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The Economic Life of the Jews in Poland as Reflected in Yiddish Literature (1914-1939)

William M. Glicksman

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The Economic Life of the Jews in Poland as Reflected in Yiddish Literature (1914-1939)

Abstract
In the following study an attempt has been made to reconstruct and depict the economic aspect and milieu of the Jews in Poland between the two World Wars. The aim of this survey has been to show the economic activities of the big Jewish industrialist, as well as of the peddler trudging with his pack through the villages, of the wage-earner and artisan, of the storekeeper and market woman, the white-collar worker, the professional class and the luftmensch, whose existence was most precarious. The study took cognizance of the Jewish struggle for survival in an atmosphere of anti-Jewish discrimination under the constant harassment and oppression of hostile Poles and their officials. (In one of his scholarly works Prof. Zeitlin has remarked that "It is an accepted fact of historical interpretation that political and even some religious philosophies of national life emerge out of the social and economic struggles within the nation.")

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THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE JEWS IN POLAND
AS REFLECTED IN YIDDISH LITERATURE
(1914 - 1939)

This dissertation, entitled

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE JEWS IN POLAND
AS REFLECTED IN YIDDISH LITERATURE
by

William M. Glicksman

by

William M. Glicksman

Candidate for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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for Hebrew and Cognate Learning
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APPRAVAL

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AS REFLECTED IN YIDDISH LITERATURE
(1914 - 1939)

by
William M. Glicksman

Candidate for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

had been read and approved by

[Signatures]

Date April 9, 1957
The Economic Life Of The Jews In Poland as Reflected In Yiddish Literature

1904 - 1939

"דוחי ידיעות יהודיות לארץ פולין"

By William J. - [Iagalikwam]

(27) ה. י"א מראה העדיד "א" תרומת ברייתBEDERMAN.
Prefatory Note

The literature of a people can be regarded as its autobiography.

The Economic Life of the Jews in Poland as Reflected in Yiddish Literature

In the following study, (1914 - 1939), it has been made to reconstruct and explain the economic aspect and milieu of the Jews in Poland before the two World Wars. The survey has been to trace the economic activities of the big Jewish industrialist, as well as the peddler, trudging with his pack through the villages, of the sage farmer and artisan, of the storekeeper and market woman, the tailor, the worker, the professional class and the lutaner, whose livelihood was most precarious. The study took cognizance of the Jewish struggle for survival in an atmosphere of anti-Jewish discrimination and the constant harassment and oppression of hostile Poles and their officials. In one of his scholarly works, Prof. Meitlin has said that "It is an accepted fact of historical interpretation that political and even some religious philosophies of national life are out of the social and economic struggles within the nation."

Some sixty-odd Yiddish publicists and writers in belles-lettres, with the period of 1914-1939, including such men as I. J. Singer, M. Reisen, G. Segalowitch, L. Minkin, R. Burshtein, J. Perish, Kaufman, Sholem Asch, J. Opatoshu, furnished the source material for this painstaking study. While it lays no claim to exhaustiveness, has been supplemented by authentic findings and documentary evidence.
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Dr. Abraham A. Neuman

In the following study an attempt has been made to reconstruct and depict the economic aspect and milieu of the Jews in Poland between the two World Wars. The aim of this survey has been to show the economic activities of the big Jewish industrialist, as well as of the peddler trudging with his pack through the villages, of the wage-earner and artisan, of the storekeeper and market woman, the white-collar worker, the professional class and the luftmensch, whose existence was most precarious. The study took cognizance of the Jewish struggle for survival in an atmosphere of anti-Jewish discrimination under the constant harassment and oppression of hostile Poles and their officials. (In one of his scholarly works Prof. Zeitlin has remarked that "It is an accepted fact of historical interpretation that political and even some religious philosophies of national life emerge out of the social and economic struggles within the nation.")

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gathered from a considerable number of scientific works produced by such eminent scholars and historians as: Dr. B. D. Weinryb, Dr. I. Shipper, Dr. J. Shatzky, and Dr. P. Friedman; civic leaders such as: I. Grinbaum, A. Hartglass, Dr. Z. Shabad, and Dr. J. Wygodsky. The works of such literary critics as: S. Niger, N. Maizel, and J. I. Trunk, were likewise consulted. The endeavor throughout has been, following Professor Weinryb's counsel, "to rid the documents of their subjective husks and to extract whatever kernels of historical truth they contained."

The author of this study, one of the few fortunate enough to survive the Auschwitz, Dachau and other concentration camps, considers his contribution as both a post-mortem and a memorial to his Polish brethren, who bled to death in the Nazi mass-slaughters, which can find no parallel in history. "Lo, mine eye hath seen all this..." one could well cry out with Job.

The years of study that the writer had spent at Dropsie College, and the lasting influence exerted upon him by Professor Abraham A. Neuman, Professor Solomon Zeitlin, Professor B. D. Weinryb, and the late Dr. L. L. Honor, will be cherished by him all his life. These eminent teachers and preceptors have guided him in the realm of spiritual values, have indoctrinated him with the great values of the heritage of our forefathers, as well as the ideas of secular progress. They also imbued him with the spirit of striving for the general welfare of humanity.

The author wishes to express his gratitude to Miss D. Abramowich of the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, Miss Miriam Stern of the Dropsie College Library, Mr. D. Rom of the Jewish Public Library in
Montreal, for their generous help in his search for material; and to Mr. M. Spiegel for his reading of the manuscript. Above all, the author is indebted to his wife, Claire, whose devotion, prudence, and inspiration greatly facilitated his task.

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THE JEWS IN POLAND
(1914-1939)

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

Poland was one of the countries where Jews found a haven during the Middle Ages. They had migrated there around the beginning of the eleventh century and in due time established communities and took root. Poland thus came to be the sanctuary for the persecuted Jews of Bohemia and the Rhine provinces.

The Jews became an integral part of Poland's population from the very beginning. A succession of Polish feudal princes and kings accorded the Jewish settlers certain rights and privileges, guaranteeing them inviolability of person and property, religion and cultural freedom, and the right to free economic activity. Among other privileges, they were granted a charter known as the "Council of the Four Lands" (Vaad Arba Ammot Hahadash), vesting them with legislative and administrative powers for their communities. These vested rights testified to the existence of autonomous institutions in the Jewish communities in Poland. Jews were also an important factor in the furtherance and progress of the Polish state at all times.

When Poland was partitioned among Austria, Prussia, and Russia in 1795, the Polish Jews in turn became integrated economically and politically in those countries.
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When Poland was partitioned among Austria, Prussia, and Russia in 1795, the Polish Jews in turn became integrated economically and politically in those countries. They were big-scale merchants, and their families also engaged in truck gardening and general farming on a large scale.
CHAPTER I 

2. CONGRESS POLAND 

1914-1915

In 1913 the Jewish population in the territory known as Poland numbered 1,957,000—roughly about 15% of the total population. Of this number 86.5% lived in the cities, and 13.5% in the towns and villages.1

The economic structure of the Jews in Congress Poland may be summarized as follows:

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In some towns, between 80% and 90% of those engaged in commerce were Jews. They participated in all the forms of trade, both wholesale and retail;3 Jewish merchants played an important role in importing and exporting—the latter, chiefly to Russia, was quite extensive; the former, mainly from Germany, though on a minor scale at first, gradually increased. At the same time, minor Jewish entrepreneurs earned a livelihood through smuggling not only commodities, but emigrants to various lands.3a

Jews ran all sorts of commercial and transportation agencies, participated in banking transactions, and so on. The boycott of Jewish businessmen in 1912 ruined the small traders and shopkeepers, but hardly affected the industrialists and big-scale merchants. Jewish families also did some truck gardening and general farming on a small scale.
Industry and handicrafts imply an employer-and-employee relationship. As employer and entrepreneur in building and expanding the industry of Congressional Poland, the participation of the Jews was considerable, but their part as workers in heavy industries was relatively minor, though somewhat higher in light industry. Jews were, however, represented in all the ranks of labor. There were Jewish artisans and so-called halupniks or home handicraft workers. Many employed one or more apprentices and sold their products directly at the local markets.

Jews were restricted in their political rights. Yet there began a crystallization of certain social trends which influenced the life of the Jewish masses in future independent Poland in various ways.

During World War I, Congress Poland became the battleground of the Russians, the Germans, and the Austro-Hungarians. The Jewish communities fell prey now to one, now to the other passing army. Hundreds of towns and settlements, with thousands of Jewish homes, were destroyed, and thousands upon thousands of Jews lost their lives.

But the trials and tribulations of the Jews stemmed not only from the inevitabilities of war; Jews suffered additionally because of their faith. They were accused of being hostile to Russia, and of giving comfort to the enemy, by both the Russians and the Poles.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Jews bore the brunt of an economic boycott led by the Polish En-Deks [National Democrats] in 1912. The Jews became the scapegoats whenever the Poles wanted to get into the good graces of the Russian or German authorities.
The En-Dek party, which stood at the helm of the anti-Semitic movement, attracted the Polish masses to its program. The Polish population had been infected with the anti-Semitic virus long before the onset of the war; during their hostile campaigns against the Jews at this time they utilized not only the press, but the clergy. False accusations and trumped-up charges of the basest sort were constantly levelled at the Jews, which in turn led to bestial attacks and even massacres.

The anti-Semitic slanders did not go unanswered. Voices of liberal Poles and Russians were raised in defense of the Jews. Moreover, eminent Jews from abroad, such as Georg Brandeis, Louigi Luzati, Herman Bernstein, and others denounced the anti-Semitic campaign in no uncertain terms.

But all the protests proved of no avail. The prevailing anti-Jewish animus was rooted too deeply in the masses to make any change for the better possible. Both the Russians and the Poles did everything in their power to bolster and sustain anti-Jewish sentiment. As a result, the living conditions of the Jews in the territory where the Russians held sway constantly worsened.

The Russian Military Command was saturated with anti-Semitism. Russian generals sought to excuse their resounding defeats at the hands of the Germans by falsely accusing the Jews of spying for and abetting the enemy. At the order of their higher-ups, local Russian commanders issued decrees calling for Jewish hostages who would pay with their lives if one of their co-religionists were found guilty of espionage. Even the minor Russian-Jewish officers and enlisted men gradually came under suspicion, and non-Jews began to avoid them.
Kangaroo courts were instituted against Jews, and in some instances the victims were hanged.

Before long the anti-Jewish policy became intensified and a new decree to banish all Jews from the border towns was promulgated. A systematic expulsion of individual Jews and of entire townships got under way. Boroughs with an 80% Jewish population had their Jewish inhabitants evacuated on short notice. (The district of Lublin, April 23-May 6, 1915).

Such expulsions took place even in towns where hostages had been taken. An expulsion order was usually carried out in 24 hours, and those banished included the old and young, the bedridden and the crippled.

Those inhuman deeds and outrages did not go without protest from the liberal representatives in the Russian Duma. But these were voices crying in the wilderness; the plight of the victims was not alleviated in the least. The anti-Jewish agitation and the harsh decrees continued unabated. Some Jews, rather than wait for the order of expulsion, departed voluntarily. That is why there are no exact statistics of the total number banished. Suffice it is to say that there were approximately 600,000 Jewish expatriates who were in need of help. It need hardly be said that the expulsion of a Jewish community also spelled the doom of its economic and social life.

In the midst of this catastrophe, the Jews and the Poles continued disputing about the participation of the former in general war relief committees. The Poles objected to Jewish representation in these organizations, although in some localities the Jewish financial contributions had been far greater than those of the Poles.
Thus, the funds for the relief of the wounded in Warsaw, provided entirely by the local Jewish community, were administered by a_ polishing anti-Semitic committee, devoid of a single Jewish representa- sentive. Accordingly, in the administration of this relief,endent so much on amity and a fusion of all elements, there was relentless discrimination against Jews. Jewish nurses were not permitted to stay overnight in the hospitals. In procuring medical supplies, non-Jewish druggists were favored, although Jewish concerns offered lower prices. Jewish newspapermen were not invited to conferences pertaining to the Jewish community. Under the pressure of the Poles, even liberal Russian leaders refused to appoint Jewish officials to the relief organizations. 7

Faced with unremitting expulsions of their co-religionists, an endless stream of Jewish refugees, and the general hostile attitude on the part of the Poles, the more fortunate Jewish communities began organizing relief organizations of their own. The most notable one was that of the Warsaw kehillah 8 community headed by I. L. Peretz and I. Dinehson. In addition to looking after the unfortunate expatriates from other localities, numbering between 75,000 and 80,000, this relief organization had to administer to the needs of the wives of the Jewish soldiers serving with the Russian army, even though these dependents were entitled to relief from the Russian authorities. A separate relief campaign was carried on in behalf of twenty-two children's homes, accommodating some 6,000 youngsters. 8

The Warsaw kehillah was confronted with a superhuman task. It had the support of various other communities, such as the Petersburg Relief Committee, and the OZE, which contributed medical
help. In some localities, the ORT and the YIKA were also active. Some labor organizations, although they had been declared politically illegal, managed to establish co-operative food depots, as well as soup kitchens. These were partially subsidized by the official relief organizations which supplemented contributions from the members of the underground groups.

Some refugees managed to rehabilitate themselves by opening stores and workshops on a moderate scale. Others, skilled in one trade or another, found employment in the remote districts of Russia, despite the prevailing Pale of Settlement restrictions.9

**POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

Political views among Jews—for or against Russia—varied. There were some factions, such as the assimilationists and the orthodox groups, which subscribed to the Russian viewpoint because they had anticipated the absorption of Galician Jewry, thus enhancing their political, cultural, and economic status. In general, the opinions voiced were dictated by emotions rather than by any definite political knowledge.

In view of the fact that the Zionist, Bundist, and other Jewish organizations were considered illegal, their activities were of necessity clandestine. In July, 1915, the Yiddish and Hebrew press was outlawed, thus silencing the public voice of the Jews for an indefinite period. With the German occupation of Warsaw on August 5, 1915, the status of the Jews changed considerably.10

**c. THE ECONOMIC STATUS 1915-1918**

Although the Austro-German occupation of Poland put and end
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THE ECONOMIC STATUS

1915-1918

Although the Austro-German occupation of Poland put and end
to the pogroms (with the exception of one in Kalisz), and the expulsions of Jews (excepting one in Pinsk and environs)\textsuperscript{11}, the country's economic situation deteriorated considerably thereafter. The loss of the Russian market, on the one hand, and the plunder and confiscation by the forces of occupation, on the other, brought all trade and commerce to a standstill.

The lion's share of the Polish industry, as hitherto mentioned, had been consumed by the Russian market.\textsuperscript{11a} As a result of the war, manufacturers and leading merchants suffered great losses in goods and credits that had been outstanding with the Russian buyers, and which were now lost forever. The outbreak of the war disrupted every contact between creditor and debtor. Only in rare instances did manufacturers who had great wealth and were also lucky, contrive to transport some of their machinery, goods, and currency to Russia. The majority remained in Poland and suffered such terrific losses that some of them could never reestablish their respective lines of business again.\textsuperscript{12}

The blockade of Germany by the Allies brought in its wake a stagnation of Polish economic life. With the influx of raw materials practically halted, Germany took to confiscating the meager supplies in occupied Poland, thus ending almost all possibilities for business transactions, for not only raw materials, but finished products were confiscated. The various decrees that restricted and outlawed practically all trading led to widespread poverty, want, and starvation. The Germans created special organizations that monopolized the economic life—and led to its ruin. Former merchants turned street vendors. Some Jews opened beer-and-tea houses to accommodate the note that were requisitioned in the villages.
German soldiers, and thus eke out a livelihood. These conditions brought about demoralization. The suffering of the populace became intensified, and mortality increased when the Germans introduced forced-labor battalions in 1916.\(^13\)

On the other hand, the war brought wealth for the speculators and smugglers. The extent of the damage and loss sustained by the workers is reported by the inquiry carried out by the "Joint" in 1921. Though the inquiry was conducted about three years after World War I, it has not lost any of its worth. It is because during the 1918-1921 period, war chaos still prevailed in Poland; the country waged war against the Ukraine and the Soviet Union. The diminishing industrial production was due to a shortage of raw materials, machinery, and capital.\(^14\)

The worsening of the Jews' lot was partly due to the fact that they were engaged primarily in trade and handicrafts, rather than farming and its related phases. Although attempts had been made to establish Jews in agriculture, these were entirely too small to have any influence on the situation. The material losses of European Jewry during World War I amounted to two billion dollars, with half of this sustained by the Polish Jews.\(^15\)

In order to tighten its control on local commerce, the German forces of occupation introduced *Pasir-Scheinen*—passport, without which one could not ride on a train. It was very difficult to secure such travel documents. In order further to thwart all economic activity, other decrees were issued from time to time. Thus, leather belts, the metal of kettles, rare materials and finished products were removed from factories. Agricultural products and cattle were requisitioned in the villages.
The following policy prevailed: "The interests of the German Army and the Homeland (Faterland) take precedence. Whenever the interests of the inhabitants of an occupied region do not run counter to those of the Army and the Homeland, they will be given due consideration." 

These unsettled conditions brought about demoralization and lawlessness. People resorted to all possible means to obtain the privilege of carrying on any sort of trade. The means consisted of bribing in one form or another. Prostitutes (and other women) were used to get into the good graces of the German officers. There were instances when German officials made common cause with the speculators and smugglers. These officials also used to sell to their speculator-partners the rationed provisions destined for local distribution and public kitchens.

Smuggling was on a wide scale; smugglers operated singly, and in groups. Food products were smuggled from villages and townships into the cities. Sometimes individuals smuggled food simply for their own consumption. To avoid the German gendarmerie, secret and tortuous roads were followed. The railroad, peasant carts, and other means of conveyance were utilized. The smuggling activity brought in its wake a shortage of goods and exorbitant prices. In order to earn a livelihood, men resorted to all sorts of speculation. The smugglers gradually wormed their way into positions of prominence in their community. During the war even some dignitaries of the synagogue turned to smuggling. Those who were nabbed tried to bribe their way out of the toils of the law in one way or another.

On the other hand, the great mass of unemployed, embracing
a cross-section of the community, continued to live in abject poverty. Famished, shabby men and women would queue up in front of the provision shops.17

The other hand, Jews were employed as clerks in the offices, as skilled workers on the rail-

FORCED LABOR

The pauperization of the Jewish masses conditioned them for the call for workers issued by the German authorities in the occupied areas. Former traders and shopkeepers, unemployed artisans, and unskilled workers, deprived of any earnings, applied for jobs in Germany. According to the reports of the Berlin Jewish Community, there were 40,000 Jews interned in 8 various labor camps in 1917. Jewish workers were employed in mines, in factories, and so on.

They worked under difficult conditions. They could rarely go home on a furlough, though the contract stipulated that privilege. There was hardly any freedom of movement. A breach of the regulations was punishable by transfer to a detention camp.

Such workers (while in Germany) could not belong to any labor organization, and were thus deprived of any protection. Those who were lucky enough to get away from the labor camps applied for help to the Jewish relief societies. The Jewish Volks Verein of Berlin extended a helping hand to 158,000 workers.

The forces of occupation also conscripted workers for various projects in the occupied areas. Entire communities were taken to task for the failure of some of their members to complete their quotas of labor.

Conscription of men for the labor battalions was carried out in accordance with the harsh decree. The authorities rounded
up men in the "public kitchens", and at concerts planned with a view to ensnare victims. Men were abducted in the presence of their children.

On the other hand, Jews were employed as clerks in the government offices, as officials and skilled workers on the railroads and in the war industries.

Relief for the needy was provided by committees organized by the communities and by city councils.18

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

In contrast to their brutal economic policy the occupying forces pursued moderate tactics in the political arena, including their treatment of the Jews. It was an opportunist approach, calculated to aggrandize the German interests in the long run. The Germans wanted to use the Jews as a Germanizing factor against the Poles. To attain their objective the Germans capitalized on the pro-German sentiment prevalent among the Jews who had suffered at the hands of the Russians. The Germans proceeded to treat the Jews as equal citizens and, as formerly mentioned, afforded them positions in the governmental setup. Long before the Germans had occupied Poland they had prepared an efficient propaganda apparatus, with a view to winning over the Jews.19

The Germans had distributed bilingual appeals—in Yiddish and Hebrew—long held in readiness. There was also the well-known "Hindenburg Constitution"—the appeal wherein General Hindenburg reminded the Jews of the misery and wretchedness to which they were subjected under Czar Nicholas; and of the comfort and happiness
awaiting them under German rule. Attempts were made also to win over the Jewish Orthodox element, with the German (Jewish) Orthodoxy acting as intermediary. Dr. Pinchas Kahan, Dr. Karlebach, and the Reichstag deputy, Ludwig Haaze, were the first emissaries of the German Orthodox in this campaign.20

The liberal political course that the Germans had set in motion in Poland led to the legalizing of many hitherto banned political parties. The Zionists, Bund, Poale Zion, "S.S.", and other parties, long driven underground, were now rehabilitated.21

The election campaign for the Warsaw City Council caused quite a stir. It was a great national and political event for both Jews and Poles. These elections were a forerunner of later Parliamenterian activities in free Poland.

The reasons for the fight for national, political, and civil rights that the Jews were to carry on later was already apparent in this City Council program. The declarations issued by leading Polish spokesmen, the disproportionate relief measures for Jews and Gentiles, the glaring difference in the number of Jewish and non-Jewish city officials—all mirrored the potential hardships in the way of life for Jews in independent Poland.22

Jews could also get a foretaste of their life in the forthcoming free Poland after the "Polish State" was proclaimed (November 5, 1916), and after the election of the "Provisional Government Council". The first Polish premier of that period, Jan Kucharzewski, informed the Jewish journalists that, with the restoration of Polish sovereignty, steps would be taken to "regulate" the Jewish faith. This implied that the Jews could not look forward
to political rights and the furthering of their own culture, but would be treated as a religious sect only. The occupation authorities began to favor the Jewish Orthodox wing, which was the exponent of such a policy. The Germans outlawed the Jewish daily Warshauer Tageblatt, which championed national rights and authorized the Orthodox element to voice its view through the newspaper Dos Yiddische Vort (February, 1917). The Germans, in cooperation with the Jewish Orthodox element, planned to designate the Jewish people as a religious sect also by organizing the schools on a religious basis.

However, the consolidation of Jewish life proceeded apace through the national policy carried on by the Zionist organization and its press. The organization known as "Volkists" was not sitting idly by either. In September, 1917, the Germans issued the election ordination of kehilloth, or Jewish communities. This decree was more liberal in spirit than preceding ones, permitting the inclusion of Zionists and Volkists in the kehilloth.

The defeat of Germany terminated its reign in Poland; and a new chapter began for Jews in free Poland.

d. GALICIA

In 1914 the Jewish inhabitants in Galicia numbered around 870,000. They enjoyed all civil rights, but had difficulties in earning a living. Because of Austrian policy, Galicia had developed practically no industry. Agrarian production also was still on a low level. Galicia was reputed to be a poor region.
The economic structure for the Jews was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry and handicrafts</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally speaking, commerce was conducted on a small scale—mostly by petty traders, middlemen, and floaters. The tendency of the Ukrainian population to establish trade cooperatives greatly undermined the activity of the Jewish merchants. The majority of those engaged in industry and handicrafts were artisans. Only in a few select areas, such as: Borislaw, Drohobycz, Kolomyja, and Sosnow, did a wage-earning class come to the fore. In the first two, Jews were employed in the oil wells; in the latter, in the manufacture of prayer shawls. The introduction of equal civil rights for Jews resulted in the development of a group of Jewish intelligentsia, as well as of thousands of government and communal officials.

The preliminary base of operations of World War I centered in the eastern part of Galicia, because of its common border with Russia. Russian troops invaded Austrian territory a few brief hours after the declaration of war. Their invasion set in motion a series of persecutions, pogroms and expulsions. The Russian army commanders, confirmed anti-Semites, vented their wrath upon the Jews above all. The false accusations with which the Polish Jews had been charged were now revived and leveled against the Jews of Galicia. Galician Jews, totalling some 400,000, were uprooted and expelled. The Russian occupation authorities endeavored
to reduce Galician Jewry to the level of their hounded brethren in the vast Russian empire. The victims' appeals to the Russian military authorities fell on deaf ears.

The civil authorities of the Russian occupation forces lost no time in unceremoniously dismissing all Austrian Jewish functionaries from their jobs. Jewish land owners were expelled and their estates and holdings confiscated. Jews were confined to the regions where they lived, and Jewish contractors were barred from supplying provisions to the armed forces. The Ukrainians spearheaded an economic boycott against the Jews. In order to buy food in the cooperatives, Jews were required to present certificates signed by the local mayor. In Czortkow, Jews were barred from buying in the cooperatives altogether; and in Tarnopol they could shop only twice a week. These trying conditions made it hard for the Jewish to organize a relief apparatus. The Jewish Relief Committee, subsidized by the Russian Jews, did not come into being until May, 1915. S. Ansky, the Yiddish author, was among the first to initiate this relief movement for the hard-pressed Galician Jews.28

It was the defeat of the Russian troops at Gorlice (1915) that eased somewhat the plight of the Galician Jews. All Galician land, except the districts of Tarnopol and Czortkow, had been freed from Russian occupation then. Jews began to return to their ruined homes. The Austrian government came to their rescue, helping them to rehabilitate their broken lives. Apathy and misery, however, prevailed in the Jewish quarters for quite some time.

During the Russian offensive under General Brusilov, the lot of the Jews still under Russian occupation was somewhat alleviated. This was due to the pressure of Russia's allies, England.
and France, who had interceded on behalf of the persecuted Jews.

with the exception of hostages, the repatriation of Jews was set
in motion—though not to their home towns. Their situation was
hardly to be envied. They became a public charge to local com-
munities, and had to struggle for a bare subsistence. Epidemics
took a heavy toll among the weak, undernourished refugees. The
"All Russian Alliance" extended a helping hand to these sufferers.
This organization provided shelter for the homeless children,
soup-kitchens and cooperative food shops. But with the mounting
influx of expatriates, the "Alliance" confined its help to the
ill and disabled. As the need for help became ever greater, the
Jewish Relief of Kiev responded with considerable help. S. Ansky
was once again instrumental in initiating action.

In addition to the food problem for the expatriates, other
problems arose to plague the Jewish communal leaders. The scarcity
of raw materials and finished products paralyzed commerce, and left
a good many artisans without any work. Children went without
schooling. It was only after the beginning of the Russian Revo-
lution (March, 1917) that a turn for the better came for distressed
Jewry in the Russian occupied territory. A democratic spirit
gradually returned. New relief organizations, cooperatives, and
free loan societies, came to the fore. In June, 1917, a con-
vention took place in Tarnopol, where plans for renewed constructive
aid were discussed. The Russian offensive disrupted these plans,
but they were renewed after a German-Austrian counter-attack, and
the Bolshevik Revolution (October, 1917) liberated the Jews of
Galicia entirely from Russian occupation.29
THE GERMAN PROVINCES

In 1910 the Jews of Posen and Pomera numbered 26,512 souls. The economic situation of the local communities was rather favorable. Jews engaged in commerce, industry, and in the professions. There were quite a few Jews who thrived as investors of capital. Their communities escaped the ravages of war.

General Review

In the course of the century and a half that Poland had been under the domination of Austria, Germany, and Russia, each power utilized its respective area of occupation for its own aggrandizement. With Poland's resurgence as an independent state again in 1918, its political leaders set out to coordinate and merge the erstwhile separate three areas of Congress Poland, Galicia, and Posen-Pomeria into a unified economic and political country to be known as the Polish Republic.

The process of economic resurgence had lasted until 1924-1925, when the depreciation of the national currency, the marka, came to a halt, and the zloty was introduced. The tariff war that raged between Germany and Poland in 1925 also brought a turning point in Poland's economic development. The coal strike in England at that time opened new avenues of commerce for Poland with other countries.

To all intents and purposes, the year 1925 more or less concluded the war era in Poland's economy with all its consequences. This does not mean that the new regime rectified the havoc of the economic chaos brought about by the war years and the ushering in of Poland's independence. The years between the Declaration of
Independence (1918) and 1925 were devoted mainly to repairing war damages and to reconstruction, and to the advancement of the country's economy. The period following 1925 was devoted to industrialization and to the advancement of commerce. There was a boom in the construction of factories and workshops, so that the number of wage-earners in this category increased by 30% in the 1921-1931 decade. During the 1932-38 period, the number of factories increased to 34%. The export of goods also increased. It required great effort on the part of the entire population to accomplish the new republic's goals. The populace had to cope with a shortage of raw materials, machinery, technical products, improve conditions fuel, and capital. In order to certain changes were effected in the economic structure of the land, such as the establishing of government and cooperative enterprises.

In drawing a comparison between Poland's tasks and those of other countries, it must be said that while other governments already had established economic set-ups that only needed to be revived and adjusted to new conditions, Poland had to start from scratch to create an economic apparatus that would dovetail with the new political situation. At the same time, the country had to devise a brand new political and social construction.

f. JEWS IN INDEPENDENT POLAND

The Political Situation

The touchstone for the future situation of the Jews in Poland lay in the manner in which the government proceeded at the outset
of its independence to deal with the restrictions still remaining for Jews from the period when the country had been partitioned among the three great powers.

Under the three powers of occupation—Germany, Austria, and Russia—Jews had been restricted in their political and civil rights in varying degrees. Under German occupation these restrictions were negligible. The same applied to Galicia, where the only curb consisted in banning the Yiddish and Hebrew tongues as official languages. Restrictions were especially glaring in the area under Russian occupation. Though somewhat less stringent in Congress Poland, those restrictions were quite harsh in Volhynia and other eastern states of the country.33

The fight to annul those restrictions was led by the Jewish deputies in the Polish Sejm [Diet]. This fight was one of the cardinal tasks with which the Jewish deputies were confronted in the first Polish constitutional Parliament. Along with the day-to-day problems that came up, the Jewish deputies had to be on the alert when the new constitution was being hammered out. Such items as civil rights for Jews, Sabbath laws, guards against anti-discriminations, and so on, claimed their attention.34

Attempts to annul the anti-Jewish restrictions met with opposition. Certain factions of deputies, such as the "Endekes", resorted to all sorts of parliamentarian tricks to thwart these efforts. They were reluctant to have such grievances aired publicly in the Sejm. Other Sejm deputies, though not rabid anti-Semites, did not go out of their way to cooperate with their Jewish fellow-members. The struggle for Jewish civil rights was arduous and protracted.35
The declarations of loyalty by the Jewish deputies were of little avail. The opposition also frowned upon Jewish rights already guaranteed by the Constitution adopted on March 17, 1921, on the rights of minorities. The latter was based upon the "Little Versailles Tractate" of June 28, 1919, published in 1920 in Dzennik Ustaw [official code of laws of the Polish government] #35, Clause 199. It was only in 1930 that the Jewish deputies' bill dealing with the abrogation of discrimination was taken up again and voted upon favorably by the Polish Sejm, on March 13, 1931.

