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Adversus Judaeos: the Jews in History

BY JAKOB JOCZ

THE worthy Editor of this Journal has requested "a historical survey of the fortunes of the Jews from A.D. 70 to the present time" to be put into 5,000 words. To compress 2,000 years of history in a short article is already a formidable task, but to compress *Jewish* history by allowing two-and-a-half words per annum is asking the impossible. We will thus confine ourselves to a bare outline of the strange vicissitudes comprising Jewish life in the diaspora.

It was said by an Irishman that the badge of a minority is suffering. Jewish history is an eminent illustration of this truth. The story of the Jewish people is an endless tale of cruel suffering. The explanation lies not only in the minority-existence of the Jews but also in the fact that Jews are a *peculiar* minority. Their peculiarity derives from the exclusiveness of their religion. Shakespeare grasped this fact when he lets Shylock say to Bassanio: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you . . ." (*Merchant of Venice*, Act I, sc. 2).

The religious separateness of the Jews from the rest of mankind largely accounts for the story of their woe. It was this that earned them the epithet of *odium generis humani*. To the pagan, as later to the Christian, the Jewish way of life was irritating if not sinister: the Jew would bring no sacrifices, worship no images, refuse to pay divine homage to the Emperor, refrain from eating with Gentiles, and associate only with his own kind: "If the Jews be citizens of Alexandria, why do not they worship the same gods with the Alexandrians?" asks Apion indignantly (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, II, 6).

Tacitus accuses the Jews that "whilst among themselves they keep inviolate faith and are always prompt in showing compassion to their fellows, they cherish bitter enmity against all others, eating and lodging with one another only . . ." (*Hist.*, V, 5). J. G. Lipman remarks: "There is no doubt that it was the social and religious isolation of the Jews, and their contempt for the pagan beliefs, that gave birth to an enmity that has descended to more recent times" (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 109a).

1. NONCONFORMISTS

The price of being different entails suffering. In the past, however, the Jew accepted his lot, gladly giving his suffering an aura of martyrdom *al kiddush ha-Shem* (for the sanctification of God's Name). In more recent times, as a result of loss of religious conviction, suffering has largely lost for him its meaningfulness.

There is a proverb which says *homo homini lupus*—a man is unto man a wolf. Yet even wolves survive at the price of conforming to the habits of the pack. But the Jews found themselves on the horns

of a dilemma : to conform to the majority meant the end of Jewish existence ; to exist as Jews meant suffering. There is the poison of death in either solution. To this day this is the basic problem of Jewish history.

The fact that the Jewish people had chosen the more difficult path must fill the historian with awe and wonder when he realizes the price it entailed.

Jewish existence is non-conformist existence. In every land of his sojourn and in every age of his long exile, he differed from the rest. He remained a stranger in Babylon, in Persia, in Syria ; he was an outsider under the Eagle, the Cross, and the Crescent.

Nonconformity has an irritating, exasperating effect upon the majority. There is a deep-seated psychological need to press the non-conformist to conform. Much of missionary zeal, unfortunately, is mere human intolerance. Under the pressure of public opinion and frequent coercive acts, many Jews conformed, but the core of Jewry held out. Jewish survival is nothing but a miracle. But only those who know the story can appreciate this fact.

It must not be forgotten that the major disaster which befell Jewry in A.D. 70 had a religious background. The Jews felt it an intolerable insult to be dominated by a pagan power. Josephus gives as the *casus belli* the abolishment of the customary sacrifices offered at the Temple in Jerusalem for Rome and Cæsar. Jerusalem fell on Sept. 25th, A.D. 70, after a bitter siege which lasted five months. Josephus estimates that more than one and a quarter million people perished in Jerusalem alone. Between May 1st and July 20th, 150,880 corpses were carried out through one single gate. Some 600,000 bodies were cast unburied from the walls ; 97,000 Jews were brought as slaves to the Roman capital. The markets were flooded with Jewish slaves all over the empire. There was such a glut of slaves as a result of the Jewish war that they almost were given away.

