

Acts of Persecution

The latest Arab-Jewish conflict in the Middle East has resulted in a flood of articles and news commentaries. Of course this fourth war has created fear and unrest. Wars fought far away have now world wide repercussions. The oil crisis as a by-product of this latest war is even felt in our nation. Many people will be wearing an extra sweater this winter as a result of the energy shortage.

The background of the war is complex. The problems have deep historic roots. The energy crisis is an extra additive to make a permanent solution even more difficult to find.

Who are the real winners in this latest round of fighting? *Time* magazine suggests the Russians. (*Time*, November 5, 1973). They have backed the Arabs more forcefully than the U.S. has helped the Israelis. *Time* says that the Soviets can now concentrate on the primary goal of their policy in the Middle East: "Broadening and developing their influence in the oil-rich nations of the Persian Gulf, where Russian strategic interests directly conflict with those of the U.S."

Historically, the Russian state and the Jewish race have always been at loggerheads with each other. Russia has always been bitterly anti-Jewish. Yet it inherited the largest Jewry in the world, when, in the years 1792-95, it shared in the partition of the old Polish republic. This great influx added more fuel to the already existing bitter feelings. Occasionally, efforts have been made to alleviate the hardships, but the results have been next to nil. Alexander II tried to bring in reforms, but his assassination in 1881 ushered in a period of reaction to the Jews that continued with only slight relief until 1917.

The powerful conservative reaction found expression in the progroms (massacres) among their Jewish communities and Europe stood aghast at the incredible barbarities of that terrible period. The outcome was a mass emigration of the survivors to the West, first to Britain and later to America, amounting probably to over two million in all. Progroms.

The Jews in Russia were reduced to a state of hardship and degradation. The Romanovs, beginning with Alexander II (1881-94) cultivated an older Russian policy that was to have fateful consequences for all European Jewry, the policy of the scapegoat. They were blamed for everything that went wrong!

The Jews under communist rule have not fared much better. True, according to law, anti-Semitism is forbidden in Russia, but the idea of the Jew as a national has been denied.

The Jew, Karl Marx, denied the peculiar position of Jewry in history. Jews should have been absorbed after their dispersion to other nations, like so many other invaded nations after destruction of their national existence ceased to exist.

The catchword was assimilation. The Jewish race should be assimilated in the nation. The Russian Jews are Russians, just as American Negroes are American citizens. ' For Stalin, Jewry was already in 1913 "a mystic,, incomprehensible, unrealistic phenomenon." According to him, there was no place for such a phenomenon in the socialist state.

Professor Dr. Dotsenko, , formerly one of the Soviet Union's top nuclear scientists, presently teaching at Waterloo Lutheran University, Waterloo, Ont., was asked in an interview: "What about anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union?" He answered:

"Soviet authorities impose quotas on the admission of Jews to universities in spite of the brilliant abilities of Jewish students and impose a shameless tax on Jews who want to go to Israel, like the tax on slaves who wanted freedom. Ideologically, Soviets are the worst enemies of the state and people of Israel. Stalin was made secretary-general of the Russian Communist party after he wrote a special work in which he denied for the Jews the right to be called a nation and scorned Jewish religion and customs."

Perhaps it should say something to us that Dr. Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) the Zionist Leader and the virtual Creator of the State of Israel was born in Russia.

The Jewish story is one of blood and tears. Throughout history, the Jewish people have gone through ovens, the ovens of the Egyptian Pharaoh, the fiery oven of Nebuchadnezzar and the gas ovens of Adolf Hitler.

The trials in Russia have added further grief to the story of persecuted Jewry. Moses pleaded with Pharaoh of Egypt: "Let my people go." Jews behind the Iron Curtain are asking their authorities: "Let us go."

Where shall they go if the Jewish nation ceases to exist?

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