At a time when the anti-Jewish policy was reflected in the implementation of Jewish rights law, it was mirrored among the vast masses in still another way. Raids and pogroms upon Jews in towns, on trains, and wherever the possibility presented itself, occurred. The massacres of 1918-1919 in Kielce, Czenstochowa (see "The Jews of Czenstochowa"), and Lemberg (carried out by civilians, General Haller's troops, and other servicemen)—are a matter of common knowledge. During the same period, military detachments carried out massacres upon Jews in: Pinsk (April 5, 1919)—38 Jews shot; Lida—39 Jews; Vilno—15 Jews, including the well-known author, A. Vaiter.

These disturbing events imposed additional burdens upon the Jewish deputies. It was a question of protecting the lives of the Jewish population. A renewed boycott of Jewish merchants had been set in motion. Fist fights between Polish and Jewish students on the university campus flared anew. It became painfully evident that the Jew would have to fight for his very survival in the new Poland.

The situation did not change during the second session of the Sejm. If anything, the anti-Semitic trends of the Poles were
stirred up even more. It was especially noticeable in the economic policy, carried out under the lash of Wladislaw Grabski, Premier and Finance Minister of that time. The government monopolies on tobacco and liquor were introduced then—a step aimed chiefly at the Jewish traders, who controlled the production of these items at the moment. The introduction of the new currency and fiscal system were likewise aimed at the undermining of the Jewish economic life. 38

In order to attain certain objectives on the international scene (one of them being Skrzynski's desire to secure a permanent place on the Council of the League of Nations), Grabski began to make some friendly overtures toward the Jews. Those efforts resulted in the famous "Ugoda" compromise, which brought about a few insignificant privileges for the Jews. But in general the official policy remained the same. The flurry about "Ugoda" merely spiked the guns of the Jewish deputies in their battle tactics, as it were. The Jews lost their first round and had to fall back now upon petitions and entreaties. 39

When Pilauński engineered a radical change in the political scene (May 12, 1926), it looked for a while as if the anti-Jewish program would be toned down a bit. Premier Minister Bartel's declaration of July 13, 1926, that he would protect "all Polish citizens, regardless of nationality", was supposed to serve as an indication of this. He had declared that economic anti-Semitism was harmful, and that therefore all anti-Jewish discriminations would be annulled. For a time, the anti-Semitic outbursts ceased.

But that was rather short-lived. Before long the attacks, especially on the economic front, resumed. The government returned
to the Grobiski policy, both in demanding higher taxes from Jewish traders and in reducing even the small subsidies that had hitherto been allotted for Jewish institutions. Out of a 23-million-zloty budget for educational purposes, the Jewish schools were now allotted only 185,000 zloty.

The third Polish Sejm was elected in March, 1928, and succeeded in splitting the delegation of Jewish deputies. Thus, the Zionist bloc of Congress Poland, headed by Itzhak Greenbaum, clung to their program, insisting on full national rights for Jews; the "Ugoda" Galician Zionist bloc, advocating the "Ugoda" idea, held to their program of supporting the government which had been adopted at two conferences of Rabbis and their followers. (One conference in which 35 Rabbis participated had taken place in Tarnow (West Galicia) in December, 1927; the other, comprising 281 Rabbis, had been held in Lemberg, on December 27, 1927).

On the general political scene, the government party ran into obstructions on the part of the opposition parties, who now controlled a majority of votes in the Diet and the Senate. Confronted with such a dilemma, the government party dismissed the Sejm and the Senate and called for new elections (August 31, 1930). The Jews then elected seven representatives to the Sejm, one to the Senate, and three deputies on the government list.40

From 1930 to the start of World War II Jewish life underwent steady decline. The government party [the era of Colonels had begun] wished to outstrip the other parties in anti-Jewish policy. The government found a natural aid for its anti-Semitic campaign in the prevailing unemployment and the economic crisis. The anti-Jewish campaign was best expressed in the formula enunciated by the current Finance Minister, Matuszewski, to the effect
that a loaf of bread could only be spread over a certain number of people, and that therefore the Jews would have to leave Poland. The government monopolies dislodged the Jews from economic life at a fast tempo. A bill was passed by the Sejm to outlaw ritual slaughter. The government tried to settle the peasant problem by declaring a moratorium on debts that froze the assets of Jews forever. However, physical attacks on Jews were discontinued, because of Marshal Pilsudski's influence.41

The years 1935-1939 marked the last stage in the existence of the Polish Republic, as well as of Polish Jewry. With Pilsudski's demise (May 12, 1935), the Jews in Poland lost the mainstay on which they could lean in their demands for humane treatment. With the Marshal's passing, the totalitarian forces which had already come into being during his lifetime picked up momentum and shortly thereafter dominated the country's policies.

The elements that came into power after Pilsudski's death called for new elections to the Sejm, in September, 1935. This election was boycotted by the opposition parties. With the exception of the "Agudah" and the "Merchants' Union" factions, the Jewish parties of Congress Poland likewise frowned upon the election. On the other hand, the Zionists of Galicia did participate in the election. The Jews elected four deputies to the Sejm and two senators. This small group of representatives had hardly any effect because anti-Jewish policy was then proceeding at such a tempo that parliamentarian function had lost all meaning. The young republic was now making giant strides toward a totalitarian fascism paralleling that of Hitler.

This event was supposed to augment liberal policy in the country, including the attitude
Poland's treaties with Hitler Germany in 1934 were a contributing factor to the anti-Jewish assaults in Minsk-Mazowieck, in Brest, on the Bug River (May 13, 1937), and in Przytyk (March 9, 1936), and spurred still other discriminating acts. This hostility intensified as time went on. In 1937, when the Ozone came into being, assaults upon Jews took place in Czenstochowa (June 19, 1937), and in Bilicz. The Sejm took steps to outlawing ritual slaughter, to restricting the practice of Jewish lawyers, and introduced new limitations on Jewish activities. Polish Jewry was threatened with a Polish version of the anti-Semitic "Nuremberg Law".

At the same time, the government levied an undue tax burden upon the Jewish population. They also extorted money from Jews for various government loans. Though such loans were supposed to be voluntary, definite quotas were imposed upon Jewish traders. Those refusing to meet these quotas were threatened with dire consequences. The movement for segregated seats for Jewish university students widened. Upon the instigation of the NARA, Poles were assigned as commissars for Jewish business establishments, in order to wring from them as much money as possible. The general intention of all this was to induce the Jews to leave Poland. (The Polish government made a half-hearted attempt to investigate the possibilities for settling Jews in Madagascar).

The municipal elections that took place at the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939, presaged a change in the general political situation. The opposition parties were victorious in the elections to the city councils. This event was supposed to auger well for a liberal policy in the country, including the attitude
towards the Jews. The "Bund" and the block of Jewish professional elements contrived to draw an average of 55% of all votes in the Jewish communities. The Jews hoped that anti-Semitism would now abate, and that the kehilloth, or Jewish communities, until now subjected to the supervision of non-Jewish commissars, would shake off that yoke and function as free and democratic units.

However, the fraternizing of Poland and Nazi Germany once again frustrated Jewish hopes. In 1938 twelve thousand Polish citizens were deported from Germany (the Zbonshin affair). The relief campaign on behalf of these sufferers relegated the Jewish problems to the background. In April, 1939, however, the German-Polish treaty was abrogated, resulting in a more lenient policy toward the Jews. Notwithstanding the erstwhile wrongs and discriminations against them, the Jews were willing to turn over a new leaf and to serve the government with all their means. Thirty-five percent of the Polish citizenry--the city elements, predominantly Jews--subscribed to the national loan of April 5, 1939, for the Air Force.

The interval between April and September included political and spiritual changes that presaged amiable relations toward the Jews on the part of the government and the Polish populace.

With the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, however, Polish Jewry found itself on the edge of a volcano that was about to engulf and annihilate so many of its members. The magnitude of the atrocities and the catastrophe into which the Jews were plunged was to become known only after the war.
Of all the national groups living in Poland between the First and Second World Wars, the Jews were unique in their occupational distribution, engaging primarily in commerce and handicrafts, and on a smaller scale in industry and agriculture. However, there began a trend to change this occupational structure. Especially in the middle class, vocations were no longer passed on as frequently from one generation to another. The changes in the professional and social structure will be clarified by a study of the various events and circumstances that took place in Jewish economic life.

According to the census of 1921, there were 2,845,364 Jews in Poland. As compared with the census of 1897, when Polish territory had been under the rule of Russia, Austria, and Germany, the Polish-Jewish population had decreased by 3.5 per cent in 1921. In 1897 the Jews of Poland numbered 2,952,458. In the census of 1931 the number of Jews had increased to 3,200,000—out of a general population of 33,000,000.

The census of 1921 classified the professional and vocational structure of the Jews as follows:

- Agriculture, forestry, gardening and fishing: 9.5%
- Industry and handicrafts: 31.7%
- Commerce and insurance: 34.6%
- Communications and transportation: 2.6%
- Professions and civil service: 4.3%
- Domestics and related jobs: 4.9%
- Miscellaneous: 12.4%
In comparing this tabulation with that for non-Jews, one finds the Jewish ratio in commerce twenty times larger; in industry and handicrafts, including manufacturers and artisans—four times as much. On the other hand, non-Jews outnumbered the Jews in agriculture by approximately nine to one.

The significant phase of this tabulation is the fact that at that time one-third of the Jewish population engaged in commerce; one-third in handicrafts; and that well-nigh every tenth person was either unemployed or had no trade of any kind.

According to the census of 1931, the participation of Jews in the Polish economy was as follows:

- Agriculture: 1.0%
- Industry and Handicrafts: 21.0%
- Commerce: 59.0%
- Communication and transportation: 12.0%
- Miscellaneous: 12.0%

There is also a difference in the percentages of employment and unemployment among Jews and non-Jews. According to the census, out of 14,000,000 gainfully employed people, there were approximately one million Jews and thirteen million non-Jews. Out of approximately 12,000,000 unemployed people, there were about two million Jews and ten million non-Jews.

We gather from the above statistics that, whereas each
employed Jew had to support two others, each non-Jew had to take care of less than one other person, on an average.

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE JEWS

According to the census of 1921, the tabulation of the gainfully employed Jews was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent incomes</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of families that</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participated as breadwinners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing these statistics with those for non-Jews, one gathers that the number of independent Jews was three times as large. On the other hand, the number of non-Jewish wage-earners was double that of the Jewish. The number of Jewish family members participating as breadwinners in family-owned enterprises was five times that of non-Jews. This can best be explained in the field of commerce. A Jewish merchant could ill afford to hire help; he had to rely on the help of his children. As compared with the statistics on independents in the partitioned Poland of the years 1897-1900, the number of Jewish independents diminished in 1921.

COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES

Commercial enterprises played a leading role in Poland's economy at the time of its resurgence. Quite a few of its merchants carried on far-flung activities. This was a result of...
the situation during the war years, when, because of German economic policy, industry and handicrafts declined far more than commerce. Although most factories and mills could not operate because of the confiscation of raw materials, machines, and tools, commercial trading continued illegal, often through such means as smuggling and speculation. The merchant whose goods had been confiscated naturally suffered too, but he was not deterred from pursuing his trade. He was not, like the manufacturer or artisan, dependent upon operating tools.

The participation of Jews in commerce in the eastern sections of the country reached almost 100% in some areas. On the other hand, the Jewish merchants operating in the western area comprised merely 4%. This was because a good many Jews chose to migrate to Germany rather than remain in Poland. Also, in the Posen, Pomeran, and Silesia districts, Jews venturing into business ran into stumbling blocks on the part of Poles.48

The reasons for the preponderance of Jews in commerce vary, but in Poland stemmed mainly from Jews' economic status since their settlement. Jews were rooted in commercial activities since the earliest times. They were a third category—the traders—between the szlachta [nobility] and the peasantry. The szlachta considered engaging in commerce an inferior vocation; the peasants, on the other hand, were engrossed in plowing the land and lacked the will or predisposition to engage in trade. An opening was thus created for the Jews.

Another reason for the predominant role of Jews in commerce was the fact that they were barred from other activities for many generations. Jews were forced to seek their livelihood in trade
and handicrafts, because their chances for earning a living in other walks of life were restricted. The incessant restrictions imposed upon the Jews in other fields served to promote efficient traders in their midst, and in turn enhanced the economy of the country. The concentration of the Jews in the cities also contributed to the predominant role of Jews in commerce. 49

Resurgent Poland, although it created new possibilities for expanded commercial activities through the annexation of former Austrian, German and Russian territories, due to changes in the government economic policy, restricted private commercial enterprises. The fact that commercial activities had gone on without let-up even during the war, favored the investor instead of the manufacturer in the renewed post-war business activity. This becomes more manifest when one recalls that Poland lacked capital when it became independent. The merchant class extended a helping hand to industry. The biggest textile mills in Lodz resumed operations, after long idleness, thanks to the investments of the merchants. The traders could contract for a mill's entire production for a certain period. Some traders also obtained agencies or concessions, or turned manufacturers themselves. 50 Jewish trading was the dynamo that stimulated the other functions of the national economy.

Commerce played a significant role in the national economy in 1925, when the tariff-war between Poland and Germany broke out. Commercial investors helped to launch medium and small mills and workshops to produce commodities that were formerly imported from Germany. Jews dominated certain spheres of the domestic trade. Thus textiles, iron, and leather products were well-nigh controlled by the Jews. Some of the leading establishments were owned or partially subsidized by Jews.
Jews also engaged in a substantial way in export and import activities and thus acquired foreign markets for Polish products. They controlled to a great extent the export of raw materials, various agricultural products, and livestock. Through the media of foreign trade, the Jewish merchants were instrumental in acquiring foreign currency, thus facilitating the government's ability to balance its budget.  

The contributions of the merchant class to the government coffers surpassed those of other economic groups. This was manifested especially in the taxes derived from the general business transaction tax. According to a fiscal law of 1923, a tax had to be paid on every profitable transaction. Jewish merchants tended to have the most frequent transactions, working for quick turnovers. Jews catered more to their customers. Moreover, the Jew's experience in commerce made him a better trader than the non-Jew. It was inevitable, therefore, that Jews should pay higher taxes than other businessmen. Thus the Jews' spirit of enterprise contributed greatly to the government's revenues.

But one must not assume that the Jew's lot was easy-going, that he could ply his trade unhampered. In addition to experience, energy, and capital, the Jewish trader in Poland also had need of courage and resistance. It was an Herculean task for a Jewish trader to maintain his economic position. Let us take a look at the inner and outer difficulties besetting his road.

The seed for the anti-Jewish economic policy was planted as far back as the boycott of 1912. This policy was temporarily interrupted during the war years, only to be resumed in independent
Poland. For a while the government's preoccupation with rehabilitation and reconstruction following the ravages of the war diminished somewhat its anti-Jewish economic policy, but in the period commencing with the stabilization of the currency (the Grabaki period) the fostering of the anti-Jewish sentiment was stressed as a cardinal program that must be pursued, regardless of cost. Polish groups sprang into being who, abetted by the authorities, left no stone unturned to ban the Jews from the realm of commerce.

Jewish traders had been used to competition from time immemorial--competition played fair by both sides: In Poland, however, they now came upon a different set of rules. Here the Jew was deprived of the basic weapon in competition; namely, the freedom of action. The non-Jew found support in the unremitting anti-Jewish boycott. The rallying-cry that Christian Poles should steer the country's trade, found strong echoes both in the government and the populace. The non-Jewish urban dwellers were indoctrinated with the virus of believing that Jews were the cause of their lowly status. For that purpose were published distorted figures about the Jews' economic power. It was drummed into the heads of hapless peasants also that the reason for their hard lot lay in the Jew's grabbing all economic benefits--not in the country squire's reluctance to share his huge holdings with the poor tiller of the soil. The rallying cry, "Patronize your own!" meant essentially to boycott the Jewish shopkeepers.

To translate their slogans into action, the anti-Jewish organizations resorted to picketing Jewish establishments. Poles resorted to propaganda, and if need be, brute force, to dissuade Christians
from patronizing Jewish shops. These goings-on, though leading to an occasional fracas and disturbance of the peace, were winked at by the government. Instead of calling the pickets to task, the police would punish the Jewish shopkeepers. Though a high official occasionally urged a more liberal economic policy (Bartel, 1926), such protests proved of no avail. The anti-Jewish climate lingered on. This was especially manifest in the Owszem policy, promulgated by the Skladkowski regime in 1936. That policy, though frowning on physical attacks upon the Jews, left the door open for assaulting them on the economic front. This became the official policy of the government, to all intents and purposes.53

The intrusion of Gentile Poles into commerce was especially noticeable in the districts of Warsaw, Lodz, Lublin, and Kielcz. The reason for it was their being a majority in the cities. The eastern region of the country, however, revealed still another picture, for in some cities and townships the Jews numbered 50% or 60% of the total population, and controlled between 7/10 and 9/10 of the commerce. The penetration of the non-Jewish Polish traders therefore proceeded slowly.

Nevertheless, the policy of increasing the non-Jewish city dwellers in the eastern regions brought about a corresponding increase of Poles in trade and commerce. During the 1921-1931 period the number of Jewish business establishments dropped from 27,000 to 16,000; whereas the number of non-Jewish ones rose from 10,000 to 14,000. In Polyessie (Volhynia) the number of non-Jewish establishments tripled during the same period.54 But in spite of the stumbling blocks and the discriminatory practices put in their path, the Jews still controlled 59% of the
trade and commerce. On the other hand, a gradual regrouping in the various vocations set in. Thus, in 1921, 42% engaged in commerce, and 37% in industry and handicrafts; whereas in 1931, 34% engaged in commerce, and 46% in handicrafts and industry.55

A second source of hindrances confronting the Jewish trader stemmed from the co-operative shops dealing in agricultural products and machinery. The expansion of these co-operative institutions, subsidized in great measure by the government, particularly harmed Jewish traders. The government granted these co-operatives, which were all managed by non-Jews, various privileges in taxes and credits, thus bolstering their growth and, conversely, gradually easing the Jews out of commerce (Koscialkowski's program, 1936). The Polish co-operative stores were also able to secure various privileges because of their procurement of great quantities of goods. On the other hand, co-operatives disposed of their wares to the peasants at fixed prices which were somewhat higher than those the Jewish shopkeepers charged. The co-operatives helped maintain their business by constantly drumming up anti-Jewish sentiments. Individual non-Jewish shopkeepers also, of course, had to compete with the co-operatives; but in the main the Jews were hit hardest, since the co-operatives operated in predominantly Jewish sections. The co-operatives were also subsidized by various Polish organizations that rallied to the call to make the Christian population independent of Jewish merchants. Considering the government's fiscal policy towards the Jews and the drastic means of competition used against them, it is not hard to perceive how difficult the status of the Jewish merchant was.56
A description of the co-operatives dealing with agricultural products will indicate how the Jews were eased out of the grain trade. The buying of grain from the peasantry and the great landowners had previously been done by Jews. The Jewish traders would advance sums of money to both peasants and country squires on the basis of the crop due to be harvested. In order to oust the Jews from these transactions, the government created co-operatives that purchased the peasants' crops at reduced prices. The peasants were forced to dispose of their products at prices lower than those offered by the Jewish trader. By way of compensating the peasants for their losses, the government clamped down a moratorium on the debts that the peasants and the squires owed the traders.

160,000,000 zloty of the Jewish traders were thus frozen. The Jews suffered double losses—in currency and merchandise. A majority of the Jewish grain merchants were thus forced out of the grain market; a few committed suicide. Non-Jewish grain merchants were not hurt as much, since they found employment in the new co-operatives, or were absorbed in other fields.

The assessment of excessive taxes, especially after the launching of Grabski's fiscal program, was also one of the expedients with which the government sought to undermine the Jews economically. The greatest amount of taxes was wrung out of trade and commerce: the government thus collected 33.6% of its revenue. Taking into consideration that a majority of those engaged in commerce were Jews, it is easy to gauge the disproportionate taxation on Jews. The proportion of payments by the Jews of all taxes amounted to 40%, although they comprised only 10% of the total
Thus, the Jew carried four times his share of taxes, whereas the possibilities for a livelihood that the government was supposed to provide for him dwindled to nil.58

Another contributing factor to the ousting of Jews from the economic life was the government monopolies. During the first years of its independence (1923-1924), the Polish government proceeded to monopolize the production and distribution of tobacco and liquor. Numerous Jewish establishments that had engaged in these fields for years were liquidated. The 3,000 Jews in these occupations dwindled to a mere 102. Each time that the government monopolized some industry, Jews were eased out of their economic positions there.59

The law pertaining to Sunday rest served to disrupt the Jewish traders' activities still further. Jewish business establishments were generally shut down on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The Jew was thus forced now to keep his shop under lock and key from sunset on Friday until Monday morning, with a still lower income as a result. Jews tried to compromise—to keep the back door open. The merchant would await the buyer in the street, trying thus to accommodate particularly the small-town patron, whose schedule permitted him to make his purchases in the city only on Sunday. But these experiments were a failure. The police punished such violations, imposing heavy fines both on merchant and customer. To ease the situation a bit, the authorities allowed the transaction of business another evening, after the official curbs. But that lenient gesture could hardly compensate for the income loss.60

The outlawing of ritual slaughter proved to be another discrimination of great magnitude. This single discrimination
dislodged the Jews from several economic positions. For one thing, cattle trading had been practically all in Jewish hands. The decree also struck the Jewish butchers and the Jewish traders in raw hides and related products. In order to cover up the anti-Jewish motives of this decree, the government attempted to interpret it in terms of humanitarian principles. The truth of the matter, however, was that it spelled another blow to the Jews. Approximately 50,000 Jews lost their sources of income thereby. This law was passed with the consent of all Polish factions, including the socialists.

One of the new restrictions that the government enacted was its license requirement based on the merchant's qualifications for engaging in trade. Every merchant was to submit to an examination, calculated to show his fitness, as a prerequisite to obtaining a merchant's license. If this statute had been carried out, quite a few Jews would have been disqualified. The commission appointed to carry this law into effect would have made the test most baffling.

The partially carried out literacy census was a companion statute to the preceding. According to this, every merchant had to possess a certain amount of education. Dye merchants, for instance, were required to have a knowledge of dye chemistry. The Jewish traders were equipped with a great practical knowledge of their calling; but mighty few of them could have passed a written examination on the theory. It is not hard to imagine the results of such a law if applied strictly to each village peddler, old clothes dealer, and so on, with his inadequate knowledge of the Polish language.

In short, the Jewish traders faced two forces of opposition: the government and the non-Jewish population. The non-Jewish traders
were looked upon as pioneers in the field of commerce, and therefore accorded all sorts of privileges. The tax authorities were lenient in computing assessment. They had access to more credit than their Jewish counterparts, since the banks got their working capital from the Federal treasury, which encouraged such a policy. At a time when Polish credit institutions had access to unlimited funds, Jewish co-operative banks that catered to most of the Jewish merchant class could not secure credit at the government banks; they had to turn to private banking institutions.64

The Jewish merchants were also forced out of the export and import realm. Some export and import commodities had previously been controlled by Jewish traders. But the Jews' participation in this phase of commerce was now gradually eliminated. Their function was taken over by various organizations that were subsidized by the government.65

Private initiative shrank little by little. The government promoted and subsidized agencies that competed with private establishments. During the period of 1930-1931, the government had in its possession one-quarter of the country's assets. The elimination of intermediaries between producers and consumers became a goal of the government's program. (Koo, February 21, 1937). The non-Jewish Pole who was eased out of his business generally found employment with the government. All doors were open for him. The Jew did not fare so well. All ways and means available to the non-Jew were barred for the Jew. Proof of this policy can be found in the fact that Jews comprised hardly one-third of 1% of government employees, and nine-tenths of this group were hold-overs.
from the Austrian regime. Moreover, constitutional rights of the Jews were violated by much economic discrimination.

In assessing taxes or in granting licenses, the government took little heed of a trader's economic status. In some cases where unfair taxation led to financial ruin, it also led to suicide. The tax authorities considered an applicant for a license as an independent businessman, and thus eligible for taxation. In reality, however, a majority of Jewish traders had long ceased to be independent. Their existence was contingent upon limited credits from the Jewish co-operative banks and the free loan societies. Their own capital had ceased to exist long ago. When called upon to pay the state license fee, 50% to 60% of the small traders had to apply for a loan. When one considers the fact that fees for small traders' licenses ranged between 18 and 90 zloty ($5.00 to $18.00), one can easily gauge the economic status of these so-called merchants. Whereas the elimination of the wholesale and semi-wholesale traders from economic life was a gradual one because of their more substantial assets, the decline of the small retail trader was rather swift. The small trader tottered to his fall when faced with the first discriminations, while the leading merchant still kept afloat. The small traders turned to street peddling, and related means, to keep the wolf from the door.

According to Dr. Isaac Shipper's tabulation, Jews secured merchants' licenses as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Category I</th>
<th>Category II</th>
<th>Category III</th>
<th>Category IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>3,476</td>
<td>45,384</td>
<td>204,432</td>
<td>127,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1,715</td>
<td>36,592</td>
<td>187,329</td>
<td>152,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>27,863</td>
<td>180,677</td>
<td>157,789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These statistics indicate the status of Jewish traders. This was the period when the notoriously harsh Grobaski laws prevailed in the country. It is significant that the first three categories—the wholesale, semi-wholesale, and medium class merchants—declined; whereas Category IV, the small traders, increased. The influence of the Jewish merchant dwindled. The Jewish wholesale traders undoubtedly yielded ground to the non-Jewish in the matter of supplying various commodities to the government institutions or leading manufacturers. The co-operatives and the boycotts spelled doom for the Jewish traders.

**INDUSTRY**

Jewish participation in the development of Poland's industry began before the era of Polish independence. While Poland was still under the dominion of the three powers—Germany, Austria, and Russia—Jews had contributed in a great measure to the launching of various industrial enterprises.

The war struck a hard blow at the development of industry. The military operations that took place in Congress Poland laid waste many factories; the machines and tools of some were transported to Russia; the rest were ruined by the German-Austrian occupation policy. The greatest blow to the textile industry in Lodz was the loss of the Russian market.

In resurgent Poland, Jewish industry as well as trade ran into stumbling blocks on the part of the government, which subsidized factories and limited credits to the Jews. The government's share in industry and banking establishments during the 1925-1939 period amounted to about one-quarter of the country's banking assets, factories and trade. With such a controlling share in the country's
economy, the government naturally exerted a tremendous influence on market conditions. More than a third of the Jewish population was engaged in industry and handicrafts. Jewish manufacturers and artisans now lacked the necessary credits, due to the government's hostile financial policy. Nonetheless, the Jews played an important role in the manufacture of various products. In a certain sense, the Jews were the pioneers in Poland's industry. It is difficult to assess the exact share of the Jews, since Jewish capital was invested in anonymous organizations. Jewish investments in Polish enterprise had to function in disguise.69

In addition to the above-mentioned hardships, Jewish manufacturers were faced with the general shortage of raw materials, machine equipment, coal, and capital. Jewish manufacturers in Congress Poland had to adjust themselves as did others to the new conditions, that is, the loss of the Russian market and the gain of the Austro-German prospects.

In order to get a perspective of the Jews' share in Poland's industry, of the energy and the capital they had invested, their achievements, despite the anti-Jewish government policy and the anti-Semitism of the Polish workers, it is worth getting a bird's-eye-view of the various manufacturing phases in which Jews participated and distinguished themselves.

In the metal industry, Jews erected and modernized factories and mills, producing such items as nails, screws and bolts, for the building of ships and rolling stock. Jews erected great iron smelting works and exported their products. Some mills produced weapon parts for the Polish army.70

In the lumber industry, Jewish participation was conspicuous
in the number of sawmills they owned. Of the country's 1500 sawmills, one half were administered by Jews. Moreover, Jews built factories to make cabinets, furniture, veneer, and kindred products.

The giant oil wells and refineries, situated mostly in Galicia, belonged to Jews before the war. The postwar period changed this entire structure. The cost of drilling and refining mounted, so that an individual could not meet the great overhead expenses. Corporations with great assets stepped into this picture. In due time these corporations took over the commercial phase of this business as well as production. The Jewish middleman, official, and skilled worker were gradually eased out. A great deal of the Jewish assets found their way into non-Jewish hands. But Jewish enterprise and resourcefulness were not altogether relegated to limbo. Jews acquired smaller oil wells and soon became a factor again in the oil industry and its related products.

Quite a few Jewish families played a leading role in the cement industry. Jewish syndicates controlled the greatest cement works. They also had a thriving business in lime kilns, brick, glass, and crockery kilns.

The setback in the textile industry brought about by the German forces of occupation, and the credit restrictions for Jews, forced the leading textile establishments to seek funds abroad. Thus, Oscar Kohn, a leading figure in the Widzenver manufacture, secured substantial credit in England. With the help of English credit and modern machinery he succeeded in rehabilitating his business. During the 1923–1928 period his mill employed approximately 8,000 people. The mill maintained spinning, weaving, bleaching, dyeing, and printing departments on its premises. It
also maintained its own gas supply, iron, cabinet works, and a sawmill. The Widzewer products competed with those of Czecho-
slovakia and Italy, and catered to the Asiatic and South American markets.

Some Jews specialized in manufacturing plush; some in cotton or wool materials. Jews covered the whole gamut in the textile field, from yard goods fabrics to dresses, underwear, etc. They also participated in such related fields as the manufacture of shoes, and chemicals. The Jews were pioneers in the manufacture of Polish rubber products, soap and cosmetics, paper products, sugar and glassware; in tanneries, the film industry, etc.71

MASTER ARTISANS AND WAGE-EARNERS

Artisans and wage-earners found themselves hit as badly as industrialists at the outbreak of World War I. Constituting by and large the poorest strata of society and residing primarily in the small towns, these workers were the first victims of the Russian occupation forces. Their workshops and homes were laid waste, and they suffered want and hunger. Many workers lost their jobs because of the devastation of industrial machinery. In Warsaw, for instance, the number of wage-earners and artisans during the 1914-1921 period dwindled to one third of its previous number, as a result of the war ravages. In 1914 there were 63,145 wage-earners; in 1921, only 20,125.72

The Jews' participation in Polish handicrafts constituted 40% in some localities, while in the southern regions, the number of Jewish artisans was proportionately larger. According to the
statistics of January, 1929, there were 78,500 Jewish artisans in Poland. There was no uniform status in the handicrafts. Thus, Jews comprised 73% of the handicraftsmen in the eastern regions; 52% in the central; 41% in the southern; and 2% in the western. Jews participated in all walks of life, dominating in some, such as tailoring, shoemaking, and baking, and constituted a minority in others. But the lot of the Jewish artisan was an unenviable one. In addition to suffering from the same discrimination as the Jewish trader and manufacturer, he had to cope with another problem. The artisan plied his trade in his own home, and with inadequate tools. Some handicraftsmen were devoid of any technical equipment, having to work with primitive hand tools. Only a small minority was equipped technically.