The Jews, smarting under defeat, were seeking opportunities of revenge. In the year A.D. 115 Trajan was engaged in a campaign against the Parthians. The Jews used the occasion to revolt and the Jewries of Egypt, Cyrene, Cyprus, and Mesopotamia became involved in civil war against Rome. Under Hadrian it came to a final show down, which ended disastrously with the fall of Bethar on the 9th of Ab A.D. 135 (to this day the 9th of Ab is commemorated as the anniversary of the Fall of the second Temple). The leader of the revolt Shimon Bar-Coziba, who was declared by the leading rabbi of the day as God's Messiah, fell in battle, and with him 500,000 perished.

It is now that the story begins in earnest. The Jews never recovered from the " Bar-Cochba " *débâcle*. The Christianization of the Empire only added a new element to the strained relations between Gentiles and Jews. The Jews were now looked upon not only as a conquered people but as a religious enemy. Constantine had already introduced restrictions upon the synagogue. Further measures were taken by his successors to curtail Jewish freedom. Valentinian, Gratian, Theodosius, Honorius, all added to the restrictions which served as the basis for the complete legal disfranchise of Jewry in the Middle Ages. By the second half of the twelfth century we find the Jews in the

position of *servi camerae*, that is, the private property of the reigning prince. Jews could be sold, pawned, lent, or even killed without redress.

It is only natural that finding himself in a legal vacuum, the Jew should become the butt of contempt amidst a fanatical and barbarous population. He had to live in segregation for his own protection and engage in pursuits which only added to his unpopularity.

As far as Christian Europe is concerned the story of Jewish martyrdom can be summarized under three headings :

(a) *Baptism or expulsion*

This alternative the Jews had to face with tedious regularity. The motives of those who put the Jews before such a choice were prompted by selfishness ; only seldom was it the result of religious zeal. Expulsion of the Jews was of the greatest possible advantage to debtors and local merchants. But to the Jews, either choice spelled financial ruin, for there was a law which required of Jewish " converts " the forfeiture of their possessions or the greater part of them on the principle that, prior to baptism, all gain was sinfully obtained.

On some rare occasions the alternative to baptism was not expulsion but death. Such was particularly the case during the period of the Crusades. Those were times of bitter suffering for Jews in Europe.

It was a frequent occurrence for Jews to commit suicide rather than abjure their faith, as they did in London at the advice of their Rabbi, Jacob of Orleans, during the massacre at the time of the coronation of Richard I. The pious writer of the *Chronicles of William of Newbury* comments upon these events: " Thus was the first day of the reign of the illustrious King Richard distinguished by an even hitherto unheard of in the royal city, by the beginning of the doom of the infidel race, and by a new zeal of Christians against the enemies of the Cross of Christ."

The classical example of expulsion was that from Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella. The moment the fatal edict was signed on March 30th, 1492, the clergy immediately started a great campaign to " convert " the obstinate Jews. The story of the Marranos is one of the saddest chapters in Church history.

(b) *Forced baptism of Jewish children*

This is one of the ugliest chapters in the Church's dealing with the Jews. It would sometimes happen that an over-zealous fanatical nurse would clandestinely baptize a Jewish infant and then confess to the priest. Once the story became known to the Church the child was claimed on the grounds of the efficacy of the sacrament. " A mock ceremony," writes Cecil Roth, " performed with ditch water by a superstitious nurse or a drunken ruffian " was sufficient to deprive the parents of all claims to the child unless they themselves accepted the Christian faith. This was not an unusual occurrence in the Middle Ages and even happened in more recent times. There is the case of Edgardo Mortara of Bologna who was abducted by the Papal Guards at 10 o'clock at night on June 23rd, 1858, when six years old, on the grounds that he was baptized by his nurse in infancy. In spite of

