are turning to agricultural pursuits on farms especially conducted throughout the country, with a view to resettlement in the Holy Land. Last year, however, Palestine's immigrants numbered only 30,000, not more than one-third of whom came from Poland.

Rooted—The tragedy of the situation is that Poland's Jews are rooted to the land where they have lived for seven hundred years. Unlike the Jews of Western Europe, they do not live entirely in large cities.

Meanwhile, Polish Jews are trying to rally, with the help of their American fellows. Since 1914, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee has raised \$30,000,000 in this country and spent it in Poland. One of its most important activities was to stimulate self-help projects through a network of 800 free loan institutions. With small loans averaging not more than \$20

DISMAL FUTURE

each, small traders and artizans can continue working.

Aid—Moreover, the Joint Distribution Committee feeds 54,000 Jewish children a year and helps send 60,000 to summer colonies. Its main effort is to devise new sources of income for the Jews.

Jews are being taught to breed rabbits for their "wool," and to manufacture yarn and cloth from it. In Vilna, Jews are turning out gloves for export. Jewish carpenters are manufacturing furniture for the British South African Dominions. Berets made by Polish Jews are even breaking into the cap's original home—France.

The Government has turned its efforts toward the revival of authority—sadly weakened since Marshal Pilsudski's death. Under a new "Polonization" program made public last week, 22,000,000 Poles—the rest of the country's 34,000,000 population consists of Jews and other minorities—become the "ruling nation." Yet Col. Adam Koc, former Governor of the Bank of Poland, who drew up the plan, sharply vetoed a proposal to make Jews second-class citizens, with restrictions on their economic and political rights.