The scope of the work was such that few Jewish workshops had any hired help. 90% of the handicraftsmen employed a single hired helper. During a slump the handicraftsmen could hardly keep above water. In 1932 there were 120,000 Jewish unemployed artisans and halupniks [home workers], numbering together with their families a quarter of a million souls. The artisans were especially hard hit by the examination, and by the additional requirement of a three-year apprenticeship before one could launch into his own workshop. The lot of the artisans did not improve any in the years that followed.74

WAGE-EARNERS

According to the census of 1921 there were 252,464 wage-earners in Poland, 205,104 of them engaged in physical labor, and the rest as clerks in trade and commerce. These workers consisted
27.3% of the Jews engaged in business independently. 75

Jews were employed, predominantly, in the garment and food industries; to a much lesser extent, in mines, ironworks, tooling factories, and other branches of heavy industry. Generally speaking, however, the Jews engaged primarily in reconstruction and finishing phases of industry. They engaged chiefly in the medium and light industries. They had almost no access to heavy industry, even where the owner, himself, was Jewish, let alone with a non-Jew.

The reasons for this were twofold. For one thing, the Jewish proletariat stemmed from a "declasse" element—from impoverished merchants, middlemen, and people without any special calling. During the industrialization of Poland, when the Polish unemployed masses streamed to the factories and mills, Jews stood on the sidelines. The individual character of the Jew, his social status as a member of the middle class, his aspiration to independence, restrained him from submitting to the regimentation of a factory worker's routine life. Moreover, religious reasons, such as the observance of the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays, were also a factor. In general, the Jew feared that his mingling with non-Jews in the giant industrial enterprises would tend to disrupt his traditional way of life.

On the other hand, the Jew's identity thwarted his approach to the heavy industry. Both Jewish and non-Jewish manufacturers were reluctant, under one pretense or another, to engage Jewish workers in heavy industry. Furthermore, a Jew would have encountered ill will on the part of the non-Jewish Polish workers. (In a few
cities, public opinion, as well as the determined stand of the Jewish workers, brought about the employment of a few Jews in textile mills.) Accordingly, Jewish workers concentrated in the medium and light industries—where they were able to maintain their social appearance and where the factory regime was more lenient than in the giant mills.

After the war, when the Jewish proletariat became better recognized, and freed itself of religious and psychological barriers, and wanted to enter industrial and government enterprises, it ran into a determined anti-Semitic front.

Jewish workers were barred from government projects. They were ousted from the tobacco, oil well, railroad, and related fields. Under these circumstances, Jews turned to the handicrafts and to jobs in small mills, where social security benefits for employees were considerably lower than in the big ones. These smaller mills did not offer steady employment. They were dependent upon the general market, which was rather limited in Poland. As a result of this, the Jewish workers were plagued with seasonal unemployment.

According to the reports of the central council of Jewish professional organizations, the average employment period of a Jewish worker ran from 16 to 22 weeks per year. Their average earnings were as follows: a skilled worker earned 30 to 50 złoty per week; a semi-skilled worker, 20 to 50 złoty; the non-skilled 15 to 25 złoty. (A złoty is approximately 25 cents).76

CHILD-LABOR

Privation amidst the Jewish masses forced minors to look for any kind of employment, also. Sometimes children were the only
breadwinners in the family. According to a study carried out by the organization "Zukunft", one third of all juvenile wage-earners were orphans. They ranged in age from 12 to 16 years; and they earned each week 4 to 8 zloty (one to two dollars). In some instances, these minors received no pay at all, during their apprenticeship period.

Hardly 5% of these young workers lived in homes of their own; one half of them lived at the rate of five to a room; 65% of the female and 58.5% of male workers slept at the rate of two or more in one bed. In the needle industry, 52.9% of the juvenile tailors lived in single rooms, sleeping on straw-pallets on the floor. Minors were forced to work under most trying conditions, and their home life was beset with difficulties.

HALUPNIK - HOME-WORKER

The home worker was an artisan who plied his trade in his own home, disposing of his products to the wholesale or retail merchant, or at a market fair. His trade was on a small scale. Due to his lack of capital and raw materials, the halupnik, or home worker, was dependent upon the wholesale dealer, who would supply him with raw materials and dispose of his finished products. This setup put the halupnik at the mercy of the wholesaler.

On the other hand, the halupnik too had to employ one or more workers. Though his own earnings were pitiful, he also had to cope with an employee's problems. Polish halupniki manufactured all sorts of commodities. The tailor-halupniks of Bezechin, in the vicinity of Lodz, and the shoemakers of the Radom district were well
The loss of the Russian market affected this group also. In 1938 there were approximately 100,000 halupniks. They were busy approximately 8 months of the year. A textile halupnik in Warsaw who employed two men, earned an average of 50 to 60 złoty a week. The lot of the Jewish halupniks in Lodz, especially the weavers, was no better. The latter, employing four workers, earned approximately 32 złoty a week. The workshops of the halupniks centered in their homes; and their employees enjoyed no social security or other workers' benefits.78

RURAL ECONOMY

Most of the Jewish agricultural settlements were situated in the eastern regions. In the Stanislaw district 26.5% worked in farming, forestry, truck gardening, and orchards; in Polesi, 20%.

During the war and shortly after, Jews turned more and more to agricultural pursuit. But with the return of the peasant-soldiers from internship, and with the maturing of a new generation, the number of Jewish farmers diminished. The ex-war prisoners, as well as the children of those killed, took over the cultivated soil.

The Jewish landed gentry suffered from the agrarian reforms. In some Galician districts Jewish landowners had comprised over 30% of Jews who benefited from the agrarian reforms comprised about .5% of the entire population. There were about 90,000 Jewish agricultural settlements in Poland, more than half of them in Galicia.79

COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVES, AGENTS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Jews derived a livelihood from the above callings. Following the war, the commercial representatives renewed their contacts with the business firms abroad, thus contributing in a great measure to the revival of Poland's economy. They were instrumental in
restoring credit to the struggling home manufacturers, as well as in marketing Polish products abroad. The revived industry and trade in turn created new jobs for salesmen, agents, and distributors of the new wares. 80

To round out the picture of the economic life of the Jews in Poland, the co-operative institutions in banking, handicrafts, and agriculture should also be mentioned. Each sphere had its own Jewish banks, distribution centers, and co-operative workshops, that operated with specified capital and manpower. On a par with others they experienced the ups and downs of the economic cycle. 81

SUMMARY

The history of Jewish economic and political life in Poland points to a steady decline and pauperization. In 1934, approximately 25% of the Jewish population in Poland applied for relief to various charitable organizations. The number of needy of Warsaw rose from 22.3% in 1934 to 60% in 1935. In Lemberg, the applicants for relief numbered 55.4% in Lodz and in Bialystok, 30% respectively. That was in 1935. According to a tabulation of an economist (Bornstein), only 20% of Polish Jewry enjoyed a comfortable living; 30% were destitute; and the remaining 50% struggled for a livelihood. According to Jacob Leschtchinsky, the picture is even gloomier; he maintains that 75% of Polish Jewry were poor; that 15% struggled for a livelihood; and that only 10% enjoyed a measure of wealth. This outlook was applicable to both cities and townships. To a certain degree the townships were in a worse plight, since their living standards were lower, and the economic discrimination policy of the Polish co-operative and other groups was first brought into play in the small towns. The running expenses of a small-town family ran to 10 zloty
($2.00) per week. That was during the 1934-1935 period. There is no indication of its having since then improved.32

The discriminations against Jews, such as the humiliation to which Jewish students were subjected; the physical insecurity of Jews while traveling on railroads or other public vehicles, on the street, in the market-place; the pogroms and other anti-Jewish excesses—all contributed to the trials and tribulations of Polish Jewry. The government was responsible for this state of affairs, in that it failed to protect the Jew's life and property. In fact, the government adopted and utilized all the ways of anti-Semites, and paved the way for the fanatics and disrupters. The government's own discriminatory legislation set the pace for and abetted anti-Semitic groups in their vicious campaign against the Jews.

The trying conditions of Polish Jewry must be examined from still another point of view, the Jewish economic situation. Polish trade and commerce underwent a transformation in the postwar years that reflected negatively on the Jews. The distinguishing characteristics of the Jewish trader, such as the resourcefulness, energy, and efficiency, which enabled him to successfully meet competition through lower prices, turned into second-rate attributes. Four-fifths of all products now carried fixed standard prices. This uniformity came about through the collusion of syndicates, trusts, and leading manufacturers. The growth of co-operatives also left its imprint. Under these circumstances the skill and natural endowment of Jewish traders receded to the background. The individual trader, the pioneer, gradually yielded ground. Since a considerable percentage of Polish Jewry engaged in commerce, quite a few suffered misfortune. The
The results were apparent, as heretofore mentioned, in the diminished number of licenses granted to large-scale Jewish traders, and the increasing shift from these groups to the lowest category of petty vendors. The following will throw a little light on how the low income groups of struggling merchants, artisans, and wage-earners weathered the storm.

Many Jewish families engaged in supplementary activities, to add to their meager earnings. In 1932, 53% of the Jews in Warsaw could not even pay their annual contribution of 5 złoty ($1.25) to the keshillah. Children would lend a hand; or the housewife would engage in some remunerative activity to help make ends meet. Assistance came, too, from such American organizations as the "Joint"—Jewish Distribution Committee—especially for loan funds, and for authorized institutions. In addition to that, some families were aided by their kin in the United States. The co-operative banks played an important role in relieving the situation. Though their function could not bring prosperity to the struggling small trader and artisan, they helped him to achieve at least a breathing spell. The loan granted by the co-operative banks to individuals were generally used to pay up delinquent taxes, to clear a private debt—and, as a last resort, to keep body and soul together. When the small trader or artisan succeeded in paying his taxes and discharging his old debt to the wholesaler or manufacturer, he was eligible for renewed credit and could continue his hard struggle for a livelihood.

All these forms of assistance had naturally, only a palliative effect. Even the transition from commerce to handicrafts could hardly ameliorate the abnormal and trying situation of Polish Jewry. The
solution would probably have lain in a resolute, concerted effort on the part of all the Jews, along with a radical change in the government policy. However, the Nazi carnage was soon to doom the fate of Polish Jewry forever.

CHAPTER II

TRENDS IN YIDDISH LITERATURE
YIDDISH LITERATURE IN POLAND

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TRENDS IN YIDDISH LITERATURE

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TRENDs IN YIDDISH LITERATURE

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earnest to the NA'BIS Enlightenment theory, a movement in

refreshment into being. This turbulent era nurtured diametrically

opposed ideas and factions, but concentrated chiefly on the national

interests of the Jewish masses. Writers turned away from the

works they were reared on and took to exposition of the heritage of their own people. In quest of a solution, a

theology stemming from Jewish spiritual values came to the fore.

Jewish literature then witnessed the rise of I. L. Perets, to be

followed by Holzer Asch, W. D. Nomberg and others.¹

The revolution of 1905 seemed momentarily to promise fresh

impetus to the development of Yiddish Literature; the uprising brought

about a revival in Yiddish letters. The newly created privilege of

Yiddish was augured as bright hopes for Jews as for non-Jews. Pub-

lishers of Yiddish books, periodicals, newspapers, etc. sprang up.

The privilege, however, was short-lived. When the Revolution was

quelled, however, Jewish spiritual life sank into apathy again. The
Under the impact of the pogroms that raged during the '80s, the influence of the "Enlightenment" on Yiddish literature collapsed. The course of self-abnegation and moralizing, the tendency to negate the Jewish mode of life, and advocating assimilation as a means of solving the Jewish problem, had lost its appeal and foothold. It became apparent that adapting themselves to their environment would not in itself remedy the deplorable situation of the Jews. And as Haskala, a deterrent to the Enlightenment theory, a movement in reverse sprang into being. This turbulent era nurtured diametrically opposed ideas and factions, but concentrated chiefly on the national social interests of the Jewish masses. Writers turned away from the ways and means proposed by the alien world, and took to exploring the great heritage of their own people, in quest of a solution.

Dynamic energy stemming from Jewish spiritual values came to the fore. Jewish literature then witnessed the rise of I. L. Peretz, to be followed by Sholem Asch, H. D. Nomberg and others.

The Revolution of 1905 seemed momentarily to promise fresh impetus to the development of Yiddish Literature; the uprising brought about a revival in Yiddish letters. The newly created privilege of free speech augured as bright hopes for Jews as for non-Jews. Publishers of Yiddish books, periodicals, newspapers, etc. sprang up. That privilege, however, was short-lived. When the Revolution was quelled, however, Jewish spiritual life sank into apathy again. The
debacle of the Revolution struck terror into the ranks of the Jewish workers and their leaders. Some emigrated abroad, or turned to other walks of life. Cultural activity practically came to a standstill. The living force to stir the individual and the multitude from their lethargy was missing. There was no one to rekindle the quenched flame of the creative forces.2

It was only immediately before World War I that Jewish cultural life awakened once more from its long hibernation, to cheer and animate the Jewish masses. A growing interest in education, music, drama and painting, became evident. Yiddish literature, hitherto limited in its scope and influence, picked up momentum and ventured into realms of universal interest. The delineation of individuals only, the township milieu, and narration of little episodes or fleeting moments--these ceased to be the main content of Yiddish literature. Authors and artists now embarked upon creations of full scope, of all-embracing interest. In addition to the shtetel [the township], they now launched into depicting the city, the metropolis with its manifold problems. The new mode of life of the Jews in the city--in contrast to that of the shtetel--claimed the interest of the novelist and short story writer. The horizon of Yiddish literature expanded.

In this transition stage the previously mentioned I. L. Peretz and Sholem Asch exerted great influence again. And a new generation of literati, including Moshe Teitch, Z. Segalowitch, M. Goldberg (Menachem), and others, blossomed forth. The erstwhile groping Yiddish literature ventured into an ever-widening range of topics.3 Historical events, as well as current issues, came in for treatment. Translations of Yiddish and Hebrew classics formed a bridge between Yiddish and other
literatures. The influence of such masters as Wyspiański, Maeterlinck, Ibsen and Chekhov became apparent in Yiddish drama. A new crop of authors such as I. M. Weissenberg, Joel Mastbaum, Jonah Rosenfeld, M. Stavski and J. Opatoshu came to the fore.

In Galicia it was S. Imber, D. Kenigsberg, M. L. Halpern and Moshe Nadir that played an important role in creative Yiddish letters. (The latter two, incidentally, eventually migrated to the U.S.).

In literary criticism of that period the following merit notice: M. Shtieff, I. Tzinberg, N. Prilutski, and Dr. Shipper.4

DURING THE WAR YEARS

World War I throttled the burgeoning Jewish creative spirit. Jewish authors were called upon to devote their time and efforts to the alleviation of the plight of their numerous destitute and ailing brethren. (In Warsaw it was Peretz, Dinehson and others). The Army claimed not a few. In general, creative efforts in Yiddish letters came to a standstill with the demise of the great I. L. Peretz. The few who continued writing, kept their manuscripts pigeonholed, pending the end of the war. The center of activity in Yiddish literature was shifted to the U.S.

It was evidently the fate of the Jewish townships to bear the brunt of the hostilities. The war operations and the harsh decrees of the Russian military authorities who took over their communities struck at the root of Jewish cultural activities. The expulsion of the many groups and the restrictions imposed upon Jews in the vicinity of the war operations added fuel to the flames. The cultural institutions of the Jewish masses toppled one after another. The silencing of the Jewish press and all other printed material doomed the Jewish creative spirit.5
INDEPENDENT POLAND

The freedom and justice that World War I was supposed to usher in became basic goals for many of the nations during the post-war era. With Jews, too, in all walks of life these ideals became the prime incentive. The postwar years ushered in a renaissance era for Polish Jewry.

Polish Jews who had previously been oppressed by the Czarist regime, pinned their faith upon the democratic movement in resurgent Poland, after decades of subjugation. The Jews anticipated a new era in their history.

The Jewish social forces that blossomed forth and brought about an upsurge in the Jewish cultural-social life, also stimulated the young, groping Yiddish literature to greater effort and achievement. New publishing firms sprang to life; new authors—and books—came to the fore.

Poland gradually became a literary center, fashioning its own life. The post-war independent Poland became the center for Yiddish letters and its influence extended to the annexed Galicia, Roumania, and, to a lesser extent, also to Lithuania, Letland (Latvia) and Estonia. Jewish literature in Poland followed its own unique course, experiencing both glowing achievements and failures, depending on the conditions of the time. For a while unprecedented styles were tried in writing and art, but ultimately the literati returned to pre-war genres, somewhat modified by the recent changes that the new era had wrought.

During World War I and the years that followed it, East-European literature witnessed the disappearance of its major older authors.
Thus, death claimed I. L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, S. Frug and Hendele Mocher Sephorim. Later, Jacob Dinehson, Mordecai Spector, David Frishman and S. Ansky passed away, one by one. Of the middle-age group, H. D. Nomberg, Baal Machshoves and A. Vaiter went to meet their Maker. Yiddish letters in Poland also lost some craftsmen to the United States and Western Europe. The vacuum thus created was filled in part by young budding authors. The contributions of the latter were both negative and positive. The former was conspicuous by its new start. Some deserted the heritage of rich cultural treasures bequeathed by the deceased authors to try making a fresh start, while a few wisely followed in the footsteps of their predecessors.

On the whole, the new generation of authors was given to experimenting. The war that had exerted its influence on all phases of life affected writers also. The persecution and pogroms, the expatriation, the outrages and devastation that many of them had experienced—all these induced bitterness, despair and dejection in the Jewish authors. The pre-war romanticism, and the works expressing faith in the world's justice, now became extinct, in both Yiddish and non-Jewish literature. Most of the new generation of authors discarded literary tradition. The era of day-dreaming and romance yielded to one of naturalism in prose. The tranquil, unobtrusive word was supplanted by the boisterous and haphazard. With few exceptions, the new cluster of authors, known as the chaliastra—"the Bunch", renounced traditional themes, and took to disparaging all that had been considered sacred until recently.

The transition from old to new literary styles was a difficult one. Just as poets now pursued the expressionist style, prose
writers also tried new forms now. However, while poetry is a product of a sudden upsurge of intense emotion, prose is the result of sober, down-to-earth meditation, with solid roots. Masterly prose gives all the details and nuances of the period described, and generally follows a standard pattern. Good prose will knit loose strands into a synchronized fabric. In the post-war era, however, when peoples' views and moods had undergone radical changes, authors paid little heed to literary guideposts of the past. The sentimental and the romantic, the ideal and patriarchal—all had lost their former ring and appeal to the masses. The novelist and short story writer stood at the crossroads of the new era. The contribution of the chaliasta, nevertheless, was a fleeting chapter in the literary creativeness in post-war Poland. Notwithstanding the hard times and gathering clouds, the Yiddish literati in Poland did compose some noteworthy works that mirrored the Jewish milieu.  

In the Jewish literature of Poland between the two world wars, the satire and idyl still loomed as the two leading trends, natural sequels to the original blueprint for modern Yiddish literature set by Mendele Mocher Sephorim's satire and a serene Sabbath atmosphere that I. L. Peretz endeavors to introduce into the drab Jewish life. The changes in human destiny affected by the war naturally left their imprint on Yiddish literature as well.  

The shtetel, the Jewish township, still continued as the chief setting in literary works. Despite the upheaval to which the shtetel had been subjected during the war, despite the fact that the small community had practically been deserted by romanticism and idyl (S. Ansh), it nonetheless remained the genuine touchstone for Jewish reality. Even though its social and economic structure had undergone
radical changes, which shook it to its foundations, it continued to be the best background in which authors could depict the life of the masses. Notwithstanding the social and economic differentiations in its community, the ahtetel seemed to be a monolith. The dissimilarity of classes was far less conspicuous in small towns than in a metropolis, and the mutual interests, the traditional way of life still so rooted in the town contributed to its specific mosaic. The very territorial limitation which imposed geographic proximity between one man and another reduced to a great extent social and economic distinctions. The individual stood out only in his private life. In the ahtetel more than in the metropolis distinctions in public, in the House of Study, and so on, were obliterated. Outside influences reached the ahtetel in a mere trickle. Whereas, in the city the Jew was always under the influence of alien cultural values, the small townsman was deprived of that, and remained a distinct Jewish type.

Yiddish was the most effective medium for portraying the life of the Jewish masses. Hebrew, the ancient classical tongue, was the national language, but Yiddish was the daily language of the vast masses. Hebraic literature usually depicted the eternal spiritual struggle that was transmitted from one generation to another. Yiddish literature, on the other hand, lacking a connective link with the past, found a foothold in the current everyday Jewish milieu. Yiddish literature approached the masses in an intimate way, in their spoken medium; whereas Hebrew was in the main the holy tongue of prayer. The Yiddish author discussed with his readers their day-to-day problems. He enlightened them on a score of issues, such as social injustice,
the contrasts between the poor and the rich, good and evil, happiness and misery, and so on. At first Yiddish literature aimed also to adjust itself to the intelligence level of the Jewish masses, but it gradually raised its level to achieve more artistic creations. It continued, however, to make common cause with realism, to keep vigil over and comment on the social, economic and political changes that occurred in the actual Jew's life of the time.

In post-war Poland, Yiddish literature was modified and conditioned to the new era, in ways which call for some elucidation.

The course of naturalism in literature that originated with I. M. Weissenberg reflected life in a dry, matter-of-fact, unromantic way, somewhat as had Mendele Mocher Sephorim, the father of satire in Jewish literature. The naturalists approached life "cold", as it were, and did not bother to search for the supernatural and symbolic.

"Mendele", however, had not been merely satirical; he discerned the positive under the guise of the abnormal and inferior, and his castigating had aimed at arousing dormant virtue. The later Naturalist school, on the other hand, often did not attain deeper meanings as Mendele had. According to the latter, there was no reason for Jews being at variance with their neighbors. If anything, they ought to conform to pattern. The Naturalist school attempted to cast Jewish life in the mold of the non-Jew. They therefore had no need to abide by the Jewish historical past. The naturalist school emulated in prose the poetic genre of the chalisastra.13

The Weissenberg school of naturalism included such authors as: Zizer Warshavsky, Shimon Horontchik, Israel Rabon, A. M. Fuchs, M. Burstein, Laib Rashkin, Rochel Korn, I. J. Singer, and others.
In contrast to the works of the leading Russian, German and French authors featuring the heroism of the soldier under fire, the hero-patriot motive carried little weight in post-war Yiddish letters. The reason for it stemmed from the fact that Jews are anti-militarists. Both as individuals and as a nation, Jews maintained a negative attitude towards war, for in a war Jews were generally among the first victims. Jews were forced into war against their will, and subjected to many more indignities and outrages than other peoples during wartime. The war situation had created a separate "front" for the Jews. It was a front of persecution, outrage and pogroms, where Jews had to fight for survival. Help for the needy and orphaned claimed a great part of the Jewish effort and assets.

Yiddish literature dealing with the war situation consisted mainly of memoirs and impressions. The following works, among others, come within that category: "Unter Die Fliegel Fun Toit" ("Under the Wings of Death") by Avrohom Zak; "Fun Kazarma Leben" ("Life in a Barracks") by Z. Segalowitch; "In Faier Un Blut" ("Under Fire and Blood") by A. Haisherik. Yiddish war literature also includes works by Jewish officers and military surgeons, such as: Dr. Gershen Lewins "In Velt Fun Krig" ("In the World of War"); Dr. J. Leipuner's "Fir Yohr In Der Velt Milchomah" (Four Years in World War I"; J. Mestel's "Die Milchomah Notizen Fun A Yiddishen Offitzer" ("The War Notes of a Jewish Officer"). The above works pictured devastation engendered for mankind, and especially for the Jews, by the hostilities.

Yiddish war memoirs and related material were inconsiderable and of average artistic merit. The realm of literature dealing with Jewish life among civilians during the war period, however, attained
great heights. This work, by quite a few Jewish authors, was not confined to single aspects of the war, but ranged over the all-embracing canvas of humanity.

Thus, Sholem Asch depicted the war milieu—as well as certain aspects of pre-war life—in his "Hurben Pollen" ("The Devastation of Poland"), which was incorporated in the volume. "Buch Fun Tzaar" (Book of Sorrow). J. Opatoshu was another author who depicted the war period masterfully in a series of short stories, that were included in his volume "Oif Die Horvos" ("On The Ruins").

The following works are especially noteworthy: S. Ansky's "Der yiddisher Hurben Fun Pollen, Galitzia Un Bukovina" ("The Disaster of the Jews In Poland, Galicia and Bokovina"); the works of Dr. Yaakov Vigodski; the Vilna Zamelbicher, the Vilna Pinchas (Chronicles) dealing with the history of the local community during the war and cognate periods. The distress and tribulations of the Jews during the war years were duly mirrored in these literary works.

The literature dealing with the period of occupation is to be regarded as a sequel to the one bearing upon life "behind the front". The war, with all its innovations, was bound to leave its indelible imprint upon the prevailing Jewish mode of life. The new social-economic conditions brought about by the war had ushered in radical alterations in the life-pattern of the Jews, both as individuals and as an entire community. The former tranquil and moral way of Jewish life suffered a setback; demoralization and degeneration came to the fore. The erstwhile patriarchal milieu gave way to turmoil.14

This aimless, confused existence was in due time depicted by such craftsmen as: L. Olitsky, I. J. Singer, A. M. Fuchs, Shimon Horontchik, D. Kaplanovitch and others.
E. Warshavsky's *Shmuglars* ("The Smugglers") serves as an outstanding example of the Naturalist school of prose. The sudden impact of the war upon the shtetel, with new groups now lording it over the community, threw the idyllic pattern of life into a whirlpool. Citizens who had been leading a peaceful, upright life, were suddenly catapulted into a rough-and-tumble existence, wherein one's instinct overwhelmed one's reasoning power, where lawlessness was rampant. They were drawn into a vortex of brutality and vulgarity. Deprived of its normal mode of life, the shtetel had to meet the new challenge in order to survive. It was suddenly confronted with an egoistic, rapacious world. The impact of the war was shattering.

Warshavsky showed the shtetel at the brink of the abyss. He proceeded with his depiction in a simple way, as though the tragedy was predestined. The township had to totter to its fall, because its organism—the Jewish mode of life—was ailing. The townsmen did not look for the sublime. They tried to meet the emergency situation as best they could. And in a sense, they were prepared for the rough-and-tumble change; they had lost confidence in their own spiritual powers. Their erstwhile idealism was on the wane. The moment their resources gave out, their terra firma became wobbly. Stark poverty held sway. The shtetel had lost its foothold, and had nothing to cling to that would justify its existence. The Naturalist school that assumed to portray the gruesome truth, indicated the shtetel's degeneracy.

The erstwhile way of life in the shtetel collapsed at its initial contact with the outside world. The township now became the abode and refuge of smugglers, thieves, prostitutes, informers, blackmailers, and so on. Practically everyone was drawn into the vortex—not merely
those whose hard life dovetailed into the new pattern. The flood carried along the ailing, the idle, the pietists. But in addition to the scoundrel and the ne'er-do-well, the intellectual was also drawn into the whirlpool. Warshavsky placed the Jewish grim reality in juxtaposition with the Jew's historical-idealist course. His work was the most candid and unvarnished portrayal of the Jewish Naturalist school. S. Horontchik also followed the Naturalist school wherein he concentrated on the shtetel. Yet there was a marked difference between his treatment and Warshavsky's. The latter made no moral distinction between the various types and classes in society. Although Horontchik, too, depicted the smuggling phase, the economic upheaval, the demoralization, he nonetheless found good as well as bad people in the period of decline. Horontchik was more of a moralist than a satirist. According to him, both good and bad traits in man are a product of the social-economic conditions. The virtuous, the well-intentioned are generally found among the poor; the opposite, among the wealthy who made their fortunes through smuggling, speculation and swindle.

In his novel Ferplonterte Vegen ("Tortuous Trails") which deals chiefly with the war period—and mentions Poland's resurgence only toward the end—Horontchik demonstrated that the Jewish "intelligenzia", too, did not escape the demoralizing influence brought about by the war. The intelligenzia had gone astray; they were no longer the precursors, the moral-ethical force and guide in society. The so-called vanguard had been deprived by the sinister spirit of the time, according to the novel.

The post-war era is mirrored in Horontchik's novel Zump ("The Swamp"). The very name of the novel points to the author's view of
the post-war blight of the parvenu class, the **nouveau riche** that thrived on speculation. Here, too, Horontchik's differentiations between the good and the bad in society are evident. The coarseness and vulgarity of the upstarts, the unscrupulous ways of the newly-rich, spiritual decadence on one side; on the other, the poor and the aggrieved—the moral force that will rehabilitate the world order. The disintegration of the shtetel was brought about by the upstarts, whose avaricious appetites knew no bounds.

Perceptive social observations were included in his novel *In Geroish Fun Mashinen* ("The Racket of Machines"), dealing with the pre-war period, the factory and its machinery. In this novel it was capitalism which destroyed the small, old settlements, and thus contributed to the decline of the town. 16

Israel Rabon was another author who dealt with the motives of want and war. A Lodz native, Rabon was the product of the city's slum district, Balut. There he witnessed the struggle, the misery and hunger of the Balut Jewish weavers. He himself endured privation even in his childhood. The scenes of poverty and starvation that he depicted were drawn from his personal experience. Side by side with destitution, he showed the rich of Lodz indulging their appetite, and squandering money in riotous living. Though essentially taking no sides in society's class warfare, Horontchik regarded human plight as hopeless. 17

L. Rashkin's *Die Mentshen Fun Godlebozhitz* ("The People of Godlebozhitz") ventures again into the manifold problems of the shtetel, its mode of life and varying moods. This author, too, belonged to the Naturalist school. In a sense he was close to Warshavsky. But whereas the latter restricted his attention to a select group, Rashkin ranged over the whole field, tackling a varied assortment of townsmen.
His novel starts with the period shortly before World War I, and continues through the war and into Poland's independence era. The people of Rashkin's shtetel were racked by spiritual upheavals as a new era was ushered in. Rashkin described the throes of his community's crumbling.