frantic efforts on the part of the parents, supported by the Jewish community and world opinion, the child was never surrendered. Edgardo ultimately became a priest and joined the Augustinian Order. The Finaly case which arose out of the Nazi persecution brings us to our own time and generation. Dr. Fritz Finaly and his wife were arrested by the Gestapo in La Tronche, a suburb of Grenoble in France, in 1944. They left their two boys, Robert aged two and Gerald, aged one, in the keeping of a Catholic orphanage. The parents perished at the hands of the Germans, but the sister of Dr. Finaly entered proceedings to gain possession of the children. After a long legal struggle the children were surreptitiously removed and hidden in a school on the Spanish border under assumed names. When finally discovered they were again spirited across the border and passed from hand to hand. Only after an order by the Supreme Court were the children returned to their Jewish relatives. A Roman Catholic writer reviewing the case saw in it an "irreducible conflict between civil law and certain incontestable superior right" (cf. *The Bridge*, A Yearbook of Judaean-Christian Studies, I, 1955, p. 300). Such a conflict is only possible to a medieval mind.

(c) *Mob violence*

The Jews were unpopular for a number of reasons: they were different in their habits; they engaged in pursuits which were held in derision; they kept aloof from the rest of the population; they did not conform religiously. They were also defenceless, as is every other minority. Defencelessness invites attack, especially when it can be done with impunity. Mob violence was thus a common experience in Jewish history. In case we are led to believe that Jew-bating was a "Christian" prerogative, it is as well to be reminded that the Jewish lot in non-Christian lands was equally precarious.

When Mohammed's followers gained the upper hand after the victory at Badr in 624, the Jewish communities became the first victims. The Jews of Medina were attacked without warning and driven into exile; gradually other Jewish tribes were "assaulted and in most cases either expelled, exterminated, or forced to embrace Islam", writes Cecil Roth in his *Short History of the Jewish People* (1936, p. 147).

The era of the Crusades, and later the Black Death, were periods of indescribable Jewish misery. They were accused of witchcraft, the use of Christian blood for ritual purposes, the poisoning of wells, the desecration of the Host, and every other crime imaginable. The result was constant massacre, rape, and pillage.

In Slav countries Jewish suffering persisted to our own days and they are still the seed-bed of anti-Semitism. The term *pogrom* has entered our vocabulary and is of Ukrainian provenance. Though the Oxford Dictionary politely describes *pogrom* as "organized massacre of a body or class in Russia", its historic reference is primarily to Jews.

Since the Cossack rising under Pavluk (1637) and Bogdan Khmelnicki (1648-49) in the Ukraine, there was almost no respite for the Jewish population in Eastern Europe. Here is the witness of a Russian historian quoted by S. M. Dubnow in his *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*: "Killing was accompanied by barbarous tortures; the

victims were flayed alive, split asunder, clubbed to death, roasted on coals, or scalded with boiling water. Even infants at the breast were not spared. The most terrible cruelty was shown to the Jews. They were destined to utter annihilation, and the slightest pity shown to them was looked upon as treason . . ." (Vol. I, 1916, pp. 145f.).

Jew-baiting continued in the Russian empire to the very last. At the end of the nineteenth century as the Czar's throne was tottering, anti-Semitism became the official policy of the Russian Government. It is now universally accepted that the worst excesses against Jews were organized by government agents. Since the assassination of Alexander II in March 1881, anti-Jewish propaganda became an important factor in Russian politics. It was believed that by using the Jew as a scapegoat the wrath of the nation would be diverted from the ruling classes. Professor Dubnow, who lists the pogroms in alphabetical order according to cities, gives instances of pogroms "carefully prepared by Government agents". His listing runs to several pages. The Russian police was heavily implicated in these excesses which cost the Jewish people thousands of lives. These pogroms started an exodus to the West on the part of Russian Jewry which was only halted by the outbreak of war in 1914.