Rashkin discerned dormant vitality in people despite the war situation and all that it entailed. In his novel some of those who fled at the outbreak of the war returned at the first opportunity to start from scratch again. Rashkin's delineation also dwells on war's demoralization and the resultant decadence. Rashkin's novel was unique in its presentation of the entire skein of the social, political and cultural life pattern of the Jewish community in Poland. In his work one could also get a glimpse of life in general in Poland. The author succeeded in portraying an all-embracing canvas of the shtetel. His types, hailing from all social strata, were typical of Polish Jewry. The Jewish intelligentsia, he indicated, was not without its share of moral depravity; neither were the rabbi and his son-in-law spared. The disintegration of the community, he implied, was a natural one, which was due to the impact of the time.

The Naturalist school also included Rochel Korn. Her forte was characterization of the Jewish peasant who thrives on his hard labor. The mode of life of the Jewish man of the soil, she indicated, was akin to that of the non-Jewish. Rochel Korn depicted a Polish village in Galicia, under both Austrian dominion and in independent Poland. Her village Jews were deeply rooted to their spots and not of the type who are constantly on the go. According to her view, the Jewish peasant will defend his plot of land with his life if need be. The Jews of this author's stories were a tribe unto themselves who had little in
common with either those of the shtetel or the big city. The war served as the topic for several of L. Olitsky's novels. His In Shain Fun Flammen ("In the Glare of Flames"), In An Okupirt Shtetel ("In An Occupied Town"), and Gerangel ("Struggle")—all dealt with life in small communities while still under Austrian occupation. The Naturalist attitude predominated in these works also. In Olitsky's novels, as with Warshavsky's, a great many townsmen were depicted as engaged in smuggling and speculation. Olitsky's Jewish characters were shown as being lured into theft by the abundance of goods left by fleeing peasants. The demoralization among Jewish women was likewise vindicated by this author. Olitsky did not altogether ignore depiction of those types who clung to the moral-ethical way of life. Though engulfed by demoralization, some individuals, his work showed, strive to preserve human dignity. But in general Olitsky was well aware that the war upheavals had contributed to the crumbling of the shtetel.

It was I. J. Singer who was most noted for his critical approach to Jewish life. He was also a satirist. Singer regarded life with a sober view; his narratives were devoid of prejudice and bias. He followed in the footsteps of Mendele Mocher Seforim. Actually, Singer's approach was the opposite of the sort of idyllic course followed by Peretz, which singled out the sublime in Jewish life. Nevertheless, despite his critical and satirical qualities, Singer was forever in quest of the idyllic in Jewish life.

Judged by his work, Singer was a prose epic writer. He showed his opposition to Hasidic romanticism, and to the idealism of the Hasidic movement, which had to a certain extent mitigated the wretched material existence of many Jews. In his satiric epic dealing with the rabbinical courts, and their retinue in Yoshe Kalb, Singer tore down
the seemingly supernatural in the Hasidic rabbi, and demonstrated that some spiritual leaders are plagued by the same greed and frailty as other human beings. More than that—he indicated that the retinue hovering about the rabbinical court had degenerated. These men and women, too, he showed, were subject to the same desires and lusts as all human beings. According to this author, the so-called sages were far from sacred, when human frailties are concerned; that there was a spurious tinge to/romantic idyllic view of Hasidic life. While in Yoshe Kalb, Singer portrayed a certain segment of Jewish society, he attempted in his Brothers Ashkenazi a giant canvas of the origin and development of a Jewish community in Poland. This novel covered the whole history of the great Jewish community in Lodz, down to the crumbling of the community. Several generations were depicted in both old and new Poland. A transformed Jewish collective comes to the fore. Its character differed greatly from that of the old township set-up. The rise of a Jewish proletariat and Jewish capitalist class were shown. Brothers Ashkenazi dealt skillfully with the various phases of the life of Polish Jewry.

In the aforementioned two epic works, as well as in Chaver Nachman ("Comrade Nachman"), Singer tried to establish the idea that genuine idealism is possible only for the individual. This author doubted that a collective could hoist itself by its bootstraps to heights of nobility. He considered the individual capable of such achievement. Such characters capable of individual nobility were Yoshe Kalb; Benjamin in Shtol Un Eisen; even Max Ashkenazi, the aggressive type who stepped across human bodies to achieve his goal, at the end emerged cleansed and pure in heart.

The war period was depicted in Shtol Un Eisen, a novel which consisted of disjointed episodes with type characterizations, rather than
of a unified plot. (Singer was also the author of several other novels, in which he revealed individual personality triumphing. 20 The trend running counter to the Naturalist school in Yiddish literature was especially evident in Moshe Kulbak's work. He brought to light the sublime and the virtuous in the common village Jew. Peretz had discerned sublime traits in the dignified patriarchal Jew; Sholem Asch had found such qualities in the small-town shopkeeper. But Moshe Kulbak discovered romance and grandeur not only in the chosen few, depicted in his Moshiach ben David, but also in Moshiach ben Ephraim, depicted in his "The Mondays". 21

The postwar period, which Polish Jewry had vainly hoped would inaugurate civil, political and national emancipation, did result in giving Yiddish literature more universality. Some authors attempted to mirror the more humane aspects of society, as well as man's shortcomings, and at the same time sidetracked specific Jewish themes. Yehoshua Perle, one of the latter group of writers, dealt with the pre-war small Jewish community during its decline. This milieu was well pictured in his novel, Die Goldene Pahve ("The Golden Peacock"), and in his autobiographical novel Yidden Fun A Gatz Yohr ("Unassuming Jews"). He portrayed the merchant class and its youth in a number of novels. In his Nein Ahzaiger In Der Fri ("Nine In The Morning"), a volume of short stories, Perlelimned the decadence of the pseudo-assimilated Jewish merchant class--the white-collar type, who had drifted away from the traditional Jewish culture, but failed to gain entrance into the Polish circle to which they aspired. This was the pivotal theme of his novels. At the same time he illuminated the tottering economic status of such characters. It was a picture of the disintegration of a social group, which had lost its foothold,
Z. Segalowitch pursued a unique course in Yiddish letters. The prime mover in his literary creations was personal rather than social. The individual's problems and imaginary grievances were thrown into focus in his work. Loneliness and drooping spirits oppressed all his characters. Thus, one of his novels was entitled Albik Einsam ("Forever Lonely"). Segalowitch seemed to be searching for decency and justice. He was a moralist, but failed to appraise the evil as the product of the social conditions under which men live. Rather, he saw the source of good and evil in the individual's predisposition.

Moreover, Segalowitch portrayed the good and bad traits of his characters chiefly as evidenced by their attitude, towards the central figure of the novel. The post-war period was not adequately mirrored in his work. Segalowitch remained aloof, isolating himself in his "Kazmierz". Post-war society figured in only a few of his works, such as his novel Die Brider Nemzar ("The Nemzar Brothers").

M. Burshtein's literary output, though uneven, was nevertheless a contribution to Yiddish letters. Burshtein depicted the downfall of Polish Jewry. Though a satirist, he viewed the tragic through the prism of light humor, wherever it fitted into the picture, particularly in his novel Bei Die Taichen Fun Mazovye ("By the Rivers of Mazovye"). His satire and irony were especially noteworthy in his Eber Die Horvos Fun Ployne ("Over the Ruins of Ployne"). Inasmuch as belles-lettres can be regarded as a source of history, Burshtein's work is of great documentary value. The artistic value of Burshtein's work lay in his rendering a true picture of the social-economic life of Polish Jewry, especially of the Grabski era, and all that it entailed. Although he showed the decline not only of the township, but also of city life, the shtetel was the setting he utilized because the compact-
ness of such a community was more conducive to a study of the complex Jewish-Polish problems to which independent Poland gave rise. Bursh-tein did not attribute the disintegration of Jewish life to inner con-
licts or to general social changes, but rather to the specific re-
gime that set out to undermine Jewry. The author points to Zionism as a factor presuming to solve the Jewish question; Levi is the ex-
ponent of the Zionist ideal in Plovne. But Burshstein evidently regarded the Zionist approach as an inadequate answer for the Jewish problem. He suggested several alternatives, such as: colonization of Jews in the Crimea or in Argentina; the employment of Jewish workers in Pol-
ish factories, and so on. He seemed to feel that a combination of several media, rather than a single one, could halt the shipwreck.
Burshstein chronicled the period between the two world ward, beginning with his novel Golrel ("Fate") and on through his Ibbir Die Horvos Fun Plovne, and culminating in his Bay Di Taychn Fun Mazovve. Bursh-
stein pictured life in Poland during the decade of renewed political anti-Semitism. It was the time of bloody pogroms in Przytyk, Bielsk, Minsk and Czenstochow, which were a sort of prologue to the appalling Hitler era. His novels were devoid of leading characters and well-
built plots, but were instead compilations of factual details and disjointed episodes. In his Bay Di Taychn Fun Mazovve, Burshtein dis-
cusses already the impending hurricane, and Jewish helplessness in the face of it. There was an attitude of historical fatalism in his work. 

In short novels it was Ephraim Kaganovsky who distinguished him-
self. He treated Jewish problems in the framework of European in-
fluences. The Jewish and Polish underworld also figured in his short stories. 

The influence of the world literature was especially noticeable in the work of Alter Kacizna, whose writing included a number of
dramas, a volume of short stories entitled Arabesken ("Arabesque"), and a novel called Shtarke Un Shvache ("The Strong and the Weak"). Both the style of narration and characterizations in this novel showed a strong Western influence. It dealt with the period from the abortive uprising in 1905 to the time of Poland's independence, delineating the Bohemian element of the Jewish "intelligenzia". Authors and artists of all types pass before the reader. Warsaw, prior to and during World War I, and Poland's taste of independence, serve as the background for this work. The conflicts of individuals in relation to the community were dwelt on. This novel mirrored a period of stress and strain--of chivalry and idealism, as well as malevolence, winding up with the time when independent Poland set out to oust the young Jewish generation from its economic position.26

S. Berlinsky was one of the authors who portrayed the life of the poor Jewish masses, the sort of characters found in the shtetel. The same kind of poverty-stricken group in the city community was painted skillfully by H. Bergner, especially in his Shtuben Un Gassen ("Houses and Streets"). He vividly showed the squalor and loneliness of innumerable townsmen.

Among others who belonged to this group were M. Halter with his novel Mir Graiten Zich ("We're Getting Ready"), wherein he wrote about halutzim; the young Jewish lads training for ultimate settlement in Israel. L. Dreikurs delineated the life of Jewish artists. A. Shlevin dealt with the life of the Jewish wage earner. It may not be amiss to add the names of Kornblum with his novel Geleiterte ("The Cleansed"); of David Mitzmacher and his work on Jewish rag-pickers; I. Smolacz, J. Warshavsky, M. Lewin, J. Tunkel the Hasid, H. L. Zhitnitsky, Ber Horowitz, S. Gilbert, F. Bimko, I. Bashevis and I. J. Trunk. Elchanan Zeitlin's memoirs, In A Literarischer Shtub ("In a
Literary House"), as well as the mystic-religious poet, Aaron Zeitlin's only novel Brenendike Erd ("Scorched Earth"), are likewise a distinct contribution to Yiddish letters.27

Yiddish literature between the two world wars had mirrored a turbulent chapter in the history of the Jewish people. These works portrayed the ascent and decline of the greatest Jewish community in Europe. The joys and sorrows, the sunshine and the gloom, the life-and-death struggle of a nationality--all have been perpetuated in the Yiddish prose of that period. This literature depicted two ways of life: the old way symbolized in the disappearing shtetel with its patriarchal set-up; and the new times, seething with numerous complex secular and traditional Jewish problems. It is quite possible that some aspects of the Jewish milieu were overlooked or not commemorated sufficiently. But in general, Jewish authors approached their craft with fervor and intelligence, each with his own interpretation, but all agreeing that Polish Jewry found itself in the throes of an endless struggle for survival. In view of all these writers, the dismal factory prevailed over bright and buoyant scenes; poverty predominated over prosperity; despair held sway over a sense of security. On the other hand, the Jewish community, rooted in the Polish soil, considered itself as an integral part of Poland, and clung to the hope and faith of peaceful existence among the vast masses of Poles. In the gloom disseminated by anti-Semites, Polish Jews always discerned a bright ray of hope...they considered themselves an integral part of Poland from time immemorial; and were always anxious to contribute to the welfare of that country. The Hitler carnage struck the death knell to a great chapter.
part II

CHAPTER III

The Economic Life as Reflected in the Literature

The Jews played a noteworthy role in the economic life of Congress Poland during the years preceding World War I. On a per

volve, not only they were active in industry, handicrafts, and com-

merce, but were prominent in the development of huge, medium, and

small factories and mills, and in the wholesale and retail

trade. Jewish resourcefulness and energy played a leading role,

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an inexhaustible outlet for the industrial products of

Poland. The ever-increasing demand for manufactured goods spurred

weft of Poland's young industry. Jews did not lag behind in

utilizing this export field.

...my sales-force operates in the remotest corners

of the world. I created markets for our linen in

India, Turkestan, Bukhara... I provide shirts and

underwear for half the country. And I accomplished

all of this with my bare ten fingers, with my energy..."2

The Jews contributed greatly to the expansion of the in-

dustry in Lodz. Some of the proprietors of giant spreading

factories were Jews. The favorable economic conditions—the Russian

reform that preceded the industrial activity of Congress Poland

was welcomed by Jewish manufacturers.2

Auchenazi points with pride to the diagrams

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under his supervision during recent years. The initial
The Jews played a noteworthy role in the economic life of Congress Poland during the years preceding World War I. On a par with non-Jews they were active in industry, handicrafts, and commerce. Jews were prominent in the development of huge, medium, and small-scale factories and mills, and in the wholesale and retail trade. Jewish resourcefulness and energy played a leading role, especially in the ramified field of commerce.

The economic life of Congress Poland was linked chiefly to the Russian market. The vast terrain of the Russian empire proved a seemingly inexhaustible outlet for the industrial products of Poland. That ever-increasing demand for manufactured goods augured well for Poland's young industry. Jews did not lag behind in entering the export field.

"...My sales force operates in the remotest corners of the world. I created markets for our linen in Siberia, Turkestan, Bukhara... I provide shirts and underwear for half the country. And I accomplished all that with my bare ten fingers, with my energy..."\(^1\)

The Jews contributed greatly to the expansion of the textile industry in Lodz. Some of the proprietors of giant sprawling mills were Jews. The favorable economic conditions—the Russian market—that preceded the industrial activity of Congress Poland were utilized by Jewish manufacturers.\(^2\)

"...Ashkenazi points with pride to the diagrams attesting to the progress achieved in the factory under his supervision during recent years. The initial
The number of 3,000 employees was increased to 8,000. Russian traders owed considerable amounts to Jewish manufacturers, wholesale merchants, and traveling salesmen.

Jews participated in still another phase of Poland's economy. They ran both large business establishments and huge workshops, as well as small ones. "The simple type of Jew leased orchards; others—the fish ponds of the country squires." Various products manufactured by Jewish artisans were sold at market fairs.

This state of affairs continued along until the anti-Jewish boycott burst upon the scene—and "agitators set out to instigate the Poles to patronize only Polish merchants." But the Jewish trader was not to be shaken; he was too well rooted in the country's economy to yield at the first blow. The Jewish merchant was more flexible in catering to a customer, particularly the peasant, than the non-Jew. The business approach of the former was more considerate of the patron, and that factor "induced the peasant to further patronize the Jewish storekeeper..." However, the boycott left anti-Jewish discrimination in its wake. Such was the general—and the Jewish—economic status prior to the outbreak of World War I.

The war plunged the country's economy into a confused mass. The industry and principal commerce arteries lost the Russian market when the country was overrun by German-Austrian troops. Economic conditions underwent a radical change. All orderly economic activities came to a halt during the war years, because the policy of the forces of occupation was to dominate and suppress all the economic life of conquered territory. The invaders promulgated restrictive laws and mandamuses and resorted to confiscations that in the long run served
to ruin the country's industry, commerce, and handicrafts.

These disruptions hit the Jews more than the non-Jews, for aside from the fact that business activities were the Jews' chief means of support, Jews suffered additionally because of their faith. Jewish possessions were plundered not only by the retreating Russian troops, but also by local Polish hooligans. Jewish homes and business establishments were ravaged as a result of the bombardment of the towns lying close to the shifting battlefront. Jewish possessions and assets--factories and mills of all sizes--were dismantled for removal into the interior of Russia. Jewish funds deposited in Russian banks were frozen for the duration. The little that was ultimately salvaged was further reduced by the occupation forces.

The retreating Russian troops laid waste all the Jewish townships through which they passed. Incited and goaded by the anti-Semitic Russian Imperial High Command, which inexplicably attributed its ignominious defeats to the Jews, the Russian soldiers set the torch to Jewish homes and looted and plundered. They broke into Jewish business places and made off with all sorts of goods and valuables. After a detachment of Muscovites had marched through a Jewish town it was as though a locust swarm had swept through it. Whatever was left was likely to be further depleted by local anti-Semites.

It was in the small townships rather than in the cities that the Jews sensed their helplessness, their being at the mercy of the winds. Whereas in the cities there were certain organizations that generally interceded with the Russian military authorities and thus staved off any anti-Jewish forays, such was not the case in the townships. The war situation, coupled with the malevolence of the local anti-Semites
and the Russian police officials, tended to disrupt all communication during emergencies between a small Jewish settlement and its co-religionists in the neighboring city, and small towns were thus easy prey for all marauders.

"...Thus, the Jewish population suddenly found itself trapped between two enemies, at the mercy of the winds... Whoever took a notion to lord it over them, did so... Polish shoemakers would enter Jewish homes, casting envious eyes at the silverware, the household belongings, inherited from one's parents..."

In order to escape molestation and persecution, Jews offered wares and household belongings to their Polish neighbors. The fear of even venturing into the street brought some Jewish families close to starvation. The baker stopped baking, the storekeeper ran out of merchandise. And there could be no talk of hunting for food among the villagers, since some of the peasants were rabid anti-Semites. Dire need was felt. Entire families huddled in cellars and other places of refuge. The suffering people shared with one another their meager food supplies. Only in the restricted Jewish nooks and alleys could they hunt for sustenance.

"...Now and then a tall, lanky Jew, carrying a bucket, is making his way toward the well. He fills his vessel and partakes of the refreshing drink..."

Wretched as the Jewish state of affairs was already, it deteriorated even more when the Russian military authorities issued orders to expel Jews from many sections. These harsh decrees wiped out whatever Jewish assets had been salvaged from flame and marauder.
The popular but trumped-up excuse for the expulsions was that Jews gave comfort to the enemy, and should therefore be barred from the regions bordering on the battlefront.

An expulsion order was generally carried out on short notice, depriving the Jewish refugees of a chance to safeguard their personal and public property. No amount of pleading with the Russian military authorities proved of any avail. Polish leaders, instead of interceding in their behalf, took advantage of the Jews' misfortune, and tried to acquire the latters' possessions for trivial sums. In the ensuing turmoil, Jews had to run for their lives, salvaging very few belongings. "...Brass candlesticks dropped out of a prayer shawl... Each child carried a small bundle...Bibles, prayerbooks, various folios--along with women's garb...Jews lugged bedding..."13

Such expatriations were carried out by Cossack convoys. Jews, old and young alike, men and women, were driven on foot, as well as in freight trains, under the most trying conditions. The unfortunates would go without food or water for days on end, death claiming a great toll.

There were groups and individuals who departed at the outbreak of the war. Those who owned carts and horses packed a few belongings and headed for safer destinations. Others were fortunate enough to make the journey by train. The poor, however, lacking means of transportation, later fell prey to the expulsions, or came under German occupation. Those refugees who retraced their steps found their home town under German or Austrian control.14

The well-to-do fled to Russia. Some manufacturers carried some of their assets to Russia. They had outstanding debts in the remotest corners of the vast empire. The Russian banks and trust companies had transferred their functions to Russia proper. In Poland
one could not draw on one's savings; bonds were not redeemable. But in Russia the monetary situation was much brighter.

Some manufacturers succeeded in transferring their factories and mills to Russia themselves. These men reestablished themselves chiefly through the Russian market. They knew that "without the Russian market all those mills were not worth the powder and shot..." They believed that the Russians would return, and were therefore reluctant to give up Russian consumers. On the other hand, those world-wise industrialists were aware that the Germans were aiming to dump their own finished products on the Polish market, and to import raw material from there.16

Jewish communities that were spared the misery of expulsion were confronted with other problems. The gigantic task of providing relief for the Jewish expatriates devolved upon them, their own wartime impoverishment.

It was to Warsaw that the Jewish expatriates of Mlawa, Josefov, and other towns flocked. Various organizations as well as individuals participated in the relief campaign.17

All the household belongings that an expatriated family could retrieve from its ruined home were loaded on ramshackle carts with long and crooked shafts..." There were

"...buckets, noodle-boards, troughs piled with bedding, women and children, grown-up girls, little boys with curled side-locks...Plodding along beside the carts were fathers with unkempt beards--sorrow-laden Jews..." The hearty welcome extended to the expatriated Jews demonstrated anew the moral duty one group of Jews felt for another. The first
urgent task was to clothe and feed the woebegone newcomers. Young men and women would come out to meet the caravan of carts. The young hosts would relieve the unfortunates lugging bundles on their backs, offer food and drink to the exiles, and candy to the youngsters. The real task of caring for the refugees was then taken over by the relief agencies of the Warsaw community.

"...It is the Sabbath day...The rabbi sanctioned the profanation of the Sabbath...The square facing the community center on Grzybow Street was swarming with Jews. The eminent Yiddish man of letters, I. L. Peretz, his thick crop of hair now graying, mounted the steps of the building. His short forehead was now knitted, and his large, expressive eyes suffused with tears. The stern line about his fleshy lips and nose had now receded, yielding to a smile--a smile so much reminiscent of dear Uncle Dinehson...Peretz was hoarse from issuing orders to the young relief workers..."20

Warsaw Jewry pledged its cooperation in alleviating the want of their co-religionists. People shared their cramped quarters with entire refugee families. A letter addressed by the Kehillah of the town of Josefov to its fellow-townsmen in the United States describes vividly the plight of the average Jewish community.

The Jews of Josefov had been accused of shutting off the town walls. The local Poles, using this rumor as a pretext, had swooped down upon the Jewish section, killing innocent people and plundering. The task of rebuilding the ravaged township had been beyond the means of the local kehillah. It therefore addressed the following plea to
...We, the elders of Josefov, crushed and plunged in grief, are appealing to you for mercy! Our children are perishing before our very eyes, and there is no help in sight... Our wives and mothers are starving...our elite, our once prominent and wealthy townsmen who once gave freely, are now stretching out their hands for a piece of bread..."^{21}

On the other hand, there were refugees who proved to be self-sustaining at least for a short while. They were mostly well-to-do people, who had capital until it gave out, and then they too became public charges. They were reluctant to indulge in war manipulations. Some succeeded in rehabilitating themselves in their former professions, or in one or another trade. Some ventured into new enterprises with their own means; others sought the support of various relief organizations. Former artisans obtained second-hand tools and resumed their trades. Some Jews became purveyors of various supplies to the Russian army. They feathered their nests through these transactions. They also engaged in the black market that had come into being in the interim.^{22}

"...Jews, who had been driven out of towns and villages, took to trading...They bought and sold carloads..." ^{23}

Side by side with the lavishly dressed men and women, one could see men in shabby, threadbare garb. Affluence on the one hand, want and hunger on the other.

As the first year of World War I was drawing to a close, quite a few Jews who had either been driven out or had left voluntarily,
began trickling back to the regions that the Germans and Austrians had occupied. Some repatriates found their homes razed to the ground, their belongings gone. "...To add insult to injury, there is a famine... bread is at a premium..." 24

Though they were spared any more deportation, the returning Jews ran into difficulties of still another short. The occupation forces took to conscripting them into labor battalions. Jews had to harvest the crops, fell timber for the army, and perform various repair and paving jobs in the towns and on the highways.

"...On a Friday, following the occupation of the town, the Commandant ordered all men to assemble at a designated place, within a half hour..." 25

Instead of being left alone to earn a livelihood, the Jews were commandeered to work at such chores as paving streets, repairing railroad tracks, harvesting grain, and felling timber. A Jewish community which did not comply readily with this labor conscription was fined heavily. Recalcitrant individuals were likewise taken to task. The forces of occupation sought to levy fines upon the Jewish population on the least pretext. This practice was abetted by the local Polish anti-Semites.

"...Jews--you are being fined two thousand kronen for not reporting promptly for work..." 26

It was under these trying conditions of heavy fines, of being deprived of earning a livelihood when their breadwinners were drafted into the Russian army, that the Jewish population found itself under German-Austrian domination. An era of new problems had begun for Polish Jewry.
THE JEWS IN GALICIA

Jews participated in the rural economy of that section of Poland incorporated in the Austro-Hungarian empire, which was known as Galicia. This region abounded in Jewish peasants as well as some great landowners. Jews also had their share of artisans, middlemen, stall-keepers and small shopkeepers.

Galicia was destined to become the first battlefield during World War I because of its proximity to Russia.

"...Before the farmers had had time to gather in the crops, Cossack cavalry trampled upon and devastated the grain fields..." 27

The invasion of the Russian troops in Galicia brought in its wake devastation and desolation for the Jews as well as for the other inhabitants. The landed proprietors fled to Vienna in time,"leaving their huge mansions, bolted and deserted..." 28 Leaving in haste, people tried to take along such items as light furniture, clothing, bedding, and pillows. The lion's share of Jewish possessions, however, was left on the spot. Jewish artisans and tillers of the soil remained behind. The unemployed were the first to feel the ravages of war. They roamed through the marketplaces and the railroad stations, hunting for work. The poor were least prepared for the catastrophe, and soon felt the impact of want and hunger. In a discussion between two unemployed men, Aaron Treger remarked:

"...My family hasn't seen a crumb of bread in two days..." 29

The plundering of Jewish homes by the Russians went on unabated.

"...Cossacks armed with bayonets..." 30 threw the Jews into a panic. They would requisition a sheep, a cow, or other livestock, thus inflicting a heavy blow upon the poor Jewish farmers. Jewish homes
were plundered mercilessly. In due time the Jews came to be reconciled to all the outrages. Thus, one Galician townsman observed to another:

"...It really makes no difference to me now. They already made off with all my valuables. They can find little else at my home..." 31

Aside from their plunder and requisitioning, the Russians also resorted to pogroms in various cities in the occupied area. The Cossack considered the Galician Jew as a member of a hostile camp, as well as a Jew, though non-Jews had little to fear. "It was only the landed gentry and the Jews that were haunted with fear..." 32

The magnitude of the havoc wreaked upon Galician Jewry became manifest only after the Russian troops retreated from certain positions, and especially after the war. The repatriates found their homes stripped of all belongings, and some razed to the ground; and with no source of income. The shopkeeper had lost his little business; the artisan his workshop; and the men of the soil lacked laborers, as well as tools and products incidental to farming. The Jews were indeed in desperate straits. Their plight was somewhat alleviated by various relief organizations. It was only after Galicia became a part of Poland that the Galician Jews came under the jurisdiction of the new Polish state.
The economic policy of the occupation forces consisted of
exploiting the wealth of the occupied country in order
to raise their own war potential and to benefit their home-

country. To achieve this, the occupation forces imposed upon the
individual population various regulations and restrictions, which made
it impossible for them during the years of occupation activities. The
people were deprived of the necessary requirements for legitimate
trade and deals, such as freedom of movement and free trading. Fur-
thermore, the requisition by the occupation forces of all kinds of
wealth impoverished the already shattered economy of the country.
Prices became un-stabilized and there was a shortage or complete lack
of food and many other goods. Unemployment, poverty, and hunger began
to affect the people. The conqueror's policy brought misery and pain
to the conquered.

The people began looking for all possible ways and means of
relieving their plight. Smuggling, speculation, and bribery of every
kind were resorted to by the majority of the population, since legiti-
mate business was practically out of the question and could be carried
out only under licenses issued by the occupation authorities which,
however, were extremely difficult to obtain.

The resultant economic situation brought about chaos among
the economic giants. Well-established pre-war businessmen who could
not adjust themselves to the new conditions crashed from their
positions. On the other hand, a class of businessmen almost unknown
The economic policy of the occupation forces consisted of harnessing and exploring the wealth of the occupied country in order to strengthen their own war potential and to benefit their homelands. Their aim was to rule and control the conquered country's economy. To achieve this, the occupation forces imposed upon the civilian population various regulations and restrictions, which made it impossible for them to conduct normal economic activities. The people were deprived of the necessary requirements for legitimate business deals, such as freedom of movement and free trading. Furthermore, the requisition by the occupation forces of all kinds of materials impoverished the already shattered economy of the country. Prices became unstabilized and there was a shortage or complete lack of food and many other goods. Unemployment, poverty, and hunger began to affect the people. The conqueror's policy brought misery and ruin to the conquered.

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The resultant economic situation brought about chaos among the economic giants. Well established pre-war businessmen who could not adjust themselves to the new conditions crashed from their pinnacles. On the other hand, a class of businessmen almost unknown...
in the pre-war period sprang into being.\textsuperscript{1}

The coming of the occupation forces to a city, town or village was very shortly followed by the issuance of decrees and orders, which had as their purpose the curtailment of supply of food and goods to the civilian population and the reduction of their living standards. The occupying forces concentrated everything in their hands and since they controlled production and consumption, they made people dependent on the rationing system which they introduced. Furthermore, the stocks of merchandise held by the industrialists and merchants at the outbreak of the war had to be transferred to the authorities. All industrial goods in the cities and all agricultural products and livestock in the villages had to be reported.\textsuperscript{2}

"...a decree calling for the populace to surrender all merchandise...and all valuables to the authorities was promulgated on buildings, fences, and elsewhere..."\textsuperscript{2a}

The city which was hit first and hardest by the war was Lodz--the country's greatest textile center. Lodz became a peculiar and unique prey for the conquerors. The damage caused to that city's industry was deliberate, since the Germans could find there great amounts of cotton, wool, jute, and other rare materials which they needed very badly; previously they had to import these raw materials and now they were cut off from their normal sources of supply. Lodz factories were stripped of all raw materials, machinery, and tools. As a result of this, they ceased to operate and their workers were thrown out of work.\textsuperscript{3}

The destruction of industry in this textile center as well
as in other cities proceeded in keeping with the needs and growth of the German war machine. Every kind of material available and necessary to the German war potential was taken out of Poland, not only from factories, but also from private homes:

"...Colonel Baron von Hidel [the City Commander] ordered all belts to be removed from the wheels in the factories... Copper was taken not only from church spires and synagogues, but also from the pans for cooking the Jewish Sabbath fish and from candlesticks..."4

Representatives of industry filed claims with the German authorities and presented their cases personally to the City Commander, but to no avail. The industrialists attempted to strengthen their plea by pointing out the threat of increasing unemployment among the workers, whose situation had already deteriorated greatly since the outbreak of the war, but they pleaded in vain. The usual answer given by the City Commander to the representatives of industry hardly ever varied: "I can do nothing. What do I care about your people? I am concerned only about my soldiers..."5

The confiscated materials were taken away on the basis of the issued orders and without any compensation for the damage done to the factories or to private property. The receipts given to the owners for their merchandise and raw materials (which were sent in carloads to Germany) gave their values in groshen; payments were to be made after the war.6

Workshops which produced various goods had to close. They, too, had to surrender their scanty stocks of raw materials. "On the Balut the hand-loomers seldom worked." 7 The machines and tools were covered with table cloths, as if for the Sabbath..."8 Crafts-
"searching by the light of a candle for the peasant..."9 Tailors and shoemakers lost their customers. "When the war broke out, everything turned topsy-turvy..."10 "Who works today, who orders anything for himself?..." 11

The unemployed Jews were looking for any kind of work to keep their families and themselves alive, but the standstill brought about by the restrictions made it impossible to earn anything for the most needed household expenses. Unemployment, idle factories, closed workshops, became commonplace in the people's lives.12 "...the Jews...walk around idly... There is no means of support in a time like today...the tannery was at a standstill..."13

The impoverished community was unable to keep all its institutions and dismissed its officials. The teachers of the Talmud-Torahs Hebrew schools were dismissed. The "Dayahim" associated rabbis and private persons who had concessions for distributing "yeast for the bakers", could not continue their business, since there were no more deliveries from those factories. These articles also came under the laws limiting business activities. The iron grip of the occupation forces had its effect on every aspect—big or small—of Poland's economic life.14

A further setback for the population in their efforts to earn a living somehow was the limitation of travel. For travel by train one now needed a permit issued by the local authorities, which could hardly ever be obtained. Thus, businessmen could no longer move about to obtain merchandise. Normal supply sources were cut off. The immediate results of this were that businessmen withheld from the
market any merchandise they had been fortunate enough to save from wartime destruction or confiscation. Because of this holding back of goods, prices began to jump sky-high. Shopkeepers closed their stores, because they did not know whether they would be able to get other merchandise to replace anything sold. Every product became material for speculation. In line with the increase of prices in industrial products, prices had been mounting steadily. Normal commercial activities and legitimate purchasing and selling came to an end.\textsuperscript{15}

On the other hand, there were many merchants who were compelled to sell out their merchandise in order to get money for food. Apparently, they had had no cash reserves. Some of them wanted to wind up their business to avoid confiscations and conflicts with officials.\textsuperscript{16}

The restrictions on traveling also, naturally, caused a shrinking of the transportation business, which eliminated for many in this line any possibility of earning a living.

"...Pantel, the teamster, addressed his wife: 'Glikhe, there's no money with which to buy a bit of coal and a rye loaf'...Koppel, the drayman, appears and says: 'Good morning.'

'I see that you didn't drive out to the station...!' Pantel observed, interrupting his prayers. 'There's no one to drive; we're at the end of the rope, brother!' Koppel came back!" \textsuperscript{17}

This was the situation in both occupation zones, the Austrian and the German.\textsuperscript{18}
The people entertained hopes that, in the course of time, normal life would be restored, that each of them would be able to go back to his regular job.

"...that the merchant will be a merchant once again; the same will be with the shopkeeper, the artisan, and the teacher." 19

However, the policy of the occupation forces soon put an end to such hope.

b. SMUGGLING AND SPECULATION

The Background

The occupation forces' policy affected first and foremost the distribution of food products. The peasants and other food producers and dealers, having been restricted from free, unlimited trade by the newly imposed laws, were now controlled by the police at their premises, on the roads and highways, at the entrances to the cities and wherever else the police could reach them. The supply of food to the cities and towns was very difficult. Every vehicle, every person who came into the city with loads or packages, by horse or by train, was searched.20

"...Lodz was starving. At all roads and gates leading to the city Germans stood guard without letting anybody out of the city or into it..." 21

The deliveries of food products from the villages and the small towns to the cities came to an end, terminating many a Jewish family's means of livelihood.

There were unexpected police raids on farms at night, b-
cause the police suspected that, despite all restrictions, illegal trade was still going on between peasants and purchasers. Officials were determined to make sure that these new orders should be carried out by the population.

The altered conditions became the main subject of talk among the people. They discussed the situation in the streets and in the markets, and talked of what evil was brought upon them by the war. Their main concern was how to earn a living, how to get some food, how to relieve their own and their families' plight. Merchants... "were walking shadows..." The unexpected shock which had come upon them, a sudden change in their economic positions, for which they were quite unprepared, brought many to despair. They were confronted with the problem "...Where can one earn enough for a quarter of a pound of bread..." If a peasant was fortunate enough to avoid the police and succeed in bringing some food products into the city, he immediately became the target of many... People besiege him as though he were a treasure..." So great was the need for food that "...One (woman) grasped the potatoes from the other's apron..." 22 On the pretext of keeping public order and preventing illegal trading, the German police would disperse the crowd but confiscate the wagon along with the potatoes..." Dealers outbid each other to get products, and would then retail their goods, only at high prices.

Shortages increased as German civilians began to come to Poland and buy at official prices, or forcibly take away all kinds of food and merchandise from the peasants and city storekeepers.

* * *

While production of food was controlled by the constant supervision of the peasants, and the limiting of goods to small assign-
ments of certain rare materials for a small part of industry, confectionery, consumption was controlled by the introduction of rationing. Food and goods were distributed through monthly ration cards, with special cards for every kind of product.

The millers were restricted as to how much flour they could produce, where it was to be sold and in what quantities. The bakers were to report how many loaves of bread they baked from the amount of flour which they had been assigned. Butchers and tanners were similarly controlled. Storekeepers were supervised in their distribution of the food products which they received from the authorities' warehouses. Artisans and craftsmen who reopened their shops were also under strict supervision. Bread, sugar, barley, and many other products could officially be obtained only in quantities assigned by the occupation authorities. The bread was of a very low quality, since the bakers were compelled to add to the flour ingredients such materials as ground chestnuts... Very rarely distribution of some industrial products of a cheap quality was also allowed.

The rationed products could be obtained in the cities' food distribution centers. In front of those establishments, queues of men, women and children would wait--some for bread, some for potatoes, others for barley or sugar. The line-ups for food now became a common sight on the country's streets. The need of the people on the one hand, and the shortage of food on the other, made them disregard many of their comforts. The queues were formed early in the morning because each one wanted to be among the first to get the food. Very often the supply of products in these distribution centers was
exhausted before all the people waiting in line were attended to.
Now they even began to form lines at curfew time, on the previous
day, disregarding the police regulations. Those who were compelled
to rely upon the ration cards for their food supplies were the poor,
and the unemployed. Sickness began to plague the people, increasing
the rate of mortality. The rich, however, did not have to rely on
rationed foods, for they could afford to buy from smugglers. 24a

c. SMUGGLING AND SPECULATION IN PRACTICE

Confronted with these hard realities, people began to look
for ways and means, legal and illegal, to sustain themselves and
their families. They were compelled to disobey and circumvent the
imposed regulations. The threat of being found out or punished in
other ways did not deter them from these illegal activities, for
one could hardly earn a living in a legal way. To avoid hunger,
one had to follow the forbidden paths of smuggling and speculation,
which now became the business occupation of the majority of the
people, beginning, as hitherto mentioned, with those from the lower
social strata. Factories were idle and craftsmen did not have any
orders. Free trade was impossible. Merchants could obtain supplies
only on the black market. Although all were reluctant to undertake
the risks involved in smuggling and speculation, they had to resort
to it... The hardship of life created by the new conditions made people
disregard laws. 24b

"...The factory workers (in Lodz) became smugglers. 25
Yerachmiel...a merchant...was driven to smuggling... 26
Pantel, the teamster,—and horse-thief, Yankel, who
spoke very little was always eager for a fight,
were the first in the city to turn to smuggling." 27
Smuggling became the main subject of conversation among the population now. In wealthy homes it was mentioned only occasionally, "as something unusual," but became the most interesting matter for discussion in the homes of the poor. Everyone made his own plans on how to start smuggling, figuring out what qualities of merchandise were in greatest demand. One tried to learn what roads and secret passages led to the cities where the chief consumers lived. They made calculations on how much profit a trip would yield eventually. Smuggling stimulated the imagination of the sick, and of both old and young. 28

"'Well' (said Zilpe), 'I think, with God's help, as soon as I am able to leave the bed...right after the Sabbath, with God's will, I will also begin to travel.' 29 As to Berel, no matter how sick he was, he was ready to run the gauntlet...

Even young children endeavored to relieve their parents' miserable plight by joining in smuggling enterprises, hoping to bring home some bread, potatoes, coal for the winter, a decent garment, or footwear. They never realized the troubles one was apt to encounter in such ventures.

Students and teachers, too, began to go in for smuggling. "Even the dayan's associated rabbi ... daughter smuggles." 30

Going to the city to exchange or buy books, students hid smuggled goods under these texts. Many professional people who had lost their normal sources of income, succeeded in avoiding financial collapse through smuggling deals. Storekeepers who were impoverished by being unable to replenish their merchandise resorted also to the illegal acts now practiced by all. They were not deterred by the
fact that they might suffer losses through confiscation, if caught by the police. The general result of smuggling, if successful, was comfort and wealth, and this was what everyone kept in mind. "Baileh ...(thought) if that would be such bad business people would not bother with it..."31

As the war continued and the possibilities of earning a living diminished, more and more people turned to smuggling. Even the wealthy class who originally had made every effort to keep away from such low-class activities now had to resort to what they had once repudiated, as their savings were used up and they found they did not have any other means of income. Once their businesses were wiped out and their household goods sold "...what could be done next..."32 The real estate which some of them still possessed was not bringing in any profits. What was left for these people to do was—smuggling.

Among professional smugglers, the unskilled one was recognized. "The dignified tall Jew...with a handsome patriarchal white beard... who is holding in his hand a package, evokes admiration and respect."33 Since smuggling required audacity, flexibility, and adjustment to the life of the lower social classes, the Jew in "...a business coat with a derby hat on his head..."34 looked like an intruder in the groups of professional smugglers. They felt somehow uncomfortable in his company, since they had to impose upon themselves restrictions and limitations in their way of talk, mutual relations, etc. The way of life of these Jews, the fathers of doctors and engineers, who had been drafted into the army, and who now had to look after the wives of their sons and sons-in-law, were strange to the professional
smugglers. The latter conducted their activities not only to sustain themselves and their families, but also to become rich. They had never experienced being rich and they wanted to explore the opportunity to its utmost. They risked more, they exposed themselves to more troubles and discomforts merely for the sake of making more money. "The non-professional smuggler went quietly with a calm face...into a grocery, sold his smuggled goods and used the profit for the household..." For him, smuggling was an unpleasant temporary necessity, in his endeavors to weather the present crisis."35

Some of these beginners at smuggling had no money for purchases. They had to get goods entirely on credit, no matter how small was the amount obtainable in this way. "...I (Zilpe) will take half a pud [18 lbs.] of flour from Yankel on credit..."36 The potential profits thereafter caught their imagination to such a degree that they never considered the possibility of failure in their enterprises.

The amount of capital which one possessed determined the scope of one's activities and one's means of transportation. There were smugglers who used trains and carts, still others rented seats from cart-owners. Some smugglers operated with considerable amounts of money; others had their whole capital invested in the goods they carried.

The main items being smuggled were foods, flour, bread, poultry, butter, meat, sugar, salt, yeast, etc. Various other kinds of goods, however, such as leather gear, were also valuable. When searches and pursuits by the police began to be carried out more vigorously, transporting goods became harder, and prices were increased by black marketeers.
"...In the past few days our smuggling business has not been very lucky...The new partners: Rachmiel Moshe, Benjamins, Gedalyeh, the carpenter, and Tzatskin the militiaman...got into trouble...were all robbed and imprisoned..."

An increased number of sales, however, might lower prices temporarily. Some smugglers concentrated on the few items which brought the greatest profits at the moment.

Food was smuggled mainly from the villages and small towns to "the big city which was waiting with begging eyes for the smuggled packages..." Other goods and industrial products were smuggled anywhere, depending on the location of the merchandise. Villages were the main food producers, but industrial items were scattered all over the country, in the possession of people who had bought them for speculation.

Smuggling had two aspects: obtaining the goods and getting them back to the ultimate consumers. There were individuals and small groups engaged in smuggling food who went to the villages to buy whatever possible from the peasants. They used secret roads and pathways, to reach a village and returned to the cities, so that they could elude the German police. Very often they had to cross swamps and other natural obstacles on their way home. This was harder because of the heavy loads which they carried back with them to the city. If caught by the Germans, these smugglers "begged to be released...through a few markas [currency]. Women tried to obtain their release...with the wink of an eye, and all kinds of tricks and subterfuges learned under these hard conditions."
These, however, were not the only troubles which the smugglers encountered. Sometimes they had to spend a night in a barn or in the woods. Since not every peasant was trustworthy, the smugglers often preferred to remain in the woods till danger was over. There were, on the other hand, peasants who did shelter the smugglers.

Once the smugglers had succeeded in safely returning to their destinations, they looked for safe places to store their merchandise until it was re-sold. They hid it in their homes or, if their homes were under the surveillance of the police, concealed their goods elsewhere. The daughters of Kayla, the wife of Tovyeh the weaver (in Lodz)...who was unemployed...smuggled food products and always hid them in their parents' home.40

"...In the beds was hidden meat...whole sides of meat were hidden in the bedding... Under the beds were potatoes, cabbage, beets. In the old closet, hidden among the clothes, were small sacks of flour and all kinds of barley. In the pillow cases small sacks of sugar were hidden... Behind the pictures on the walls saccharin was hidden, which was used in the homes of the poor instead of sugar." 41

If large amounts of smuggled products were discovered by the police, it meant not only economic ruin for its possessor, but also his imprisonment.

It was mainly from these smugglers that both individual consumers and storekeepers bought their supplies.

Those who used horses and wagons as a means of transportation represented the large-scale smugglers, because they had more space for merchandise. The scope of their activities usually required
the work of more than one person. While one would be assigned to look for merchandise and to make purchases, others were more skillful at transferring the goods to the cities. All of them, however, had to be prepared to carry out any work involved, and the partners divided their obligations among themselves. Since the horse and wagon were the main requirements for large-scale smuggling, it was mainly the horsedrivers who were best equipped and prepared to begin it. 42

"... We have three wagons with covers ... we will make a partnership and immediately begin to travel to Warsaw. ... Pantel outlined his plan ... to Kappel and Yankel." 43

With them also went those smugglers who rented seats on the wagons. The latter preferred this way of traveling to the railway, which involved the difficulties of obtaining a travel permit, and carrying the goods through the town to the railway station, and running a greater risk of confiscation. If the police appeared there was no way of escape from a moving train, while in wagon on the roads, particularly at night, a few bundles or packages could be saved from the gendarmes' eyes. Some smugglers, however, still clung to the comforts of train travel.

"... Berel said to his wife: 'Itte, I will go by train. It will be a little harder... but therefore you are in Warsaw in two-three hours, and you are sitting on a bench like a human being..." 44

To travel by train, one had to apply for a permit, submitting substantial reasons for the trip and specifying its duration. Since the granting of a travel permit was usually refused, the applicant
had to use bribery in the form of food to obtain one.

This travel permit did not protect the smuggler from confiscation of his goods in case he was caught with the merchandise. It only enabled him to use a more convenient way of transportation than the horse and wagon. Troubles began with the very inception of the trip. The road to the railway station, which was usually located on the outskirts of the town, was guarded by police. One had to be lucky to be able to bypass them somehow and get into the station. The next obstacle to overcome was to avoid "the gendarmes (who) ... glare at the doors of the train cars ... alert for booty ... and stand at the ticket office ...." Although the smuggled goods were concealed—"New military shoes under a layer of grapes"—the smugglers nevertheless had to be always alert to avoid the searching eye of the "crows" (police, in smugglers' slang).

On the trains, there was no place to hide packages, and therefore they had to be put on the shelves, which might be searched. Passengers distrusted each other. "They looked sideways like thieves." Talk among them was about the smugglers' troubles—searches and confiscations.

Every time Germans boarded the train and "peppered every civilian passenger and his luggage with flashlights ... the dark Berel, the redhaired Jew, and the skinny one ..." resolved not to continue smuggling any more. They would say a "chapter of the Psalms" to overcome the present danger. However, the need for some source of income and the considerable profits possible in smuggling, eventually would lead them to forget these troubles, and continue their illicit trade.

When a train arrived at its destination, a search was made by
the police of all the passengers, including women, young and old, "padded with all possible products." Those who looked enormously fat were detained, but others were lucky enough to remain undetected.

"...Rachel...naked...wraps chunks of meat around her body...tightens them with cord..."49

Great risks were also involved, however, in horse and wagon smuggling. Under cover of the darkness of the night, the smugglers would start out individually from separate spots in whatever town they were in, to meet at some highway leading back to the city of their destination. Police and informers would have noticed it if they had set forth together from any central point in the town itself. Once they had actually started the trip, everyone's concern was to avoid getting caught. Sometimes the driver was stopped by horse-mounted gendarmes, and taken to the nearest police station. For many of these smugglers, as for "...Chanah Cimpls...(who) bows down to kiss the German's hand...(and to beg him): 'Don't take away my daily bread..."50 confiscation meant complete disaster, for their entire capital was invested in the smuggled goods. Some smugglers succeeded in bribing the police, and retaining part of their merchandise. The wealthier smugglers could afford bribery and a partial loss, which would be made up by their profits on many other transactions. Many of the German officials were even unofficial partners with the smugglers. As a whole, however, the occupation authorities really exerted their powers to prevent smuggling.51

All possible tricks were used to deceive the police. The owners of wagons made double bottoms for hiding smuggled goods. Confiscation of goods was always a possibility to be expected; among many lucky days there could also be unfortunate ones. Some smugglers
were prepared to cover such losses by increasing on their load of merchandise. They did not "let their hands down" when they were caught, but continued smuggling to recover these losses. Moreover, a frequent contact with the police brought a closer acquaintance-ship which facilitated bribery. If the smuggler came into contact with the same policemen whom he had formerly purposely allowed to take away some of his goods, he in the future would save other packages. 52

"...Tomorrow, he (Tzvek, the smuggler) will be back with a new suitcase, with new products and let the German again confiscate...when he was suspected by the same German...the food packages were let through every day." 53

Brewing and bootlegging were also practiced by people to get more money when "the last rouble" was spent, and one was "walking around idle". They erected breweries in their homes, where they produced liquor in a primitive fashion. In a way, this activity was more risky than smuggling. The very fact that it was carried out in a limited space, without many possibilities for concealment, made it more vulnerable to the searching eyes of the police. Moreover, the process of production—and the odor which emanated from the boiling liquor with various ingredients, drew attention. Furthermore, the materials needed for production, such as flour and sugar, had to be bought on the black market and transferred to the home brewery under the eyes of neighbors, informers, and police. The constant hunts by the police for smuggled and hidden goods led them easily to the trails of these breweries, with resultant con-
Yet these failures did not discourage people. They tried to find other places which seemed safer, where they could begin another brewery. To remain undisturbed by local police officials and informers they would give the former money or food products, but the latter had to be taken into partnership. 54

Partnerships were also often entered into because bootlegging required considerable amounts of cash, and many could not by themselves meet the costs of equipment and materials which could only be bought on the black market for high prices.

Those who succeeded "all give the impression of being well off." 55 There was no hunger or misery in those homes. Moreover, the constant strain imposed upon these people by their risky occupation simply led them to expose themselves to greater risks and danger. Some endeavored to expand their breweries, to have one or two additional units, so that if one were padlocked, the other could continue functioning. "Anything at all, in order to survive..." 57 One had to pluck up courage for that. The stouthearted and fearless "were, thank God, well fed and dressed..." 58 The irresolute, those haunted with fear, the ne'er-do-wells, simply perished. Half of the community thus came to an untimely end. 59

The small trader, the little fellow, hoarded limited stocks, small and large. His modus operandi was that of the mighty entrepreneur; namely, to sell when the market was highest. However, to his limited capital, the small trader was forced to compromise occasionally (though he still realized a substantial profit).
smuggling led to widespread speculation with the contraband goods based on withholding commodities from the market, until the highest possible prices could be obtained when there was a favorable turn of events. The art of speculation and the extent of its success were contingent upon disposing of commodities which commanded the highest prices on the open market.

People spent their earnings and savings on speculations not only with industrial products, but also with foreign currency, bread ration-cards, all sorts of government licenses, and whatever else was in demand. To get money to live on, one had to resort to smuggling or speculation or both. One could "...become a millionaire within three months." Conversely, one could lose every cent over-night, but that did not deter people from these enterprises.

"...World War I dragged in, among other evils, also the bane of speculation... And none was immune to it..."

Speculation had its sphere of influence. Some speculators traded in small quantities; others carried on huge transactions. Some marked time until prices skyrocketed; others were reluctant to dispose of their accumulated stocks even then, hoarding goods instead of currency.

The small trader, the little fellow, hoarded limited stocks, big and large. His *modus operandi* paralleled that of the mighty entrepreneur: namely, to sell when the market was highest. However, due to his limited capital, the small trader was forced to compromise occasionally (though he still realized a substantial profit).
The rich, the well-heeled speculator had enough assets to carry on his trade, and could afford to hold onto his accumulated merchandise for considerable periods. This trader was on terra firma: the longer the war dragged on, the scarcer the commodities became. The occupation authorities "...put an embargo on the possession of ninety percent of the commodities..." Even goods included among legally permissible items could be banned and confiscated at any moment. The speculators, therefore, resorted to all sorts of subterfuges in order to escape the German snoopers. Merchandise would be concealed wherever it seemed safest, in private houses, in business establishments, camps, and so on.

"...Goldfeld outwitted the Germans. He fashioned secret cellars, with openings in the walls. Huge stores would be stored therein. The walls would be lined with shelves of legitimate goods..." Smuggling, speculation, and illicit stills—the three chief sources of income during the war years—though beset with difficulties, brought comfort and even relative wealth to those engaged in them. This bogus prosperity soon became apparent at home, on the street, and in public life. Some individuals climbed to a higher social status, and gradually assumed positions of importance in the local community, in the synagogue, and elsewhere. The nouveau riche were liberal, giving ungrudgingly. On the other hand, the old established traders who had held the limelight in the pre-World War I days, now met with failure and became impoverished.

"...prominent merchants failed ignominiously; and street vendors gained the ascendancy..."
Jews who before World War I had struggled to make ends meet suddenly prospered beyond their fondest dreams. Former clerks and domestics were suddenly catapulted into prominence. Wage-earners and drifters in business who had found themselves without any means and had been forced to venture into anything that might bring them some profit, now took a leap in the dark, and in most instances came off with flying colors. "...Schmul Rabinowitch...could never scrape up enough groshns for the Sabbath...today a regular big shot..."68

Individuals with a considerable capital amassed from their war-time business ventures began to take over factories whose owners had deserted to Russia. "...Toviah Wax, who had once served as bootblack for the Meyerbachs (the owners of the Godlboshitz tannery, who had escaped to Russia) is now in possession of the tannery..."67

Artisans and craftsmen found it more to their advantage to engage in war enterprisss than to stagnate in their respective callings. The tailor, the shoemaker, the tinsmith, and their kind, could profit from smuggling and in speculation, rather than following their own trades. For one thing, there was a dearth of raw materials for their usual work; moreover, there were hardly enough orders to keep them busy at their normal occupations. So they followed the line of least resistance—the ventures that the war had brought.

Some families who previously had been unable to keep the wolf from the door now lived in clover. Now they could buy food and household effects, regardless of the peak prices.

"...Shliomikha's wife fetched a side of meat from the butcher's shop—something even the leading housewives could ill afford..."70

Those families had never prospered as much as during the war years. The near boom suddenly catapulted them into a life of ease.
"...Kayla indulged her appetite—her pots filled with meat on weekdays... After all the years of want and misery..." The new crop of prosperous individuals were not selfish, however. They extended a helping hand to the less fortunate with whom they had formerly gone through years of want. The well-to-do had not forgotten their friends in need; they supplied the latter with food and other necessities to the best of their ability.72

When several members in a family engaged successfully in smuggling, the mode of life improved considerably. They abandoned their former dwellings in dingy cellars or attics where they were cramped for space, and moved into a first-floor apartment with a kitchen. "...A house with gas-light and running water..." That was merely a steppingstone to still further improvements. Next came new clothing and shoes, as well as various household effects—items that they had done without for a long while. Life took on a new meaning for this class. The erstwhile drab everyday atmosphere that their homes had had, even on holidays, now yielded to one of joy and warmth. The Sabbath and other holidays were now marked by glowing festivity. The feasts, the new attire, and the charitableness on the eve of a holiday—all testified to the new way.74

The social prestige of the nouveau riche rose simultaneously. No sooner had the obscure, lowbred citizen feathered his nest, than he became one of the town's notables. Those upstarts suddenly got to the forefront of the community's social life. In the House of Worship the rude, unlearned parvenus now occupied the coveted pews along the "Eastern wall", relegating yesterday's elite to the limbo.75
These newcomers were able to bid the highest, and to arrogate to themselves the honors incidental to the services. Their womenfolk became conspicuous by their flashy garb.76

Aside from smuggling and speculation, the war situation created new possibilities for filling one's pockets. One could also make his fortune through obtaining a license from the occupation forces for certain activities. Thus, if one obtained a concession from the occupation authorities for the delivery of provisions to the troops, or for the distribution of ration cards and food, one became a licensed trader. Such a status also opened an avenue to the "black market".

Every concessionaire was responsible to the forces of occupation. The delivered products had to be accompanied by official invoices. In consideration of that, the concessionaire had the right to purchase such products at the official prices. Such transactions were difficult under the prevailing conditions. None wanted or dared to quote official figures. "...Reb Yossele of Godlbozhitz... who held the concession for procuring and delivering rye and wheat flour, managed to secure those products with the help of a gendarme. Wherever the peasant or miller proved unyielding "...Reb Yossele brought along an armed gendarme..."77 and thus acquired the grain for a mere song. The profit accruing from such a transaction surpassed all his dreams. The concessionaires missed no opportunity to demonstrate their power and to "make hay while the sun shines". If someone was suspected of business deals that could interfere with those of the concessionaires, the latter would retaliate forthwith and, if need be, resort to confiscation of merchandise. Those who traded without the required license,
on being apprehended, would bribe the concessionaire in one form or another, and thus be absolved. "...Feivel and Moshko of Godlbozhita", who had fraternized with the local military authorities, would determine the amount of hush money required for clearing someone's violation of the law.78

One had to be on an intimate footing with the occupation forces in order to get the required licenses, but once the ice was broken, the concessionaires could also go in for speculation and amass a fortune.

"...Look at Zainvel. He was nothing but a poor tailor, a mender of old clothes... And today he is a big government contractor..."79

Concessionaires benefited in still other ways. On occasion they would smuggle in contraband, disguised by a top layer of legitimate goods. When confronted with a license, inspectors were not overly inquisitive, and the smuggler benefited greatly, without undue risk and fear.80

It was quite natural then for individuals to leave no stone unturned in order to obtain trading licenses from the occupation forces. Since the legal approach seemed ineffectual, bribery and corruption were resorted to. The official in charge of issuing licenses exploited the situation to his best advantage. He insisted on a maximum bribe, in the form of spot cash, merchandise, or other valuables. There were instances when men sent their wives or daughters or mistresses to the German commandants, as a means of persuasion.81

"...During the Kaiser's era, such a woman was likely to obtain a license for one carload of oats and one of wheat from the German district commandant..."82
The feeding of a community was contingent entirely upon the goodwill of the local commandant. If he was well-disposed, he would approve of a license for the provisions; and, conversely, if he was hostile, he could bring the civilians to the brink of starvation. In the latter instance, it took great effort and pain—and women—to win the battle. 83

In general, traders endeavored to have a woman as a partner or, at any rate, as a sort of trademark. In the welter of corruption brought about by the war situation, people stopped at nothing for the sake of some income. "...Shimmon Kneifelle prefers a girl as a partner in his business..." 34

A Jewish girl's fraternizing with an official or soldier of the occupation forces was no longer frowned upon, if that was helpful in a business transaction. The German military patronized only the shops where the clerks were girls.

Such immorality had been forced upon practically the entire population by the occupation troops. The trade embargoes and restrictions were increasingly tightened to extort as much as possible and at the same time demoralize the victims.

"...and women above all. Without a woman you can hardly do business with an Austrian official. Then you must depend entirely on smuggling...." 85

The concessionaires in charge of the distribution of ration cards diverted some to their own benefit. The food thus acquired would be sold on the black market. The stolen ration cards were the cause of eventual feuds, since every concessionaire craved the lion's share. Those fellows defrauded the population in still another way.
for instance, they would hold back some of the products they were
supposed to distribute, filling the gap with goods of an inferior
quality. They also cheated on the weight.

"...by mixing the bread with chaff, the cereal with
sand, and the gasoline with mud..."86

Complaints and grievances were of no avail, because the con-
cessionaires were influential with the authorities. If someone lodged
a complaint, it fell on deaf ears. The government official, being
a silent partner with the concessionaire, would naturally exonerate
him of any wrong-doing. When legal proceedings were instituted, it
was only a sham.

"...affairs glided along as before, if not worse.

As heretofore, Moshko Abishes distributed the same
variety of bread, gruel, flour, sugar, gasoline...
Moshko Abishes Committee bread... was clay rather
than bread..."87

In general, the concessionaires lived in comfort and affluence.
"...the individuals comprising the 'Committee' lived in clover..."88

The struggle for existence was especially hard for those who for one
reason or another, failed to participate in the war boom. Even some
of those holding ecclesiastical offices were drawn into war enterprises,
and if they succeeded in such undertakings, also gradually succumbed
to corruption.

Comfort and affluence on the one hand, and want and poverty on
the other, were the two opposite poles between which the economic
situation of the people--including the Jews--oscillated like a pen-
dulum during the period of World War I. While some wallowed in wealth,
Others were in dire straits.