In other Eastern European lands the Jewish lot was not less bitter. Poland was the scene of sustained anti-Semitism. Dubnow says that "the *furor Polonicus* assumed more and more dangerous forms, so that at the beginning of the World War in 1914, almost the entire Polish nation, from the 'progressive anti-Semites' down to the clericals, were up in arms against the Jews". After the Poles regained their freedom in 1918 the Jewish position underwent little change. In 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland he found willing and even eager co-operators in the annihilation of Polish Jewry. It is a bitter fact that while Polish Jewry was being systematically destroyed, the Church looked on without raising a single voice in protest. Anti-Semitism is almost a dogma in the Polish Church. The same can be said of the other neighbouring countries, specially Hungary and Roumania.

2. THE INFERIOR RACE

Anti-Semitism from a semantic point of view is a modern concept. Ancient Jew-baiting rested upon different premises. For the ancient Roman the Jew was an atheist who denied the gods; for the Crusader he was the Christ-killer who refused to repent; for the Muslim he was the infidel who rejected his Prophet. For the medieval Christian the Jew was the man under God's curse in association with the sinister powers of the Devil. There may have been hidden racial prejudices which determined the medieval Christian's attitude towards the Jews but he was not aware of them. Judaeophobia on racial grounds is a modern creation.

The theory of anti-Semitism derives from France and is associated with the name of Ernest Renan. The great French historian was not an anti-Semite in the vulgar sense. All he did was to define the Semites as inferior, when compared with the Aryan race. He did not even regard the modern Jew as a Semite and denied that the Jewish people constitutes a race. But the seed he sowed soon bore fruit upon

German soil which became the hot-bed of anti-Semitism. The literary father of the movement was an obscure German journalist by the name of Wilhelm Marr. He described the Jews not only as blood-sucking leeches, but the sworn enemies of the Germanic race. Adolf Stöcker, the court chaplain and Conservative member of the Prussian Diet, gave respectability to the anti-Semitic movement. A flood of anti-Semitic literature filled the country. The political situation in Germany provided the proper soil for anti-Semitic sentiment as it served to strengthen national unity—the main aim of the Bismarck régime.

The theory of the supremacy of the Aryan race was elaborated by the Frenchman, Count Gobineau, and received a degree of philosophical, if not anthropological, support from men like Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Dühring, and Nietzsche. Treitschke, the historian, gave a special anti-Semitic twist to historical studies. G. F. Abbott in his *Israel in Europe* (1907), says about Germany: "German professors analysed the Jewish mind and found it Semitic, German theologians sought for the Jewish soul and could find none. Both classes, agreeing in nothing else, concurred in denouncing the Jew as a sinister creature, strangely wanting of spiritual qualities—a being whose whole existence, devoid of faith of any kind, revolves between his cash-book and the book of the Law" (p. 419).

October 1879 was the date of the first anti-Jewish society in Berlin and Dresden with the objective of uniting "all non-Jewish Germans of all persuasions, all parties, all stations, into one common league . . . to save our German fatherland from becoming completely Judaized . . ." The German League passed a resolution "to eschew all intercourse, social and commercial, with the enemies of the Teutonic race" (G. F. Abbott, *Israel in Europe*, p. 422), and in April 1888 presented a petition to the Prussian Chamber requesting the deportation of all foreign Jews; the exclusion of Jews from posts of authority; the removal of Jewish influence from Christian schools, etc.

It is odd to contemplate the fact that German anti-Semitism which began with the purpose of defending Christianity and was sustained by the most conservative elements of the Protestant and Roman Churches, ended as a bitter foe of the Christian faith. The logic of this fact is only too apparent: vilification of the "semitic" spirit consequently led to the vilification of the Bible and of Jesus Christ himself. The prophets of naked anti-Christian racialism were Friedrich Nietzsche, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Alfred Rosenberg, the racial theorist of the Nazi party and the sometime editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. The faith of Nazism is summarized in a few words: "The struggle for existence is a law of Nature; hardness is the supreme virtue; the key to history lies in race; power is the prerogative of a racial élite. There is the old scorn for the Christian virtues, dismissed as the attempt of the underdog to impose shackles on the strong . . . there is the old hatred of the Jew as the eternal enemy of Aryan 'culture' and the Germanic peoples" (Alan Bullock, *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, 1952, pp. 615f.).