There were manufacturers, traders, artisans, whose old established business enterprises had been uprooted by the impact of the war. They could not adjust to the new course of events created by it. The pre-war procedure governing business transactions differed greatly from the one adopted by the new crop of war traders. Both the wholesale and retail dealers in this category pursued a well-ordered, scrupulous policy of buying and selling. They strove to build their livelihood on a solid foundation. They ordered their merchandise from reputable firms; they had no need of hunting for goods, on a hit-or-miss basis. Above all, they made every effort to pay their bills on time, to follow the moral and ethical principles pertaining to the field of commerce.89

The advent of the war disrupted normal business relations. Since the occupation forces outlawed possession of a long list of commodities, the owners were forced to conceal their wares. The artificial shortage of goods thus brought about resulted in keen competition, and sales to the highest bidder. Moreover, the trader's stock might be confiscated at any time. The situation bordered on chaos.90 Naturally, all this ran counter to the conceptions of pre-war merchants. True, the latter still enjoyed a measure of comfort; some established traders were still in possession of monetary or other assets. They were not anxious to experiment with the new methods of doing business; they preferred the policy of watchful waiting. In the long run, these cautious traders were gradually pushed out of their former enviable positions. They were replaced by the new and daring type of traders, who were impelled by want to take the bull by
the horns. The adventurer, the one who took risks, amassed relative wealth; whereas the solid merchant was taken down a peg or two, or forced to liquidate his enterprise altogether. 91

Social decline for many followed in the wake of the economic upheaval. As the struggle for existence became harder for some, men cast around for new means of support. Business establishments were partitioned and sublet. The owner merely wished "...to keep a door open..." to keep the firm functioning until the advent of more stabilized conditions. People traded in items approved by the authorities, such as candy, postcards, matches, chicken feed, and so on. Householders rented out rooms, reserving for themselves a minimum of space. Some converted their homes into tea-and-beer halls, catering to the German soldiers. The latter used to patronize Jewish ale-houses, where they would sip beer and spin long yarns. Running such an establishment was not easy for Jews, especially those having adult daughters. (Some of the German warriors did not hesitate to molest women.) But in order to earn a livelihood, one sometimes had to overlook such drawbacks. 92

Private tutoring turned out to be a source of income for some well-educated individuals from the previously prosperous families. 93

For those who had formerly been well-established the mere fact of their decline from their high estate made them resentful of the war trade.

"...Uncle Melech, however, had no patience with retail sales... Prior to the war he was wont to transact deals in carloads of herring, gasoline, salt, and here and there he is called upon to dispense an ounce of pepper..." 94
These were the men who could not become reconciled to the peculiar wartime type of business. The daily fluctuation of prices, the hunt and scramble for commodities, the persistent fear of the authorities, dulled their interest. Now, however, well-bred women, who were used to being waited on hand and foot, had to cater to others. Some took to running "public kitchens", others turned to nursing--anything at all, in order not to become public charges.

It was only when they became destitute, and there was no other alternative, that the conservative businessmen turned to war pursuits. Great antagonism arose between the old-timers and the parvenus. The solid traders still wished to pursue their former business methods, and looked askance upon the newcomers. They clung to their prestige in the world of commerce and remonstrated with their new rivals.

"...with the outbreak of the war, Jechiel picked up his walking stick and proceeded to the marketplace, to engage in business... He came upon new traders that had come forth in recent years--the high-and-mighty, the brazen type... The market was dead; hardly a peasant showed up to buy or sell anything..."

Some families still stubbornly refused to acquiesce in or yield to the demoralizing climate created by the war, steering clear of the lowly trades to which some of their comppeers had finally turned. Reduced to poverty, they sometimes went without food. They would accept occasional help from friends rather than resort to unethical tactics in commerce. They looked upon unscrupulous transactions and war profiteering as a violation of their principles, of human dignity. In order to survive, they proceeded to sell their last household effects.
Before World War I this group had belonged to the elite, owning factories, houses, villas, and estates. At the outbreak of hostilities many had joined the Russians, hoping thus to spend these trying years in safety. They had assets to fall back upon. "...the wealthy Broderson was the proprietor of five houses in Russia..."97 After the war they had hoped to return to Poland, to regain their old status. The Bolshevik Revolution, however, had disrupted all their plans. Their possessions had been confiscated; and many repatriates could not regain their former status. This became noticeable in their economic as well as social life. For one thing, they had to dispose of their homes and move into poorer quarters. Their shabby garb testified to their poverty. And, at long last, they were forced to apply to the public kitchens.

"...a young lady of a well-to-do family...Broderson's daughter... the Brodersons of the villa... is not ashamed to wear a black cloth coat on a hot summer day. Broderson must have gone down in the world... Why, the young lady even gets her meals at the public kitchen..."98

They began to economize as much as possible. Meat, butter, eggs, sugar, and other food products became luxuries. All they had left was their position in society. They continued to participate in the upper-class social life, but did not retain their former glamor.

It was, however, among the unemployed wage-earners, the village hucksters, the stall-keepers in the marketplace, and others of the lower social strata that the worst results of the war were most conspicuous. With the sources of their income no longer functioning, and with no savings to fall back on, this was the most hard-
pressed group. They had no household effects to barter, and their ration cards were their only means of obtaining food.

This suffering humanity subsisted chiefly on bread. They could not avail themselves of the cards granting occasional bits of synthetic oil, sugar, or barley; they traded those cards in either for bread or for other urgent items.100 In some homes bread itself became a luxury.

"...in quite a few drab-colored houses, wooden shacks, and basements, lay children with parched mouths, whining and pleading for a piece of bread..." 101

Some of the unfortunates took to soliciting alms; others were plagued by a variety of ailments. Entire families separated and went begging from door to door. A few disguised themselves as cripples, in order to arouse greater sympathy. These mendicants went pleading and wailing to the well-to-do.

"...Fellow Jews, please let me have a piece of bread!
I'm a poor orphan--I'm starving..."102

Contagious diseases became rampant among them. With the hospitals crowded to overflowing, some of the afflicted had to be cared for at home. The quarantine imposed on such a patient would apply also to the kin living in the same house, thus aggravating their none-too-happy lot.

"...Instead of funerals with horse-drawn vehicles, one came upon pallbearers carrying corpses in boxes, accompanied by disheveled mourners wailing bitterly..."103

Poverty manifested itself not only at home, but on the street, in
the market-place, etc. Some individuals did not succumb easily to panhandling. Prior to begging alms, they made efforts to find work of some kind. One could easily recognize them by their shabby clothing, run-down shoes, unkempt beards. They preferred the open spaces to being home, where their wives and children were starving.

There were also those who were literally homeless, left with almost nothing.

The Workers' Kitchens were the sole refuge and haven for the hapless unemployed. Jewish organizations in the towns and cities endeavored to ameliorate the lot of the unfortunates by providing them with a free meal daily. The meal consisted of "...a thin slice of sandy bread...and a bowl of watery soup..." The unemployed queued up in employment agencies, where workers were recruited for various jobs in Germany. Fathers and sons took leave of their loved ones, in the hope of finding gainful employment elsewhere.105

During the later war years the occupation forces eased their restrictions a bit. They distributed more food, facilitated the granting of various licenses, and so forth. The majority of the people, however, still found it hard to earn a living. Smuggling and speculation continued to flourish, despite the risk of punishment, enriching a small minority, but leaving the great masses impoverished.

"...Pantel's smuggling is done at the risk of life and limb. He hardly has a day's rest or a night's sleep; at times he has to go without food or drink..."106

In these hazardous undertakings, there were still some who made fortunes, with which they could buy new clothing for their families, new furniture, etc. Some of them operated on a full partnership in
Occasionally, the smugglers and speculators ran into difficult situations. Informers and extortioners would threaten trouble, unless they were bribed. Others stipulated that they be allowed to buy the smuggled products at ridiculously low prices to prevent their tattling to the authorities. The smugglers generally yielded. Though they were hardened individuals, and knew how to circumvent the law, they would rather not fight both police and informers. On returning from their ventures, they strove to dispose of their contraband as soon as possible. The longer the delay, the greater the risk of falling into the clutches of the law officers and the underworld characters. (When a smuggler wished to speculate, however, he still held back his wares from the market.) If demands for hush money proved too exorbitant, there were bloody clashes. The role of the informer, too, was one of the new occupations created by the war. There were Jews who earned their living by serving the German authorities in that capacity, and made no secret of it. In order to extort greater sums from the smugglers and speculators, the informers resorted to intimidation, to a reign of terror. The threatened victim would usually continue to "pay off".

"...sacks of flour were stored in Pantel's home... when the door swung open and two gendarmes entered...

'What's going on here?' Malinowski demanded. 'You are smuggling...?' Yukel added. 'Just be seated...! things could perhaps be adjusted...!' And Koppel is showing something into the other's hand...".

The populace was plagued by the informers, who stopped at nothing to extort money from their victims. The informers ruined many of the small-fry smugglers. Some of them insisted on a full partnership in
the illegal enterprises. Others demanded spoils in proportion to the value of the contraband.

"...Hurry, Reb Froyim--a porter might appear out of nowhere who will ask for carting the beans and onions more than the stuff is valued. Or he is likely to inform--and there will be the devil to pay..." 109

There was one group of informers who concentrated on the matter of granting various licenses. They worked hand in glove with the local German authorities. The German official utilized the informer's knowledge of the applicants. The informer's word usually held sway. If he frowned upon some applicant, the latter's chances were doomed. At best, some money had to grease the palm of the extortionist, in order to assure a favorable ruling.

"...Lippe Gershon's application has been rejected...
Some militiaman must have done him a favor...our fine Jews..." 110

Jews who, for one reason or another, wished to escape forced labor, had to grease the palm of the informer. Those who tried to do without the informer's service were likely to wind up in the forced labor gang.

"...Jewish militiamen go into a huddle: 'He won't get by us. As soon as the work project gets under way, all of them will be down at the bridge..." 111

Nevertheless, in this new world of persecution and outrage, of fear and hazard and good fortune, the will and the opportunity for enrichment still triumphed. The wheel of fortune held out temptation.

This is the way they rationalized:

"...One vat of mash of illicit liquor yields ten litres;
and one litre fetches a profit of ten markas, which add up to ten times ten—a round hundred. In the course of twenty hours one can ferment four vats; multiplied by four, you've got four hundred. All that can be earned in a mere twenty-four hours..."112

The smugglers and speculators hoped to continue functioning even after the Germans had to evacuate Poland. However, Poland, having regained its independence, brought these ventures to an end. The economic life of the country—including that of the Jews—turned to a new chapter.
POLAND RESURGENT
(1918 - 1939)

CHAPTER V

After having been divided for almost a century and a half between Austria, Germany, and Russia, Poland has regained her independence and became a nation once again after World War I.

The government's principal objective, second only to the restoration of political independence, was the reconstruction of economic life, a task which presented enormous difficulties since the Germans had left the country economically devastated. The government's task was further complicated because of the high appreciation of the Polish currency, which prevented stabilization of the prices of all kinds of goods. Unemployment was another serious and most urgent problem confronting the government. There were frequent demonstrations and riots of the unemployed and poverty-stricken masses; millions of the population.

At the same time, there was an artificial prosperity because of government control of all sorts of goods had brought about a great demand for them. Besides, as their main way of obtaining some measure of protection against the depreciating currency, the people were buying and keeping their money into goods. Another protective device was the instability of the currency was the conversion of savings and profits into foreign currency. With such conditions for a land, speculation and black market operations found a fertile ground.
After having been divided for almost a century and a half among Austria, Germany, and Russia, Poland has regained her independence and become a united nation once again after World War I.

The government's principal objective, second only to the consolidation of its political independence, was the restoration of its economic life, a task which presented enormous difficulties, since the Germans had left the country economically devastated, having paralyzed it through a ruthless exploitation of its wealth. The government's task was further complicated because of the rapid depreciation of the Polish currency, which prevented stabilization of the prices of all kinds of goods. Unemployment was another of the most urgent problems confronting the government. There were frequent demonstrations and riots of the unemployed and poverty was crushing vast numbers of the population.

At the same time, there was an artificial prosperity. The shortage of all sorts of goods had brought about a great demand for them. Besides, as their main way of obtaining some measure of protection against the depreciating currency, the people were trying to convert their money into goods. Another protective device against the instability of the currency was the conversion of savings and profits into foreign currency. With such conditions for a background, speculation and black market operations found a fertile
soil and brought on financial chaos.

The people seemed heedless of the fact that this state of affairs must result in a crisis which would, in turn, bring on bankruptcy and economic collapse.

The government's economic policy toward the Jews was a part of its general anti-Jewish policy, which was designed to eliminate the Jew as completely as possible from the economic life of the land, to the ultimate advantage of the Poles. However, despite the prevailing anti-Jewish atmosphere, the Jews were the country's most active group in economic enterprises.¹

a. Industry

Polish Jews had played a significant part in the development and progress of Poland's industry, prior to World War I. Jewish capital had been invested in every line of production, from huge plants to small industrial enterprises, and was represented in practically every undertaking.

The war had been a severe blow to Polish industry. Many factories were destroyed during the war or transported to Russia.² Furthermore, the Germans had ruined the country systematically through the confiscation of its technical equipment, raw materials, and so forth. "Ashkenazi's textile plant in Lodz had been put out of commission, Meyerbach's tannery in Godlbozhitz Godlbdezyc had been destroyed.³ The war brought utter ruin to certain industrialists. "Richter's giant plant in Lodz and Asher Podlasky's factory in Warsaw had been completely ruined."⁴ Industry had fared worse at the hands of the occupation forces than any other branch of the economy, thus reducing its productive capacity to the lowest level.
Yet, after the resurgence of the country, industry began to revive. Poland's economy had taken a new lease on life in which industry played a vital part. An economic prosperity began which facilitated quick reestablishment of their plants for a great number of manufacturers. Industrial products of all kinds proved very profitable during the first years of the post-war period. Merchants had to place their orders with the industrialists many months in advance in order to receive their supplies in time. Those factories which had somehow managed to reopen were working at full speed and even so they were not able to fulfill all their commitments.

The part played in this rehabilitation by Jewish enterprise was an outstanding one. Industrialists all over the country exerted themselves to the utmost in rebuilding their ruined factories. Almost every one of them had to overcome difficulties from the very start, such as finding capital, raw materials, machinery, and so on. In addition to these general obstacles, every manufacturer had his specific problems, such as finding skilled labor, and the necessary equipment. Yet nearly all of them, with minor exceptions, managed to surmount these difficulties in one way or another and succeeded in their undertakings. Among them were many who had returned to the country after having spent the war years outside of Poland.

"...Ashkenazi came back from Russia, where he had lost a fortune...without any capital...Zidener returned from a detention camp in Germany...to his devastated factory...Moritz Meyerbach...came
back to Godlbozhitz from Russia... with nothing but
an old derby hat... and empty pockets...." 6

In the textile industry of Lodz, the country's greatest textile
center, the participation of the Jews was predominant.

There were textile manufacturers who took full advantage of the
favorable economic situation. They exploited the speculative aspect
of business to the full and not only succeeded in restoring Lodz's
reputation as a manufacturing center, 4 but also in increasing it,
through the construction of new factories. They managed to procure
new materials, natural as well as synthetic, by one means or another,
as well as to overcome their temporary financial and technical
difficulties, and at last to put the plants in operation, and through
their zeal and tireless energy restored the city to the position it
had held, striving to make up the loss caused by the war. As a group,
the industrialists used their credit to the utmost, regardless of the
interest charges they had to pay. The devaluation of the currency
was another helpful factor. While the value of the marka was con-
stantly deteriorating, the price for textile goods was steadily in-
creasing. When the time for repayments came, the amount of a loan,
even plus the interest, would be reduced considerably in value. The
difference between the cost of credit and the manufactured goods was
so high that the manufacturer could operate at a minimum risk. In-
dustrialists who, by the end of the war, had been on the verge of
ruin suddenly became rich. Besides enlarging their plants, they
made investments in real estate. They lived in luxury and the pri-
vate life of many of them became the topic of common talk. 7

"...Shortly after the war, when there was a great
demand for textile products, Zidener succeeded
through ingenuity and cunning in easing himself into a partnership in another factory. It was no secret in Lodz that the Zidemans were prospering...

On the other hand, there were manufacturers who had been ruined by the war and never succeeded in regaining their positions. They were compelled either to sell their property, or to take into partnership people with capital.

There were industrialists who encountered great obstacles in surmounting their financial difficulties; such was the case with the big Jewish industrialist. The private banks were unable to provide sufficient credit to meet the big industrialists' requirements for long term loans at low interest.

The destruction of a big factory was of such dimensions that its restoration required great sums of money. Vast capital needed to buy cotton, wool, jute, etc. (obtainable only in foreign markets—mainly England), to replace the confiscated machinery and tools and to repair damages. This could only be obtained with the government's support. However, when a Jewish industrialist applied to the state bank for credit, he was refused the necessary funds because of the prevailing anti-Jewish policy.

"...It is difficult, very difficult...for the Polish Bank to give big credits... Despite our best intentions, we are not in a position to do this...the Country has no money..." Ashkenazi was told.

The aim of that policy was, if not to completely eliminate the Jews as industrialists immediately, at least to have a Pole partici-
pating in each Jewish enterprise in one form or another; the ultimate goal being that the Pole would take over Jewish wealth. The crushing of a Jewish enterprise seemed to be an important patriotic deed.

Although the Wojewoda, [governor of disrict] Paczewska, on every occasion told the...industrialists in the city that he would use all his power to rebuild the city, which the German occupation had laid waste...he had no intention of restoring Jewish Lodz...He wanted to transfer commerce and industry into Polish hands, and first and foremost, to erase Lodz, the Jewish Kingdom, and make of it a respectable Polish industrial center...

At the same time all credits went to the Polish landowners...and for the native Polish industry in process of being built...

The Pole was favored in the establishment of every new industrial enterprise. Special consideration and virtually unlimited credit were extended to non-Jewish organizations built up on a cooperative basis. In addition to the bank credits which such a business would obtain, there were subsidies by various nationalistic organizations interested in contributing to its further expansion.

Not only was the Pole granted the necessary funds, he also received government orders. Many a Jewish enterprise sought protection from economic discrimination by being registered under the name of a Pole. This Pole represented the Jewish enterprise wherever the appearance of the Jew might harm his business activities, while the Jew remained de facto the moving spirit, the financier and the principal one to bear all responsibilities involved. The Polish partner was chosen according to the size of the enterprise. The bigger
was, the more prominent a person was required. In order to obtain the means necessary for operating a huge plant, close connections with government offices and numerous other business contacts were needed. They could be acquired through the big landlords and nobles whose acquaintance in the desired circles was extensive enough to assure the success of one's efforts. Many such Polish nobles became partners to Jewish enterprises. They seized eagerly upon such opportunities since the partnership did not obligate them to anything but representation of the business firm as a genuinely Polish enterprise.\(^{12}\)

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\text{...a Pole was proposed (as a partner) to Ashkenazi for his factory. He would not bring in any money, but with his aristocratic name he would cover the ill-sounding "Ashkenazi". The factory would obtain large credits and orders...}^{13}
\]

The Jews endeavored to defend their economic position with every legitimate means within their power. They appealed to the government in Warsaw. They argued that restriction of credit would prevent them from opening their factories or, in some cases, would bring currently running factories to a standstill, thereby increasing unemployment. Their pleas, however, were in vain. In the government itself, many officials were against the Jews. The government entertained hopes that by refusing financial aid to a big Jewish industrialist it would compel him to sell out his plant to a Pole or, at least, to take one in as a partner, thus indirectly furthering the official policy of introducing Poles into established Jewish enterprises. Eventually, a new Polish enterprise would thus come into being. The impoverishment of the Jew and his expulsion from
all major economic positions did not present a troublesome problem to the government. Indeed, this was in line with its aims. The government was aware that the elimination of a large Jewish factory would entail, at a later date, the closing of many smaller Jewish enterprises, thereby gradually causing the economic downfall of the Jew.\textsuperscript{14}

...let him (Ashkenazi) choke on the ruined factory, be strangled without credit, and then the "Unity" co-operative will buy it from him for little money. After him, other Jews will move out of their palaces and they will go back to the sack...\textsuperscript{15}

However, the Jewish industrialist generally placed his hopes on foreign capital, especially those firms which had supplied Poland's industry with raw materials before the outbreak of World War I. He was ready to create a market for such imported raw materials. "They should merely help him with credits to restore the factory, and again he would buy raw materials for millions of sterling,"\textsuperscript{15a} said Ashkenazi. The foreign financiers and businessmen found in the plans submitted by the Jewish industrialists a realistic and sound economic approach, particularly since they had known these customers before World War I. Credit was extended not only on raw materials, but also on capital, machinery, and tools. Together with the raw materials, came shipments of the most modern machinery. Old plants were re-equipped with the newest technical inventions.

"...without a knowledge of English, with only the Lodz German (dialect), but with shrewdness and tact, business plans, blueprints...prospectuses, diagrams and excellent inventions, he (Ashkenazi) went to London...and Manchester...he reached the
bigwigs in the cotton industry and with his logic, argumentation and sober ideas he made such an impression on... them that he won them over to his side... Ashkenazi's factories worked at full steam...

Manufacturing in Lodz had become a tradition. Factories had been passed on from generation to generation. The older members of a family had taken the necessary steps to hand over the plant in due time to younger members. It was mainly in the textile centers of England that young Jewish men received their vocational education. Lodz's textile industry depended on the importing of new materials from England and it was convenient for the manufacturer to have his heirs, who would be the future industrialists educated there. Modernization and technical improvements followed on English patterns. The young industrialists brought back to Poland the experience they had acquired in producing fabrics of various designs and colors, quality and manipulation.

"... Zidener studied in Germany... he took over his father's plant... his great-grandfather had already manufactured drygoods... Szymon Visheviansky's oldest son was sitting [studying] in Manchester... Teytelbaum's son was studying in Oxford..."

Side by side with the prewar industrialists, whose names had been known for generations among Lodz's textile manufacturers, new ones emerged in the postwar period. Alongside such names as "Ashkenazi, Zidener, Frumkin, Levinson," in line with "Szymon Visheviansky, who had the finest and most respectable reputation among Lodz's industrialists," there were newcomers. Many of the
Jews of Lodz who had succeeded in their business undertakings during the war became, in the post-war period, owners of factories. The speculating type of business continued to prevail in the first years after the war. Having accumulated capital, these became nouveau riche partners to impoverished industrialists, or had bought whole plants from those who were unable to reestablish themselves. These parvenus represented a group in themselves. In fact, the old manufacturers refused at first to accept them as equal members in industrial circles. For the founders of Lodz's textile industry, these newly emerged industrialists represented a lower social group. Yet, in due time, they gradually took over the places of the old manufacturers.

"...Broder was also ruined. The old manufacturers don't exist any more. The "Bereks" take their place. He went in business during the war. He became rich, has (now) a factory and two houses."

The variety of textile goods manufactured in Lodz ranged from the most expensive materials to those of cheaper quality. Domestic and foreign woolen and cotton goods of the highest grades were marketed side by side with those produced for mass consumption at more reasonable prices. There were manufacturers who had specialized themselves in manufacturing a certain product. In some instances, it became a matter of inheritance, both the plant and its specialized aspects passing from generation to generation. Changes were introduced in accordance with the progress of technical improvements, and new qualities, designs, and colors added in response to the demand of the market.
"...Vishnevansky...produced cretonnes...in the millions of meters...Zidener...(produced) tablecloths for...Poland and other countries...Ashkenazi...produced linens...for a whole world...Wolowelski's...produced linens...for a whole world...Wolowelski's or Levinson's woolens were of high quality..."21

The manufacturer was the main promoter of a design or fashion. The more inventive one could be, the greater was the demand for his products. Manufacturing required the knowledge of the trade. One had to know the processes involved and to be able to participate also in the technical supervision of the plant.

"...I want to see a design which is going to be woven today. I am not satisfied with one thread (in the design) and I want to talk it over with the technical supervisor...(Zidener said to Olker)..."22

There were textile plants which did not have their own spinning, dyeing, or finishing divisions. They concentrated on weaving. The other necessary phases had been done for them by special factories.

In addition to clothing fabrics, Lodz was also the country's main producer of hosiery, knitting products, blankets, and many other similar products.

"...Olker's mother and brothers were great manufacturers of hosiery..."23

The related phases of textile production, such as finishing and dyeing, included a vast field of activities. Here, too, knowledge of the trade was an important factor in the development of one's plant. Aperture and dyeing required knowledge of chemistry.
Jewish plants of this kind, such as "Teytelbaum's were working twenty-four hours a day." At the same time, the manufacturer was required to give overall direction to his plant. A large textile enterprise took up a vast area, which was separated from the outside world by brick fences. Inside this territory were located warehouses, offices, workshops, etc. All phases of production were carried out inside these buildings. The plant had connections with the main railroad, which brought in every day all kinds of raw materials, mainly from foreign countries. The most modern elevators unloaded them from the freight cars and forwarded each kind to its respective division. Also arriving were dyes, machines, tools, etc. Huge, very modern spinning machines produced threads. Thousands of looms located in large spacious halls, produced the webs under the supervision of men and women. Then the webs were forwarded to the washing, dyeing and bleaching divisions. The air there was permanently saturated with steam coming out from the huge water tanks where the dry goods were washed and dyed. Hundreds of workers were employed in this division. From here, the goods were forwarded to big ovens for drying. The last process was to finish and prepare the goods for shipment to the markets. These vast enterprises had their own electric plants, with large kettles in huge buildings producing the necessary power. Thousands upon thousands of workers--spinners, weavers, technicians, dyers, supervisors, etc., streamed into their respective divisions every day to take up their positions. Along with them, there arrived hundreds of office workers, engineers, managers, directors, and others. Architects were always attached to the factories'
technical staffs in order to check on the old buildings and to erect new ones. The offices were full of merchants, salesmen, buyers, agents, and other businessmen.25

In Lodz, a manufacturer's wealth was measured by the number of looms which he had operating, workers and clerks he employed, and meters of textiles which he produced. In addition, the soundness of his economic position was established by his turnover in money or in goods, by his reports of expenses and income.

"...In Lodz...one should not dream. One season is on the other's heels. The...industrialist should be concerned with production..."26

However, the above mentioned items were not the sole criteria for determining who was a well-established industrialist. Neither the size of his plant, nor its yearly turnover were the sole virtues by which he was judged. His place was determined by his personal qualifications, by the extent of his credits, and by how he fulfilled his obligations. Decency and fairness in business deals, the quality of being trustworthy, and proper performance of moral and legal duties helped to define an industrialist's position.

People in Lodz exploited their "abilities for manufacturing."27 They represented a specific type of industrialist. Competition was not necessarily limited to outbidding one another's prices. Lodz's competitive race was also centered on a design, on a new product. The industrialist's main concern was the mode, the people's taste. It was in this competition that many industrialists strove to outdistance each other. "Should a manufacturer come out with an attractive design, many others are trying to bring out something similar."28 This brought one to make new investments, to search
"...I could not sleep at nights, because I was afraid that Prunikin was producing more than I, and that Abramovitch has more attractive designs..."29

Although every manufacturer individually set his prices according to his own calculations and manipulations, prices depended mainly upon what kind of raw materials were produced. There were manufacturers who mixed their web with threads produced from rags, and could then offer their products at a lower price. One who had used exclusively new materials came into the market with more expensive goods. There were, however, definite limits to these variations.

Lodz's slogan became "more looms, more production." The city represented a huge machine "which is always in motion."30

Now once again textile products from Lodz were being carried all over the country, to Warsaw, to the province, to cities and towns. Merchants from all over Poland came to Lodz to make their purchases there.31

A favorable economic situation prevailed in every line of industry. Manufacturing of leather was one of the most profitable businesses. Tannery owners made every possible attempt to reestablish their factories. Here, too, the German policy of confiscation and damage had played its role. The manufacturers had to overcome initial difficulties to set the factories in motion. They needed machinery, chemicals and raw materials, etc., which had to be imported. Furthermore, they needed capital. Each manufacturer attempted in his own way to master these difficulties. There were manufacturers who tried to renew their pre-war business connections
with foreign firms in order to obtain the necessary credits in goods and in money. Others obtained it from domestic sources, or had their own capital to start with. During the war, when manufacturing had become impossible, many tannery owners had turned to other business activities at which they had been sufficiently successful to accumulate enough capital for the post-war period.

"...Yitzhak Sharshartz bought a house... during the war... and a short time after the war... he reopened his tannery... Meyerbach received, on credit, machinery, raw materials from Danzig...." Soon they were again making big profits.

There were manufacturers who accelerated the increase of their wealth through falsified bankruptcy proceedings. After having been extended credits in substantial sums on the basis of their assets they would subsequently declare themselves bankrupt. Actually, in order to avoid court actions for repayment by the creditors, the "bankrupt" industrialists were resorting to a legal fiction. They had turned over their wealth to other persons—chiefly within their own family circles, and by such fictitious transfers had given up their ownership rights, to prove their inability to meet financial obligations. At the same time they remained unofficially the owners of their wealth. Unless the creditor could prove a premeditated bankruptcy, he could not undertake any legal judicial steps against the "bankrupt" debtor. For the creditor, there remained only the course of negotiating with the debtor in an effort to recover as much of his loan as possible. The repayments were usually reduced to a small fraction of the basic capital, while
the rest remained with the debtor. With a proper management of these funds, and without further interference from their creditors, such allegedly bankrupt industrialists could then develop their enterprises on a large scale.

Once the problem of capital was solved, the industrialist turned his efforts to an ever increasing expansion of the factory premises. To accommodate the newest machines and production, new buildings, new halls and warehouses were erected. Besides, from the profits gained, one made investments in other industrial enterprises, to increase one's riches.34

"...Moritz Meyerbach (from Godlbozhitz) owned a tannery...a mill...a sawmill...He employed...a hundred workers...yet became poor overnight...he premeditated a bankruptcy...he paid back 25% of a credit of about 300,000 glotys... (about $60,000)...."35

On the other hand, mismanagement might bring one to very real bankruptcy. There were people who built up a small industrial enterprise, but for various reasons were unsuccessful in expanding it. The most decisive reason usually was that expenses exceeded income. One's private salary and the increased costs of operating the business were higher than the profits which a small enterprise could give.36

An assumption of social elevation had its impact on factory operations. In their desire to keep up with the standards of the richer industrialists, the newly expanding small manufacturers increased their labor forces to an extent they could not afford; the work which the owner should have done was carried out
by hired workers. Moreover, these suddenly socially elevated men and women could also ill afford their attempts to keep up with the way of life of the wealthier classes, as the profits which should have been used to meet the business costs involved in the expansion of the enterprises were instead diverted to other purposes. To fill in the gap created thus, these over-ambitious small manufacturers had to get private loans which could only be obtained at high interest. Ultimately, they went bankrupt and had to return to the workshop as laborers.37

"...Tsadok Zaydman could derive a livelihood from his small tannery if he would do some manual work by himself. But this was contrary to his position...Tsadok had to return to Meyerbach as a manual worker..."38

There were many who failed, because of miscalculation, in their endeavors to build up a factory. Unforeseen difficulties might occur which the most experienced manufacturer could not anticipate. The establishment of some industries varied with the quality of the local raw materials and the amount of the resultant products after these raw materials had been processed. Thus, the erection of a lime burner, or a brick factory, depended mainly on the quality of the grounds destined for exploration. If the stone or clay brought out from those grounds still retained after transformation in the lime burner, a substantial part of its quantity and quality, then the industrialist could expect successful results from his endeavors. If, on the other hand, these dried out materials lost a considerable percentage of their original substance, then the undertaking was usually a failure. Such enterprises involved
a risk, and a period of experimentation. For these experiments and tests, one required capital, which was usually lacking. Yet for some people the desire to become a manufacturer was so great that they did not hesitate from any risky steps for the sake of achieving their goal. Also the time—the favorable economic conditions—encouraged them to go on with their plans. Once the bank credits became limited, such manufacturers also were compelled to look for private loans at high interest from professional money lenders just as the aforementioned unsuccessful expanders of small industries did. The investments far exceeded the possibilities of obtaining profits. Gradually, the new would-be manufacturer got further involved in a search for money. Next he looked for the necessary funds from non-professional money lenders, who entrusted their small savings to trustworthy persons and charged little interest. In most cases, the entanglement in financial difficulties, plus natural obstacles, eventually brought the aspiring entrepreneurs to bankruptcy and ruin. 39

"...From the sawmills, from the brick factories, from the lime burner, nothing came out... Shmul Rabinowitch left a half of his wealth with Fivel Shpilman, the professional money lender... he paid 15% interest monthly for every 100 dollars...." 40

The creditors could not believe that "for Rabinowitch, daily bread became a problem." 41

In the timber industry, which had an important place in the country's post-war economy, the Jews played a prominent part both in the development of domestic production, and the organization of international trade.
Poland was an exporter of timber. It was transported, mainly, through the country's waterways and by freight loadings to Danzig, whence it was forwarded to Germany and England. Buyers from London and Berlin frequently visited Jewish sawmills, where transactions amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars were concluded. Many an industrialist with an enterprising spirit and a knowledge of the trade attained remarkable achievements in the timber industry. The great demands of the domestic market also contributed heavily to their successful efforts. Endeavors were focused primarily on establishing sawmills, usually in the country's wooded areas. To have the raw material—timber—close to the factory was a great advantage for the industrialist.

The establishment of a sawmill brought a change to the surrounding area and adjacent villages. In place of vast areas of forest, new settlements came into being. The Jews were employed in buying wooded areas, they were experts in measuring, in estimating the quality of the trees. They were bookkeepers, and top supervisors like "Yitzehak Semyaticher". They were the experts in assigning timber for export.43

...every Saturday evening many Jews who are employed by Nemzar are gathering in his office...they are coming to report on the week's accomplished work...one went to Warsaw...the other to Siedloe.... 44

"The non-Jews were forest-keepers, woodcutters, and similar types of workmen. They came every Sunday...for a drink..."45 Peasants of the adjacent villages found employment in the clearing up of wooded areas and in the transportation of timber from the forest to the sawmills.
The raw materials—the forests—were predominantly in the hands of the big landowners, or the government, with whom the Jewish timber industrialists had to come in contact. Their owners or administrative officers, taking advantage of their positions, demanded extravagant prices. "Branicki wanted from Nemzar $100,000 for a small area of forest." While such steps were actuated partly by business considerations, they also carried an anti-Jewish aspect; namely, to get the most money possible out of the Jews. Along with well-known timber industrialists, new ones came into being.

Although the atmosphere inimical to the Jew prevailed, they were not deterred from expanding their activities. It is true that there were moments when they sensed the insecurity of their existence in Poland. "There is no solid ground under my feet," complained Nemzar. For some Jews, it became a matter of principle whether or not to remain in the country: "I want to leave the country," said Nemzar, who eventually achieved his aim. So did many others. But the great majority of the Jews remained in Poland. They went on with their business activities, with all its ups and downs. Craftsmen or merchants often became industrialists. A craftsman developed his workshop gradually into a factory. A merchant, through investing money in a partnership, became an industrialist.

Jewish industrialists made investments on various scales—large, intermediate, and small—each according to his means and what was available in the locale. In Lodz, Jews concentrated chiefly on textile manufacturing; the timber industry, naturally, was predominant in the country's most wooded areas, there was a sugar refinery near Ployn, one of the country's agricultural regions.
The prevailing prosperity was not, however, considered by many as a sign of a sound economy. There were industrialists who appraised the situation as disastrous and detrimental for the country. They became apprehensive about it. They knew that "the day of repayment will come, and there will not be anything to pay with." The industrialists' financial obligations to foreign creditors was the main reason for the subsequent downfall of many of them. The debts had to be repaid in foreign currency, which was scarce. The valueless Polish "marka" was not accepted by the foreign creditors in payment for raw materials and machinery delivered. According to prior agreements, the bills had to be paid in pounds sterling. The official legal source for foreign currency was the government banks, which were often unable to furnish it.

...He, Ashkenazi, saw that his transaction with the English, which he had achieved through a master plan, had crumbled to dust. The logical and sensible calculations became senseless in that disastrous time...

Responsible industrialists, especially the big ones, found themselves in a precarious situation. Their plans were built on a solid basis, and calculations were similar to those of the prewar economy. Production and consumption, buying and selling prices were determined in terms of a sound and stabilized economic situation. They now felt responsible for their tremendous financial obligations but could see no way out. The logical solution of closing down one's factory was not always feasible. For one thing, the workers' situation was also far from good and would further deteriorate if
unemployment increased. Furthermore, for a Jewish industrialist,  
is Jewishness made his situation more precarious. The thousands  
of workers he employed could not be laid off, because he would  
then be attacked by Polish trade unions, and the anti-Semitic  
press as the Jewish exploiter of Polish workers. Besides, he could  
not expect any help from the government. The local police authorities  
would not protect him personally, or his plant, should the workers  
be incited to riots and demonstrations. The central government  
would take over his plant, or it would hand it over to the Poles,  
should he decide to close it. It is true that this was against the  
law, which, at least theoretically, protected every citizen, re-  
gardless of his creed. But expropriation of a Jewish industrial  
business was in line with the government's anti-Jewish economic  
policy. Once the plant came under governmental administration, the  
Jewish owner could be removed and a Pole could take over the Jewish  
property. The only way out of the situation was to let things run  
according to the will of the storming waves," which actually was  
against many an industrialist's convictions. They had not realized  
that these abnormal conditions would last so long a time and, con-  
sequently, destroy their sober business ideas. What was most puzzling  
for them was the success of people who had never been engaged in  
manufacturing before, yet now emerged as Łódź's foremost industrial-  
ists and wealthy class.  

"...Only those who built on sand, the unscrupulous,  
the crafty and scheming, will survive the deluge...  
the solid and reputable industrialists, who built  
on a sound economic basis, will deteriorate and  
collapse..."
The steady rise of Poland's industry came to a halt with the enactment of the Grobski laws. Now the means of production suddenly came to a standstill; and the unlimited market hitherto created by artificial prosperity suddenly shrunk and dwindled.

Foreign financiers clamored for payment due on the raw materials, such as cotton and wool, that they had delivered to the Lodz manufacturers. The latter still possessed no foreign currency; and the Polish medium of exchange (the marka) remained unacceptable abroad. Furthermore, with the populace refraining from purchasing any commodities, the manufacturers hardly obtained any orders.

The upshot of the new turn of affairs was that many a manufacturer was deprived of sufficient means to continue production. He found himself unable to meet his various obligations, to pay wages and to meet current expenses. He had to default and shut down.

To avoid bankruptcy and total collapse, some manufacturers made every effort to retain at least a part of their assets, with a view to re-establishing their business at some future date. For not always did a manufacturer's liabilities exceed the par value of his resources—the latter, incidentally, legally attachable by his creditors. Those who were not so heavily indebted were only temporarily hampered by the sudden financial slump that overwhelmed the country. It was fairly certain that with the first auspicious turn in the national economy these industrialists would once again be in the saddle and be in the forefront. They therefore tried to meet their obligations to the best of their ability. Generally, there were mutual concessions, the debtor paying a part of the debt, with the remainder either being annulled, or its due date
extended, pending the advent of better times. With the help of lawyers and arbitrators, they endeavored to strike a happy medium. The manufacturers were anxious to avoid "death." 53 

"...for how and when does a manufacturer succumb (die)? When he goes bankrupt..." 54 

There were manufacturers chiefly men of the old established category, who were eager to live up to their promises, even if it meant their own financial ruin. In order to maintain their high reputations, they endeavored to meet all their obligations with spot cash. They, too, looked forward to a favorable turn in the national economy, and made all possible sacrifices in order to preserve their prestige in the business world. 55

The only obligation they could not circumvent was that of Federal taxes. In cases involving delinquent taxes, the authorities would requisition all valuable assets pertaining to a factory, such as: machine equipment, tools, raw materials and finished products. And when the aforementioned failed to cover the liability, the government "would confiscate the gold watches and the necklaces from the women..." 56

On the other hand, there were manufacturers who "made hay while the sun shone" at the great fair... 57 Those were, by and large, parvenus, nouveau riche: 

"...Poor men, clerks...witless yet cunning, who had feathered their nests during the days of turmoil— who resorted to snatching sharp practice, borrowing and amassed fortunes..." 58
These traders had had a run of luck in the years gone by; they had turned the period of feverish speculation to good account and filled their pockets. "The solid, astute merchants, the erstwhile masters of the situation...who had wended to build a solid foundation--now failed ignominiously... Whereas, a scatterbrain, a dullard, scored a success..." 59 In a certain sense, the demoralizing effect of war and inflation--the lack of a sense of responsibility in regard to ethical business laws--exerted an influence on the nouveau riche. Just as a pledge on a business transaction was loose, not binding during that hectic period, just so had the upstart manufacturers obtained merchandise on credit, wherever the opportunity presented itself. Then all sorts of spurious legal technicalities were resorted to for the evasion of reimbursement to creditors.

Such manufacturers were held responsible, along with their business establishments, for the credits extended to them. As long as the factory was registered in the name of the debtor, he bore solid responsibility. In order to disclaim such responsibility, the schemer also contrived, upon legal advice, to transfer title of all their assets to some kinsman, in most instances their wives as had earlier entrepreneurs staging false bankruptcies. With such subterfuges, one could ward off the creditors' claims. The moment title of one's property had been transferred to another person, the creditor was forced to accept a fraction of the original sum due him. At the same time, the insolvent manufacturer reverted--though unofficially--to former ownership.

Meanwhile, quite a few who remained in possession of substantial assets migrated from Poland, in most instances to Palestine, planning to establish workshops and venture into business there. But proportionally they were a mere handful. The majority of
manufacturers remained in Poland, striving to carry on under the new restrictions.

When the "Grabski crisis" was over, and prosperous times returned once again, Jewish manufacturers also resumed their activity. Once again they played an important role in the development of Poland's industry. Some of them forged ahead and prospered; others remained at a standstill; and still others suffered adversity.

"...Fusbank is once more in possession of the factory, houses, considerable cash, promissory notes, negotiable instruments..." at a time when "Kalman Kabaker, who had substantial wealth, has now been reduced to the status of a minor manufacturer... He was involved in a good deal of litigation that consumed some of his wealth."[61]

In the years preceding World War II the anti-Jewish policy of the government tended to eliminate the Jewish manufacturer from Poland's economic life. The seeds of the economic discrimination that had been planted at the time Poland regained its independence, now began to bear full fruit. Polish establishments were now on the increase, especially those based upon a cooperative framework, initiated during the first decades of the country's independence. Jewish manufacturers were barred from negotiating contracts with the government. In the ensuing competition the Polish manufacturer always beat his Jewish rival.

Nevertheless, the Jews continued to be the main bulwark of the medium and light industries, until the advent of World War II. It was Hitler who wiped out the existence of the Jewish manufacturer in Poland.
b. COMMERCE

The restrictions imposed by the occupying forces upon the economy of the country affected commerce to a lesser degree than industry. Commercial activities had still been carried on during the war years, although reduced in the main to smuggling and speculation. Those who succeeded in these illegal undertakings had accumulated considerable wealth both in money and in goods.

As a result of this, at the end of the war, groups of merchants having the necessary capital and merchandise to step into the economic vacuum created by the war. They were the first to re-establish old stores or to open new ones and thus become an immediate source of supply for the consumer who, after years of curtailed production and shortage of all kinds of industrial products began to make extensive purchases. The accumulation of goods the value of which had now skyrocketed, enabled many of these merchants to exploit the economic situation more extensively. They re-established themselves more rapidly than other traders, who had to exert themselves to the utmost in order to regain their positions.

"...those with considerable inventory are well-off...

Felix Rosenstein, who had managed to establish a drug store during the war, is not doing at all badly... Goldfeld is about to liquidate his small store and will build a big wholesale plant..."
thus securing for themselves the first deliveries of goods, or they bought up an industrialist's entire output for a specified period. In the course of the transactions these traders became the sole distributors of certain products, which in turn strengthened their economic position, since those products could be obtained only through them.

"...They (Levin and Goldfeld) are talking of forming a partnership to buy up the entire yearly output of chicory from the Bernard factory..."3

Commerce was in general more attractive than industrial production—in the beginning of the post-war period. Opening a store was preferable to building or re-establishing a factory, since it required less effort; a store was not dependent on those raw materials and technical equipment, without which no factory can operate. All the trader required was merely a place where he could display his merchandise, something which did not even necessarily require the ownership of a business establishment. Many a merchant carried on his business from his private home or by renting some space.3a

The trader's main concern was to find sources of supply. Prices fluctuated from day to day, owing to the increasing exchange rate of the dollar and the values of the merchandise.4 Buying at prices at least no higher than yesterday's was considered good work, since any delay in buying brought dimmer prospects of a reasonable purchase. The trader's primary aim was to build up his permanent inventory.5

"...Goldfeld is racking his brain, as to where he could buy some goods...he regrets having sold at the same price today as prevailed the previous day."5
Consumption was by no means limited to items of primary need. As hitherto mentioned, purchases were also made in order to convert the depreciating currency into goods, as the only assurance against losses caused by devaluation. In addition to that, people from other classes were attracted to try their luck in trading, even though they did not have business experience, or any knowledge of merchandise. The only element in favor of these tyros was the speculative temperament. A spirit of enterprise, and two or three lucky breaks contributed greatly to one's success.

If one were fortunate in buying fairly cheaply, and keeping the merchandise until it reached its peak price, the profits were spectacularly beyond normal, and led to the creation of newly-baked "millionaires". The first successful steps would lead to many others and the experience gained through these deals was of great help to the speculators in their subsequent transactions, until they became well known on the black market as established and well-heeled operators. This in turn attracted all sorts of middle-men and go-betweens, who had a finger in everything from silks to sardines, and were interested in turning a quick penny. The wholesale speculators, always ready to make a deal, found these pilot-fish of commerce useful. The intermediaries knew the sources of supply; they could save the wholesaler the trouble of searching after goods. Furthermore, they were adepts at locating certain merchandise which was un procurable even on the black market. Even if an occasional transaction did not show an immediate big profit, it still paid the big operator to buy through the petty broker, since things would even up in the end through the profits from...
Moreover, the ability of the big-time operators to pay spot cash without delay, was most attractive to the middle-men. It was almost inevitable, for a number of the speculators to corner the market on certain goods which in turn greatly contributed to their financial rise.

"...Fortunes were made overnight. The speculators ranged from sextons and cantors to ritual slaughterers and even an operatic singer."  

Naturally, the traders often switched their lines; there were some who dealt in a different product from day to day, depending entirely on what offered the most gain. If sugar, for instance, promised to net a greater profit than textiles, they would switch to sugar. This flexibility brought about, in most cases, a rapid rise on the economic ladder. Nissel, the poultry dealer of yesterday, is a rich grain baron today. On the other hand, there were traders and shopkeepers who stuck to the same line and proved just as successful as the others. There were also merchants who sought every possible excuse to keep their shops closed; the uncertainty of being able to replace goods sold was one of the main reasons for this avoidance of buyers. The owner of goods was reluctant to part from them, even if the buyer offered fabulous prices. "By not selling Naya Fessye became even richer."  On the other hand, there were merchants who preferred a great turnover to having goods pile up on their shelves. Still others wanted to sell just enough to cover their business and personal expenses.

Deals were done both for cash and on credit. Credit was extended on the basis of promissory notes, known as veksels, which considerably helped the buyer's chances of becoming rich, since
the monetary depreciation soon reduced the original indebtedness to an insignificant sum. "Never ever went wrong by buying through promissory notes and selling for cash." Commodities were of the widest variety, including haberdashery and other clothing, fabrics, hardware, groceries to shoes, stationery, pharmaceuticals, and many other items.

Gesia Street in Warsaw and Piotrkowska and Nowomiejska streets in Lodz were all textile centers; almost all the stores there were in Jewish hands. The goods offered for sale came not only from Lodz, but also from all over Poland, and ranged from the most expensive woolens, cottons, and so forth, to materials much lower both in quality and price. In addition to the shops, every other available bit of space was devoted to the textile trade, both retail and wholesale. The jobbers, thanks to their direct connections with the manufacturers, were able to maintain permanent and ample stocks, while the advance payments they made to the manufacturers ensured prompt deliveries. Dry goods dealers from all over the country came to Warsaw and Lodz for merchandise.

On Piotrkowska and Gesia Streets one could see Jews from such Galician cities as Tarnow, Lwow, Cracow; from other places in the eastern part of the country, like Vilno, Grodno, Pinsk; from small towns, such as Grodzisk and Wysoko-Mazowieck, from Lublin, etc. Traveling by train for a Jew was, at that time, connected with being exposed to physical assaults by Polish hooligans. Yet the trip, no matter how long and risky it was, had to be undertaken. Commerce, with all its hardships, was the only income for many.

Traveling was mostly done during the night for two reasons: first to save hotel expenses, secondly to use time more efficiently, leaving
the day for business transactions. During the day out-of-town merchants stayed at a restaurant or in the boarding-house room where they had their luggage or packages, and where they eventually rested. The business schedule was planned so that they could return home the next night.12

Transactions went on far beyond the normal working hours. Not only was the owner himself engaged in work in the late evening, but the employees also had to work overtime to attend to incoming orders from customers, making their purchases directly or through agents. These streets became the unofficial bourse where the sale prices of textiles were determined, to be taken into account by the textile dealers all over the country, who were the main supply source for retailers. The textile dealers on Gesia and Piotrkowska Streets and elsewhere were all well off. In fact, the textile dealer became a symbol of the rapid economic rise one could achieve during periods of inflation.13

The grocery trade was also a profitable business. There were wholesale merchants who, in addition to their shops, had to have warehouses for the storage of their supplies. Minor items which did not take up much space were stowed away in every available place—even in the shopkeepers' private homes. The wholesale merchants served not only the local retail stores, but also the Polish cooperatives and stores in adjacent small towns. In the grocery trade, the problem of purchasing supplies was more complicated than for textiles. Whereas, for the latter there were industrial and commercial centers where the merchant would turn for goods, such was not the case for foodstuffs. The supply sources for domestic articles were
scattered all over the country. Every region of the country offered different products. On imported articles, delays in deliveries brought hardships to purchasers. It often happened that the articles most needed had been bought up by private speculators, non-professional merchants as it were, who would hold back their private store of some item until that particular article became acute enough to enable them to market it at the highest possible price.

This trading seemed to go on endlessly, with only occasional slowdowns of more limited purchasing, which usually occurred after a holiday, for which excessive supplies had been bought in advance. This brought about a temporary recess. "Even on the black market was quiet."

These slowdowns were generally followed by a business boom in which the stores were again heavily visited by buyers, with even the shopkeepers' private homes, which were often attached to their stores, crowded by customers waiting their turn to get into the store. The price increases which ordinarily accompanied these booms did not stop people from buying. Customers would outbid each other to obtain merchandise. They had already found out that every purchase brought its profit to them, too.

Many people invested their accumulated wealth in such things as real estate, jewelry, or foreign exchange. "On account of his dealings in foreign currency, Goldfeld (the wholesale merchant) comes often on the black market." People who had never owned any property before now became owners of houses, farms, etc. Brokers and agents found a new field of activities. They were frequent visitors in the homes of the wealthy to negotiate the purchase of houses, farms, lots, etc.
The wealth of the people made itself noticeable also in private life. It became almost a route for the rich to refurbish their homes and to equip them with luxury items. On the streets and social gatherings, in private and in public, people demonstrated their wealth, with expensive attire or ostentations exhibition of special personal items. In this women were more conspicuous than men. It became a matter of good taste to show off items bought in the country's most expensive stores, or in foreign countries. 18

"...Goldfeld...furnished his dining room with a new iron safe...packed with jewelry, bonds, and money... The daughters of the speculators are parading in the streets in (expensive) fur coats..." 19

The period of prosperity brought economic comfort for large segments of the population who had suffered during the war years. They hastened to do now the many things previously postponed because of the war. Now, in the "time of frenzy", restoration of houses and homes, marriages and other events of human comfort and delight increased, and the birth rate went up. People spent money without considering future earning possibilities. They did not limit their expenditures, as long as "the paper chain remained intact", as long as the value of the currency was in a state of decline. They were aware that this false prosperity could not go on indefinitely, and were afraid to see it end.

On the other hand, there were merchants who could not adjust themselves to the prevailing conditions and therefore were unable
exploit the opportunities offered by the post-war boom. These merchants, to a certain degree, did not have the necessary predisposition or even the ability to take risks, to speculate, or to deal in black marketing. The shortages of the times necessitated constant searching for goods, which consequently brought strong competition among purchasers. Outbidding one another in prices, quite often to an excessive degree, became a normal way of buying. The more conservative previously established merchants, however, had been accustomed to receiving their supplies of merchandise through regular advance orders, and buying and selling with the limits of accepted standards in business competition. They had built their enterprises on the basis of normal business transactions rather than on occasional ups and downs. Business as it was conceived in the present period was something foreign to their conceptions. They could not act as the speculators and black marketeers did. Furthermore, they were not left immediately without any means and had no need of turning to speculation. As long as they were able to do so, they drew on their reserve of capital, delaying their activities on the market until ultimately they were dislocated from their positions and replaced by newcomers who had been forced by circumstances to look for some kind of income because they had never had an established business, or resources from which to draw a living. Now, when black marketing and speculation offered the best opportunities, it was these newcomers who were the first to explore these paths, while many of the old reputable merchants had to give up their businesses.21
"...In grief and sadness, the once rich merchant and honest business spent his best years. He could not adjust himself to the type of business conducted like a robbery or a war." 22

Lack of vocational training, and the fact that they had never been employees, made it more difficult for these newly displaced people now. As soon as their reserves came to an end, they were confronted with hunger and misery. Some had to fall back on public charity, or help from family members and outsiders. Others tried to deal in every possible item to earn a living.

"...Bendet became a middleman because the time is now abnormal..." 23

The situation of these people was the more unfortunate because it involved a sudden transfer from a high to a low standard of living, from wealth to poverty.

The enactment of the Grabski fiscal legislation put an end to the economic prosperity. The withdrawal from circulation of the marka and the introduction of the new stabilized unit of currency, the zloty, along with other revisions of the fiscal system detailed in the new laws brought a general slowdown in business and deterioration of the country's economy, which ultimately resulted in a crisis.

"...Killstein has been going to the bank with packs of money...for exchange... There came a hail of taxes, such as there had not been until now... they were extracted mercilessly... The situation became worse..." 24
The new currency brought about the stabilization of prices. The piling up of merchandise for speculation had stopped. "All kinds of goods hidden hitherto by speculators came into the open for sale; but there were few buyers..." The consumer was eager to retain cash, and therefore he limited his purchases to the most needed items. Besides, people refrained from buying now because they had ample supplies left over from their previous wild spending sprees. Now the merchants' main concern was how to obtain cash. Whereas they had restricted their sales in the preceding period, they were most eager to sell now--during the stabilization.

Furthermore, the burden of the taxes imposed now drained most of the merchants' cash income. They could hardly cover their obligations and debts, let alone meet the payments of exorbitant taxes. The high taxation permanently indebted almost every merchant and shopkeeper to the revenue authorities because they were never able to discharge their obligations in full.

"...A Jew whose store does not amount to one hundred złotys should have to pay a few hundred złoty taxes..." Taxes were assessed by special committees consisting of the employees from the revenue department and representatives of taxpayers. Each line of business sent its representatives to these committees. These representatives' task was to defend the taxpayer so that he should not be excessively assessed and should be treated fairly.

Jewish members of these committees had to perform a difficult task. Defense of the Jewish taxpayer usually met with many objections from the tax inspector.
The taxpayer representatives pleaded for favorable consideration of their clients' paying abilities, but their efforts were in vain. Unless the inspector or some other committee member had any special reason to be concerned about that taxpayer's plight, he was always excessively assessed. This was in line with the government's usual anti-Jewish policy. But there was also the fact that for personal reasons such Jewish tax committee members as "Moritz Meyerbach, Feivele Shipillman, and Yehiel Honigman" did not insist too much on general reductions at the committees' hearings. They were apprehensive lest the great number of applications of the impoverished small merchants and shopkeepers, whose taxes rated from "a hundred to two hundred zloty", should not gain priority over theirs—the members' own applications. The taxes of the latter amounted to considerable sums. Actually, however, even if these wealthier Jews were to pay their huge taxes, it would not have had such a disastrous effect on their economic positions as would the payment of a hundred or two hundred zloty for a small merchant. For the latter, the assessed taxes amounted to, and sometimes exceeded, their entire assets, while the taxes assessed against the rich constituted only a small fraction of their wealth. Ultimately "most of the victims were poor," while the inspector of revenue considered carefully the applications for tax reductions of such men as the rich druggist, "Isidor Zonenhev, the industrialist, Moritz Meyerbach, Dimantshtin, Luzer Kohn," and similar important individuals included in members' lists in order to deflect attention from the inclusion of their own names. Sometimes a committee member's ill will against a neighbor brought the latter closer to
economic collapse. For such purposes, it sufficed for a committee member to merely give tacit approval to the amount of taxes suggested by the inspector without raising any objections or making any reservations. On the other hand, these members would extract from the inspector the most favorable consideration of their own applications for postponement of payments.\(^{27}\)

"...Yehiel Honigman advised Berl"Kashe-macher" on how to defend his case at a committee hearing...

while at the same time he brought Menashe, the hardware merchant, to ruin..."\(^{28}\)

Sometimes excessive assessments were made as a result of deliberate false information given by informers to the revenue authorities about someone's economic status, his paying abilities, and business turnover. There were Jews who for the price of certain privileges granted them by local state or city authorities, denounced many Jewish merchants before the government assessment committees. (These informers would withhold their denunciations for bribery paid by the victims). In "Godlbozhitz, Moshke Abisha's", who became the president of the local Jewish community, was also an informer for the revenue authorities. The denunciations were naturally exaggerated. The retail merchant was accused of having dealt in wholesale transactions; the wholesale dealer was accused of deals which he had never made.\(^{29}\)

"...Moshke told the revenue inspector that Moshe Katz bought two freight car loadings of wheat, that Abish Anker bought a hundred barrels of herring, that Finkelkraut is doing business..."
without having obtained a business license... that the firm trading as 'Tzirl Rottenberg' actually belongs to Isaac Kalushiner, and that his business turnover reached the sum of 200,000 zlotys..."30

In the long run, these denunciations led to the ruin of many merchants.

A further blow to the merchants' economic position was the new legislation about business licenses. According to the new requirements, dealers in certain kinds of goods had to have licenses of a higher category than hitherto, which ultimately implied higher taxation. "There are rumors that those in the grocery business will need a license of second category."32 Many merchants faced the problem of whether to apply for a license at all, because the taxes had already drained many a merchant financially. They were particularly apprehensive about obtaining a new license because the time was when "business was at a standstill."33 What one expected was a relief from the burden of taxation, rather than further increases. The general opinion was that "if it would require a license of the third category, half of the stores would have to shut down."34 However, since the stores remained the only hope for a livelihood, licenses had to be obtained. One could not officially conduct any business activities without a license, regardless of his financial status or business turnover. The difficulties mounted because of the short period of time given to obtain these licenses before a certain date.35 When the deadline came everyone strove to apply for a license and at the same time try to obtain one in a lower paying category. The people entertained hopes that times might change and the economic situation might improve. They preferred
to put up with the present difficulties for merchants rather than
close their stores and remain without any income at all.

In "Ployne" the number of persons applying for lower tax-
paying classifications was high.

"...The waiting room of Hench the factotum is
crowded with bearded Jews..."37

The applications were filed with the "Izba Skarbowa" In-
ternal Revenue Division. The applicants pleaded that they were
small merchants, with a very limited business now that consumer
demand had fallen off. Furthermore, they described their situ-
ation as one that would continue to deteriorate rather than improve,
and pointed out that the new business tax classifications would
further undermine their economic positions. To relieve themselves
of the burden of delinquent taxes, some merchants did not apply
for licenses in their own names. Accordingly, some shopkeepers
submitted applications under the names of their wives. Thus, also,
these merchants hoped to obtain the lower taxpaying classification
available for those whose names showed no evidence that they had
ever been in any business before.38

The economic decline of many a merchant was caused by the
refusal of the revenue office to issue to that individual a license
in a lower tax category.39

Merchants who had developed wholesale enter-
prises faced economic collapse. The capital which they had in-
vested was now badly needed to maintain their positions and help
them weather the current depression. Their volume of trade during
the previous period of inflation had been due to their competitive
power in prices and the variety of goods which they carried. Now, with the introduction of the new currency, these advantages had lost their importance. Consumers now did not necessarily have to buy from these particular storekeepers any more. The abundance of goods and stabilized prices gave customers a chance to shop around more and buy wherever it suited their fancy.

The shopkeepers made every effort to attract the customer, but with little success. In spite of reduced prices and high quality merchandise, buyers appeared infrequently.40

"...with the market stabilized for the time being, the retailer was no longer dependent on the Goldfeld firm. There were limitless supplies on hand..."41

The depression that now enveloped the country affected the city of Lodz most of all. Just as in the period of inflation Lodz had been one of the leading commercial centers utilizing favorable economic conditions, now it was the first to suffer from the ensuing depression. Lodz, the erstwhile foremost manufacturing center for textiles, now witnessed its market dwindling. The majority of its businessmen, whose warehouses were bulging with the great stocks they had regarded as so much more valuable than the fluctuating currency, were now confronted with catastrophe. The prosperity that had gone on for years suddenly came to a halt. The streets of Piotrkowska and Nowamiejske, heretofore teeming with merchants and middlemen of all sorts, were now deserted. The small town trader, likewise hard hit by the slump, no longer came to Lodz for fresh supplies. He tried to make the best of his available business, a shopkeeper would close only the front entrance...
nager stocks. No one thought of procuring new merchandise. The standstill in the economic life drove shopkeepers and traders, here and there, to bankruptcy. "Numerous protests poured in from Galicia", where the wholesale dealers were the first to feel the blow.

Wholesalers everywhere who always had to extend credit sustained great monetary losses, but despite their dwindling assets, made every effort to settle debts, pay taxes, and carry on. However, the business slump at long last undermined this category as well. Leading merchants were driven to the wall and became insolvent.