With such a philosophy of life, all that the Germans needed was the opportunity to translate theory into practice. The opportunity came

at the outbreak of the Second World War. Lord Russell of Liverpool, who acted as assistant judge advocate at the trials of war criminals in Germany, quotes the Nazi Journal *Das Schwarze Korps*, in which the German aim regarding the Jews is bluntly stated : " Just as the Jewish question will be solved in Germany only when the last Jew has gone ; so the rest of Europe must realize that the German peace which awaits it must be a peace without Jews " (Lord Russell, *The Scourge of the Swastika*, 1954).

Wherever the Germany army went it remained true to its purpose—the destruction of the Jewish people. We quote Lord Russell again, who like few others, knows the story from the inside. Here is his account in carefully chosen and measured words : " Their women could be violated with immunity, their places of worship desecrated and set on fire. Their shops were looted and executions began. Jew hunts were organized and when rabbis were caught, their beards were cut or torn off. The Jews were made to perform the filthiest and most degrading tasks ; to clean out latrines with their hands ; to collect horse-droppings in the street and fill their caps and pockets with them."

But all these humiliations were only a prelude to the last act in the drama : the moment the Germans began to invade Russia the *Einsatzkommandos* were organized ; these were special units to exterminate the Jewish population. At first the victims were shot after they were made to dig their own graves, but in the spring of 1942 the Main Office in Berlin supplied mobile gas vans for mass extermination. When these vans were unable to cope with the numbers destined to be destroyed, the gas ovens in the concentration camps were introduced.

Lord Russell, with typical Anglo-Saxon restraint, tells of the tragic end of Polish Jewry : " From the statistics available it would appear that the total annihilation ordered by Himmler in 1942 was almost accomplished. Of the 3,000,000 or more Jews living in Poland in September, 1939, not more than 50,000 could be traced in 1946, and not less than 2,600,000 perished."

These fantastic figures do not, however, convey the whole extent of the tragedy. According to Alan Bullock's report the total picture is much more staggering. Bullock records that in August, 1944, Eichmann, Himmler's infamous assistant, soon to be tried in Israel, reported the extermination of 4,000,000 in the various camps ; an additional 2,000,000 to have been shot by the *Einsatzkommandos* of the Security Police in Russia. Himmler disputed the report and insisted that more than 6,000,000 had perished. He even proposed to send an S.S. statistician to overhaul Eichmann's records (cf. Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 643).

European Jewry emerged from the holocaust decimated and bleeding. " Decimated " is hardly the word, for it was not one in ten who suffered death, but barely one in ten who escaped. Of Polish Jewry about 50,000 survived. Of German Jewry only a handful survived, except those who were fortunate enough to leave the country before 1939. Hungary, Roumania, Holland, Belgium, and France, all suffered grievous loss. The first victims in every country invaded by the Germans or under German influence, were the Jewish communities.

In the East of Europe, Himmler found willing henchmen among the Ukrainian, Poles, Roumanians, and Lithuanians in hunting, pillaging, and shooting the Jewish population. When we speak of German guilt we frequently forget the many willing helpers of non-German origin who have been reared in the tradition of Jew-baiting and whose hands have become stained with Jewish blood.

In terms of personal suffering the full story can never be told. A glimpse of what happened to people hunted like wild animals and in constant danger for their lives we receive from reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Those who miraculously survived the holocaust to tell the story have frequently found it impossible to express the depths of despair and degradation. There is a growing literature of reminiscences and evidence of those frightful years. There is a book by Belsen survivors containing twenty-four articles on different aspects of conditions in the camp. There is the autobiography of Gerda Weissman Klein, *All But My Life*, which gives a fairly good idea what it meant for a girl of fifteen to become a Nazi slave. There is the gruesome novel by the Polish author Jerzy Andrzejewski called *Noc* ("Night", 1946). There is the hair-raising account of Ravensbruck concentration camp by Sylvia Salvesen, *Forgive—But Do Not Forget*. There is the incredible story of the rising of the Warsaw Ghetto and the tragic end of the imprisoned Jewish community (cf. the article by the Polish writer Adolf Rudnicki, written on the fifteenth anniversary of the destruction of the Ghetto (*Jewish Chronicle*, April 18, 1958)). There is the moving, haunting story of a noble and stout-hearted woman, Mrs. Grete Salus, who survived in a labour camp in Germany—*Eine Frau erzählt* (*Das Parlament*, Oct. 30, 1957, Bonn). There are thousands of other books and documents, but one book still awaits a writer. We need somebody, preferably a Christian theologian, to tell us the implications, inferences, and effects of what happened to European Jewry in the midst of the twentieth century, and perpetrated by a modern, highly-industrialized and "civilized" people. Such a writer will also have to explain to us the miracle of Jewish survival in spite of persistent efforts to destroy this people. He will also have to help us understand the meaning of Jewish destiny and the significance of their national renaissance.

* * * *

The present writer has just returned from a visit to Israel. For three exhilarating weeks he went up and down the country speaking to people, visiting biblical sites, observing the miraculous transformation of the country. He saw this "inferior people" building schools, erecting the new university in Jerusalem, draining swamps, planting trees in the desert. But above all he saw a new generation of Jews being raised in freedom, fearless, uninhibited, and disciplined. He repeatedly asked himself the question: What is the future of this people? The Jews have seen Hitler's rise and fall, and, as Dean Inge observed, have always stood at the grave of their persecutors. Is there meaning in Jewish history? Is there a pattern woven into the strange vicissitudes of Israel, though invisible to the human eye?

These are not theoretical questions but questions which press upon us when we contemplate upon Israel's pilgrimage through time. Some-

what similar questions could be asked about any people in any period of history, but in no case are these questions more puzzling, more insistent, more urgent, than when face to face with the Jews.

The writer only knows of one answer but it is an answer of faith : Jesus Christ, " a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel ". For a crucified people need the message of Easter Day.

Is there a Future for the Jews ?

BY GEORGE STEVENS

FROM the purely secularist point of view the question of a possible future for the Jewish people is bound up with the prospects of the survival of the human race as a whole. The development of nuclear weapons has placed a gigantic question mark against the whole future of humanity and recently such secular " prophets " as Bertrand Russell and Philip Noel-Baker have given expression to views of extreme pessimism in the matter. Bertrand Russell has said he considers there is a fifty-fifty chance that any human life will remain upon this planet in a hundred years' time. Noel-Baker has been still more pessimistic stating that the most probable future of the planet is to be a lifeless, radio-active mass rotating in space.

Leaving these dismal and terrifying possibilities on one side the likelihood of the Jewish race surviving as a separate entity may be argued on the basis of probabilities arising from past history. The fact that the Jewish people have shown an astonishing genius for survival, the fact that, in Disraeli's oft-quoted words, the Jew has time and time again stood at the graveside of his persecutors, might well make it seem likely that they will successfully withstand any further ordeals the future may have in store for them. Moreover, there is now for the first time for nearly two thousand years a Jewish state in existence in part of the ancient fatherland. Although the position of the State of Israel, surrounded as it is by hostile and suspicious nations, may well be regarded as precarious in the extreme, yet, in the opinion of an increasing number of unbiased observers, it has come to stay. If this is so that State would almost certainly provide a refuge for many potential victims of a future " Hitler " and therefore the likelihood of the entire people being exterminated is proportionately reduced. Thus, if the human race as a whole survives, it may be said that having regard to its past history and its present prospects the Jewish race is likely to survive at least in the foreseeable future.

Can the continued existence of the Jewish people, however, be explained on purely secular, materialistic lines? There is certainly something unique about their history. This was recently well expressed