The retail shops that formerly did a thriving business, no longer yielded a livelihood now. "One could not earn a groschen in the town." Shopkeepers began to dismiss their employees because there was not enough work for both. One after another closed up entirely for lack of business, or else was forced to shut down by the tax collector.

Gezia Street in Warsaw was as tumultuous as usual, these days, but the people in the street were not looking for any merchandise. Middlemen who had earned their livelihood through soliciting trade for the manufacturer or wholesaler, were now impoverished. In a few places, such as Simchah Tuchverger's shop, the shelves were jammed with supplies—because of the decline in sales. Retailers could not pay their debts to the wholesalers. They took counsel on how to keep afloat during this critical period. Gezia merchants like "Eliezer Krengel, Meyer Zidener and Yakov Reif" could foresee their gradual downfall.

When the hour arrived for the police to padlock his place of business, a shopkeeper would close only the front entrance—
to avoid legal penalties—but leave his rear door open, risking arrest because he was still so anxious to have customers come in. When a prospective buyer did appear on the street, several stores vied for his patronage. The would-be purchaser, naturally, turned this rivalry to his own account. Retailers would sell at ridiculously low prices—to get a little cash.45

The same situation prevailed in the smaller cities and townships. The eagerness for customers was, to a certain extent, keener in the towns of "Ployne, Smollin, Tzintzimin and Bozhevolle," than in the metropolis. Provincial traders in general had always lacked capital, and their patrons, the peasants, were of the low-income group, interested in transactions for paltry sums. During the current financial slump, peasants likewise discontinued all purchases. The small shopkeeper lacked the financial reserves to tide him over a difficult period. The meager resources of individual traders dwindled before long, and the over-all decline of commerce proceeded at a rapid pace. Bankruptcies and related litigations now played havoc with the economic life of the Jews in the provinces. "The internal revenue officers confiscated Fevishe's household belongings...the latter will be sold at public auction the following Wednesday. And Pinchos Itzik Leib's flour mill will be auctioned off on Friday because of delinquent taxes."46

Thus the changes in the economic situation brought great segments of merchants and storekeepers to economic ruin. Many committed suicide;47 others left the country. The great majority, however, had remained and continued to struggle for their existence.
"Wherever you go, and wherever you stay, there are only troubles."

Businessmen who had stopped paying their bills tried to keep this fact secret as long as possible, hoping that somehow they would be able to meet future obligations, and knowing that if their present indebtedness became known, all credit sources would be closed to them, destroying their hopes of being able to carry on.

"...Wolf Yablonka and Yona Bocher...learned accidentally that Moshe Yosef...and Shmul Shemion had defaulted on their payments."

The downfall of someone who had a reputation for being trustworthy became a warning sign for many others. Those who still remained in business were eager to learn the specific reasons behind the latest collapse, so that they could avoid a similar fate.

"...If Moshe Yosef has also stopped payment...then the world must be coming to an end... To whom else can you trust a couple of złoty on interest?..."

Creditors were also interested in the reasons behind any defaulting so that they would know what repayment arrangements might still be made. There were merchants who wanted to come to some terms with their creditors in order to keep going. If compromise could be offered, it was in most cases.

Merchants who managed to pay off part of their debts were able to continue their business, however greatly reduced in scope, paying creditors a certain percentage of what was due. Apparently these merchants somehow retained some cash after having declared themselves bankrupt; others were forced by creditors to sell their real estate in order to pay off their debts.
"...The enriched butchers, who had become cattle dealers, now returned to the butcher's block...

Avremel Pessye's, the well-known dry-goods merchant, had gone bankrupt. Hersch Moishe Hayim's, the fancy-goods merchant, is once again trying to eke out a living by teaching."51

The stopping of debt payments not only brought ruin to the bankrupt person, but also to many others. Often it affected professional money lenders, or private persons who had lent their savings to the merchant for higher interest than banks paid. Many of these people had lent all the cash they possessed, money saved for dowries, for retirement and similar purposes. The total amount of these savings was usually a small sum of a few hundred zloty, but the "poor widow" or the "old shoemaker", who saved grosz from his hard-earned pay, depended on such savings for their very existence. Unfortunately, the debtors now often could not even compensate these small creditors with goods because they had been arrested either for tax delinquencies or because of the claims of other creditors. Moreover, not all of these creditors were eager to take a piece of furniture, or similar items, as a settlement of the debt. The very appraisal of such articles brought about quarrels between the two interested sides; in the homes of such men as "Shmul Shemion or Mordecai Yosef", who still had some furniture left, sometimes the quarrel went on between the creditors themselves as to what each one should take. The creditors could not settle such disputes by court proceedings, since these little deals were also illegal to begin with, and it made them liable to court fines if discovered. One was fortunate if he could salvage anything from a
bankrupted debtor. In most of these cases the small creditors simply suffered complete loss.52

The crisis was reflected in many ways in an individual's life. Once his capital came to an end and credit sources were exhausted, the bankrupt's social status declined, and he considered himself fortunate if he could get a job during this period. His standard of living became lower, with household expenditures reduced and food purchases carefully limited, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

"Hayim Rosen's family discovered the secret of economy: the staler the bread, the more satisfying. And that one can taste fish in an ordinary dish of hot water with some crumbs..."53

Even to meet these curtailed household expenses, many a person was again compelled to sell pieces of furniture or similar articles, but in many homes there was nothing valuable left to sell, because of previous auctions of all possessions by the state or creditors following the original bankruptcy declaration. The respectable homes from which one had formerly derived so much comfort and satisfaction became now for many the symbol of downfall. The "half empty rooms" served to aggravate the prevailing depression.54

Children's education was another thing to economize on now. Many youngsters were taken out of schools and universities because their parents could no longer support them. Frequently those who were almost ready to graduate had to abandon their studies.55

The future which these young people faced was bleak. Because they were members of the middle class, most of them had no
vocational training. While they had been students their economic needs had been taken care of by their parents. Later on, most of them were usually trained to participate in or take over the family business. Only a small fraction went out independently on their own, with the majority forced to continue the same way of life and remain in the same economic class as their parents. Yet there had always been some urge towards making radical changes in the existing economic structure and finding a more rational set-up.

This pressure for change now became acute because of the economic slump. Having been deprived of their routine life as students, and having become quite unnecessary in their parents' business, these young men and women, particularly the men, now tried various solutions for their economic problems. Many of them emigrated to Palestine, having gone through, prior to this, a special training—the so-called hachshara. Others joined extreme leftist political organizations hoping to find there some explanation for the depression which had led to their present wretched situation. Still others, if they were fortunate enough to get entry visas, emigrated to the Americas. Only small groups could find some occupation in private shops, mostly girls who found some work "at the sewing machines as seamstresses." The economic situation of these young men and women was more hopeless if they were Jewish, for then they could not get employment on government projects.56

"...Jewish girls were discriminated against because they would not forsake their faith."57
The sudden financial upheaval affected many aspects of peoples' personal lives. Engagements were broken off because the parents could not pay the dowry, or to carry out other obligations of that nature. There were instances in which girls, on their own initiative, broke engagements to marry instead wealthier men who might help their fathers economically. Parents became suddenly dependent on their children. One father told his daughter:

"Shaindel, my dear, I'm not trying to dictate to you. I just want you to know that conditions are getting worse; the creditors are on my neck..." Yet despite the "everyday inventions for strangling the Jew", the Jewish businessmen were not deterred from making all possible efforts to retain their economic positions. As long as any possibility existed for doing so, they tried to preserve their stores and merchandise. True that "locked doors and bolted shutters in the market place became a familiar sight on week days." But those who were left struggled to eke out a livelihood somehow, and did not shun any hard work which could help them sustain themselves. As long as they could, they met their obligations, so that they could continue in business and not experience hunger and misery. "Sometimes there were a few customers in Alteh's grocery store" and "Yakov was busy preparing for a painter." From other Jewish stores occasionally a gentile lad came out with a herring, a gentile woman with a piece of soap, and a peasant with a can of petroleum." Whether it was a wholesaler, who fought bravely with his last strength "to meet the payable taxes", or Alteh whose debts "are causing her sleepless nights", or Moshe Yosef Ungersohn, the lumber merchant, who was delinquent in taxes, or Reb Shmul Shemion, the owner of the
lingerie store, whose business was severely affected by the pressing taxes, or Mordecai Yosef, the textile merchant, they all fought to retain their strongholds and to make a living.

"At a time of all sorts of taxes, alas, she has to struggle for bare subsistence. If only she had a bit of merchandise on hand, and not be forced to engage in carrying goods from one town to another." 63

THE DAILY BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

The main business days in a shtetel town were the days when fairs took place. From the adjacent villages peasants drove in to buy industrial goods. Merchants and storekeepers looked forward to these days since peasants were their chief customers. The merchants' ability to pay off their own obligations depended on these fair day sales. On such days, those who had stores on side streets used to put up stands instead in the market place where the fairs were held. There were also small merchants who permanently had their stalls there because they could not afford to rent a store. There were counters with footwear, with haberdashery and dry goods; with hardware and cord; with glassware and household items. Merchandise had to be transported to market from homes, or storage places. Usually all the adult family members were needed to carry out the work involved. Some had to guard the stands from thieves; others had to take care of the customers. Still others had to be on hand if some items not on the stands were requested, so that they could run back home to fetch the goods wanted, or borrow it from someone else. "As Yakov said to Alteh: 'perhaps you have a can of blue paint.'" There were even
those who had barkers to attract purchasers, either members of
their own family or outsiders who were paid commissions for bring-
ing in customers.

On the other hand, the peasants were the supply source for
agricultural products. Fruit, vegetables, butter, eggs, and simi-
lar products were brought and poultry and cattle driven into the
market for sale. Jewish butchers, small storekeepers and food
peddlers made their purchases here for further sale in cities else-
where.64

The majority of the stores and market stalls were, however,
small in their scope of business. Their owners had miserably low
incomes. In the homes of "Groynem, the cereal peddler in Smolin,
of Leibush Kopp in Zelechow, of Pinchas, and Feivish in Ployne, and
Zalman in Godlebozhitz," lack of bread and undernourished children
were common. In many of these homes milk or a fruit were seldom
seen. A herring and a piece of bread was considered a good meal.
Yet they used to say that "although the situation is very, very
bad, it is still bearable" (in view of what it was to come).65

It was the natural instinct to live that had made the
people continue to do their utmost to keep going somehow.

When the tax collector appeared in the "ruined and impover-
ished stores," their worried owners made every effort to pay off
their taxation debts as much as possible. The authorities granted
to many taxpayers the privilege of paying off their obligations in
installments. However, it often happened that the storekeepers
did not even have the money to pay these installments. One had to
look for a usilas hessed [loan free of interest], "as Godel, the
dry goods merchant," who wanted to be able to pay at least some of
his debts to avoid confiscations and auctions. The gnilas hessed of a hundred zloty which "Abraham Batz" got from his friend prevented the auction of Batz's store. These small private loans without interest were a great help for many a merchant. Many a storekeeper used such loans to buy merchandise in the morning and paid them back from the day's sales receipts. Thus people helped each other now to continue functioning in their former roles, though sometimes a merchant's call for aid got no results because the other storekeepers did not have a gulden to lend.

Some storekeepers divided their stocks of merchandise, leaving a small amount in the store, and hiding the rest, to avoid a large tax assessment and prevent confiscation and auctioning of all their goods if they were declared to be tax delinquents, so that they could still go on then with the hidden merchandise. However, these secret arrangements were most detrimental to one's business status. Buyers had to be looked for and attracted by special privileges like low prices, or unusually good quality to be persuaded to buy. Moreover, the merchant had to be constantly alert for informers and internal revenue officers, for in the long run, these secret stores were either discovered by tax collectors, or revealed by competitors. The latter did not want to tolerate a fellow-merchant running a business without paying taxes and thus gaining an unfair advantage over themselves.

To stave off such disasters as bankruptcy, small businessmen went so far as to sell their most guarded personal family possessions. When all other possible resources for cash were exhausted, when no loans from a bank, private money lender or gnilas hessed were
obtainable any more, then people resorted to selling such items as
a wedding or engagement ring, some silver ornament or a pair of
earrings which had been handed down from generation to generation.
In the long run, of course, the cash obtained from these sales did
not really solve economic difficulties, since the prized belongings,
whatever their sentimental importance, did not have enough cash value to
radically change one's financial situation. Such sales only de-
layed the ultimate downfall. The sums they brought enabled the
merchant temporarily to buy some additional supplies, to pay off
some debts and a part of the taxes due and have a little money for
household expenses. Many storekeepers lost even the few customers
there were, because their lack of capital made it impossible for
them to carry a full line of goods. There were non-Jews who preferred
to buy in the Jewish stores, but only if the merchants carried a
large selection. In Ployne such customers were lost to "Feivish,
the colonial soychen" [merchant] and won by the Polish Co-operative
store. Jewish storekeepers continued to make every effort to obtain
the merchandise demanded. "It remains (for Feivish) to sell the
inherited silver items and...with the money buy some goods."

The business of Jewish merchants suffered particularly from
the establishment of Polish co-operative and private stores, who
became the strongest competitors, especially in the small towns. The
leather merchant from Porison, Hodel and Menashe, the hardware mer-
chants, Feivish from Ployne, Yantche the paint dealer, and many
others scattered all over the country, began to lose their customers
once a co-operative or a private store was established there. Both
the variety of articles which the co-operatives carried, and the
anti-Jewish propaganda drew Polish customers away from the Jewish stores. Jewish merchants who had exclusive local rights to procure merchandise from certain firms now had to relinquish their rights because they could not show enough sales, and the local co-operative store would then take over these sales franchises. Consequently, to obtain certain articles for which he had once been the exclusive local dealer, the Jewish dealer now often had to buy these items at the Polish stores. Actually, many of the obstacles encountered by the Jewish businessmen were not the result of price or quality competition. It was chiefly with the weapon of anti-Semitism that the Pole competed with the Jew.

These circumstances forced many Jewish shopkeepers to look for another livelihood. Jews from Ployne, Smolin, Tzintzimín, Bozhevole and other towns began to deal in wywoz—carrying various food items to the big cities for sale. Such trading did not require the regular business license needed for a store, but only a cheaper type of permit. Taxes also were lower than those paid by storekeepers. For some traders dealing in wywoz became the sole source of income; for others, merely an additional source. Most of the Jews in the small towns could not escape becoming food peddlers, eventually, despite the hardships of such work. It began with the lower social classes, then gradually spread to middle class merchants, and finally to prominent citizens. Since most of these peddlers traveled by railway, the "Committee for Polonization of Commerce" influenced the station master to make all possible difficulties for Jewish travelers. For example, when they applied for monthly rail-

The peddlers encountered difficulties also about the houses and small storekeepers would not pay for their houses until that evening. The storekeeper expected to pay the house from the province with the money he obtained from his own
road tickets which were, of course, cheaper than single fares, the station master could not legally refuse, but he would hold back approval for a couple of days. While he waited, the Jew had to forego a few trips, thus forfeiting whatever profit he might have gained thereby. Consequently Jews had the additional expense of having to bribe the "men of the Committee", or the attending clerks, to hasten the station master's issuance of the tickets.70

Still another handicap encountered by Jews was the departure of the trains before scheduled time. The men and women carrying all kinds of packages and bundles had to run to catch a train because the station master had shortened its stay at these small stations to far less than the prescribed time. In such a rush, many packages became damaged and useless.

Warsaw was the nearest trading market for the Jews of Ployne. They gathered with their products in two of the city's many commercial districts: the Grzybow and the "Eiserner Toyer" Iron Gate. The latter was a center for food stores, stalls, etc. The people of Ployne and from other small towns looked here for their patrons, mainly housewives or small storekeepers. The butter, milk or boneless meat which was brought for sale had to be offered below the market prices to be sold. Buyers took advantage of the fact that these merchants were from out of town and had to sell their goods to avoid lugging them home again. Moreover, there were too many food peddlers. To get a buyer one had to be satisfied with the lowest profit.

The peddlers encountered difficulties also about payments because the housewives and storekeepers would not pay for their purchases until that evening. The storekeeper expected to pay those from the province with the money he obtained from his own
sales of these products. The housewife delayed payments until her husband would come home. Often the peddlers did not receive their money at the promised time, either, and had the unexpected additional expenses of having to stay overnight.

Some of these food peddlers looked for customers among those from whom they used to buy industrial goods in their storekeeper days. Having regular customers they could call on, would be much easier and less humiliating than standing in the street with their products to await any random purchasers who might come around. A definite customer route meant quicker, more successful and frequent trips. Therefore they looked for possible regular buyers among those with whom they had formerly had business connections.\textsuperscript{71}

"...Times have changed, Reb Feivish. In the past I used to supply you with merchandise; now it's the other way around. Ployne meat and dairy products rate highly. From now on I'll patronize you."\textsuperscript{72}

However, the change to a peddler's economic status brought about also a change in the relations between the peddler and those from whom he had formerly purchased merchandise for his store. As long as the peddler had been a buyer, he had been treated with courtesy. Now things were reversed, for it was the industrialist or wholesaler who was doing the peddler a favor.

The sudden economic degradation which the peddler had to go through in the cities, and the difficulties and handicaps which he had to endure at the start of his trip led some of the peddlers to give up their trips. "Peddling with food" deprived them of their dignity as merchants. They considered \textit{wywoz} an inferior
commercial activities were identified by them with a store, incoming orders and customers, buying and selling in accordance with all commercial rules. Although they realized that peddling was the only way left for them to earn a living, yet they could not overcome their pride and gave up peddling also.

"...Feivish hurled his tin container and wicker basket through the window of the speeding train, arriving at his destination empty-handed." 73

The economic downfalls of the "Feivishs" and "Pinchases" became a warning sign for many others. Most Jewish merchants suffered similar restrictive fiscal legislation that had been enacted and directed mainly against Jews, aimed at bringing them to a point where they would be compelled to give up their positions.

"...It became increasingly clear that business was on the wane; that things were going from bad to worse." 74

Many Jewish merchants became impoverished because of the "moratorium". This was a new law which suspended the debts of landowners and peasants, bringing ruin to those who dealt in agricultural products. There were Jewish wholesale dealers in grain who had agreements with landowners and rich peasants that the latter would deliver certain crops after harvest in return for payments that had been advanced earlier by the merchants. For many these advanced sums constituted their whole capital and their very existence economically depended upon the delivery of the bought products.

"...It was common knowledge that Ber Feitelowich had loaned considerable sums of money to the
Thus, should the landowner go bankrupt or for some reason refuse to deliver the crops, the results were extremely detrimental for the Jewish creditors. This loss of capital plus the pressing demands from the revenue department made it impossible for many a merchant to retain his economic position.

The "moratorium" had an even more disastrous effect on creditors. They could not undertake legal judicial steps against the bankrupt landowner. While hitherto in case of a bankruptcy, creditors could expect to arrange for some partial payment from debtors, such attempts became impossible after the enactment of the moratorium law. A landowner, backed by the law, would refuse to come to any terms at all with his creditor, particularly if the latter were a Jew. The Jew was respected only so long as he was a source of money. Once a Jew ceased to serve this purpose, he was abandoned.

"...Ber Feitelowitch, heartbroken over Esau's swindling him out of his life's savings, hanged himself. A single moratorium—and Jewish prosperity goes up in smoke."76

Jewish merchants who had been established for generations and deeprooted "as a cedar tree" in the country's economic life, were thus eliminated by the "stroke of the pen".

Not only were the heads of the families victims of this moratorium, but the whole family group might be ruined. Besides
having advanced their business capital, many had entrusted to land-
owners their accumulated savings for things like their daughters' dowries. Yet the debtors refused to return even such sums. "The dowry of Ber's daughter was lost because of the moratorium." Thus, Jews were not only deprived of their business assets, but their private lives were also affected.⁷⁷

The withdrawal from Jewish trades of monopoly concessions, on such items as tobacco, liquor, salt, matches, etc., was a further step in the undermining of their economic life. Those who had held such concessions were now told to surrender their licenses and to close their stores. In most cases, these storekeepers were displaced from positions which they had held for long periods of time.

"...The Liquor Control Board ordered Herman Greenfeld to dispose of his liquor store that he ran for 25 years."⁷⁸

Without avail were all attempts by individuals or Jewish organizations to persuade the government to postpone action until these people had found some other business, or to take into consideration some individual's special merits and experience in handling that particular product. Neither would the government offer any compensation to these businessmen. Moreover, the Poles who were to take over these concessions insisted on also taking over the previous concessionaire's shops and equipment. The location of the Jewish stores in the town's business center was an advantageous one. Some Jews resisted this pressure and made every effort to retain their shops after having given up the concession. Other Jews, however, were forced to sell their stores. The transfer from
One line of business to another constituted for them too much of hardship, particularly now when business was not good enough for new investments. They gave up their positions and did not take up any other. 

On the other hand, there were people who retained their economic power because they possessed sufficient capital. The needs of others became a source of profit for them. Either they loaned money for interest which might be as high as 18% per annum, or they financed small businessmen and unofficially became their partners. Some, "like Isidore Zonenshein, the druggist in Godlebozhitz, brought real estate and Hayim Shikora in Ployne bought Pinchosel's mill and house at an auction." Unaffected by the economic depression, some merchants became wealthy. They were successful enough to retain reserves of money, to keep up their stocks of merchandise and to become more rooted in the market. They grew and developed their businesses on the ruin of others. The more stores were closed, the more the consumer became dependent upon them.

There were others who wanted to save as much as they could from their wealth, and emigrated to Palestine as had many young ex-students previously. They gave up their homes and businesses in order to begin a new life somewhere else. But the bulk of the Jews remained in Poland and went on with their struggle. 79

If a spark of hope still lingered with some Jews, after the enactment of the Grabski legislation, the increasing anti-Semitic economic restrictions dashed it completely. The new curbs on ritual slaughter, the obligatory examinations for artisans, and the decrees requiring the installation of mechanical ovens in bakeries, renovation of old buildings, erection of sidewalks in
in front of each residence, etc., weakened further the economic status of the Jews.

During the post-Grabowski era and up to the outbreak of World War II, the Jews felt more and more insecure. Their faith in a favorable turn in the political and economic conditions diminished. Unmistakably, the very foundations of their existence were being undermined.

In addition to the harsh tax laws that deprived Jewish traders of their monetary assets, physical assault now occurred again; the older policy of persecution and pogroms was set in motion. The Jewish trader now stood unprotected not only in public, but in his own place of business.

It was the Jewish shopkeepers who felt this scourge of economic extermination most keenly. Gentile shoppers began to steer clear of the Jewish market. In addition to the incessant anti-Jewish agitation, Polish would-be buyers were sometimes prevented by physical means from entering a Jewish store. Anti-Semitic hooligans picketed Jewish shops, barring non-Jewish patrons from entering.

"...Their eyes pop out before they (the Jewish traders) glimpse a gentile customer..." 80

Earnings naturally diminished with the decline in trade, and the general standard of living for Jewish traders went down. But the state taxes and assessments were not reduced one bit. Jews who were delinquent in tax payments were denied traders' licenses. And since a majority could not pay all their taxes, they were automatically forced out of business. Here and there one endeavored to secure a license under the name of some kinsman; others resorted to changing the appearance of their wares, in the hope that this would
prove they were launching a new enterprise. But those efforts usually proved unsuccessful, and if such applicants failed to convince the tax-collector that a changed status existed, they had to forfeit their licenses.81

The harsh decree limiting (Jewish) ritual slaughter, affected Jewish cattle dealers, butchers and others, since the new law restricted to a special quota the number of cattle slaughtered ritually in the local abattoirs.

The lowered meat quota reduced Jewish butcher shops to part-time activity. To make matters still worse, the price on meat went up, which further reduced sales.

The Jewish population suffered, along with others, from the occasional city ordinances calling for the dismantling or renovation of old dwellings, improvement of the sanitary conditions, street repair, etc. These laws hit particularly at slum areas where old dilapidated houses existed. The Jewish population complied with these laws to the best of their abilities. The penalties for violations were rather severe. Ordinances pertaining to dismantling of houses worked a great hardship on many; for it sometimes disrupted the life of entire families. Some of these houses had served not only as dwellings, but also as workshops. Pulling up roots, moving elsewhere, was difficult for many citizens.82

"...Wooden houses flank the Town Hall... The authorities are likely to order their dismantling at the drop of a hat. The old edifices will be demolished—and the lives of some human beings will collapse also..."83

As a result of the new conditions, more and more Jews had to apply for relief. "The drab days..." represented wretchedness. It
became ever harder to earn one's bread. No matter how small the living expenses were—"...a few groshen for bread and potatoes—one had to exert himself unduly..."\textsuperscript{34} The struggle for survival now continued on two fronts: the business establishment and the home, which one moved heaven and earth to preserve.

The breadwinner could no longer provide for his family. No matter how much the family economized, they could not make ends meet. The small capital with which the breadwinner operated began to dwindle. One didn't know whether to use it for clearing delinquent taxes first, or to buy merchandise, or for daily living expenses.

"There were homes where the children fought over a few sour currents."\textsuperscript{35}

The mutual aid extended by kinsmen had to be increased. In some instances the benevolent were themselves reduced to dire straits. Any given Jewish community was, by and large, poverty-stricken. Its means of support was a hand-to-mouth existence, but it clung to it for want of something better.

"...We have two rich men in our community—Yossel Brochas and Itzchak Sharfhartz; and two thousand destitute families..."\textsuperscript{36}

The economic depression set in motion a sort of inland migration: people moved from one town to another in search of a livelihood. Some migrated to a metropolis; others, vice versa. Some drifted to industrial centers, or to the regions ceded to Poland after the war. All yearned to keep afloat.

There were traders who switched from one product to another, or added new ones. People used any means to survive. The trouble, however, was that the migrants were an impoverished group, without
any capital or tools, and thus they merely "marked time." They had hoped to improve their lot in another locality, but throughout the country the hopes of these itinerant Jews were dashed.

"...Hayim David exclaimed: 'Fellow-Jews, we were never as bad off as we are at this moment. There hardly seems to be a haven for us anywhere in the world. Our very souls are being scorched! We are being ousted everywhere--but where are we to go?'"

The increasing economic depression inspired many new deceptions as desperate efforts to raise capital. Some traders resorted to fictitious railway shipments, sending out containers filled with straw or rags instead of with valuable commodities, and then proceeding to collect on the strength of the fraudulent bills-of-lading.

"...Israel was gradually becoming deeply involved in debt. Pressed for funds, he dispatched two cases filled with wooden chips along with some rock to the border states..."

The tragedy of the Jews in Poland derived not so much from the economic decline, as from the fact that they could find no way out. For they were becoming reconciled to their fate--"...to subsist on a gulden a day, a half a gulden, and even without any money at all..." as long as one might live in peace. Affairs came to such a state that "...Gabriel sensed the approach of a typhoon..." from which there was no escape. The policy of forcing Jews out of their economic positions was bearing fruit. The harried Jews had begun to break under the newly imposed strain.

The second World War accelerated the end of that struggle through the Hitler invasion.
Economic distress was severe among the lower Jewish social strata. Want, destitution, was the lot of wage-earners, artisans, village- and street-peddlers, teamsters, porters, and related categories. Their economic status hardly rested on a solid foundation. A job in a factory, or an artisan's miserable workshop, or these street-vendor's calling generally yielded but a hand-to-mouth existence. There was no saving a penny for a rainy day.

The lot of these classes did not improve in the least during the inflation period. Economic prosperity did not reach them, as it did the manufacturers, traders, and speculators. The want and penury that the factory workers and artisans had inherited from World War I was not alleviated. Workmen considered themselves fortunate if they could secure a bare subsistence. (There were some who subsisted on a starvation level.) Their want was reflected in their home atmosphere, their garb, food, and related phases of their lives.1

a. Fruit and Vegetable Farmers
(Sadovniki)

The farming of truck gardens and orchards was a popular occupation for many Jews. The farmers were chiefly of people from the lower social classes, often with another occupation as well. Thus, in addition to full-time year round professional farmers, there were, for example, tailors and shoemakers who hardly eked out a living in the city and looked for some extra income from farming. They continued to also exercise their city trades during their summer months on farms, drawing their customers from the local population.1 For
hawkers and peddlers, a little farming was also a help in their struggle for a livelihood. Moreover, the usual village locations of the gardens and orchards they rented gave them better opportunity to trade with peasants on other agricultural products like butter, eggs, poultry, etc.

The truck gardens and orchards were rented from private big landowners—mostly Poles. Occasionally also a Jewish landowner rented out space for farming; more rarely the government, too, made portions of its estates available. For the prospective farmer it usually required a great deal of effort to raise money for the rental fee, part of which had to be paid in advance. He applied for loans in Jewish co-operative banks and borrowed from private money lenders, or from persons of his own family circle who did not charge any interest. Even those who had enough cash of their own to cover payment of the rental fee, seldom had any money left over for living expenses. They had to live on borrowed money until they could get some return from their truck gardens. The very existence of some depended on the harvest.¹² If profits were sufficient, the farmer usually renewed his agreement. Many Jews continued to rent their plots from the same landowner for years.

"...Hersh Lustik had priority in leasing Vitbroth's (the German) orchard for 28 years; Reb Zelig (from Radzyn) has been leasing the orchard from the local squire for years."¹³

With the coming of Spring, the part-time seasonal farmers sometimes by themselves, sometimes with their families, moved into their rented gardens. Those who had rented space close to their
permanent homes, stayed throughout the week and went home for the Sabbath day. Others, whose garden plots were more remote, stayed in their gardens for the whole season. For these families, their seasonal stay in the villages was a great help in their struggle for a livelihood. Here they were able to get some food products, as poultry, eggs, butter, vegetables, etc., from the peasants more cheaply than in the city. Even those who stayed on their farms only on weekdays, usually brought with them when they went home for the weekend "cheese, eggs and a chicken for the Sabbath."lc

The farmers were assisted in their tasks by the rest of the family, and, if the crops were rich, by hired workers also. Sometimes peasants from adjacent villages were employed.

Many kinds of apples, pears, cherries, plums, vegetables, etc., were sold on the markets to wholesale merchants and to retailers.

"...Leizer, here are the cherries [shklankes]. Please, deliver them to my agent in Warsaw."ld

Some farmers rented gardens in partnership as a means of developing a bigger business. While one partner was occupied with work in the garden, the other took over the commercial marketing of their produce. Competition was great, and a quick sale of the crops before they spoiled was necessary to conclude the season successfully. Transportation of a crop from the garden to the market, usually done with horse-driven wagons, required the presence of the owner to guard against stealing.

With the coming of the Fall, the seasonal farmers returned to their city homes. The tailors, shoemakers, and peddlers went back to concentrating on their regular occupations.
In general, however, the farmers, too, could not escape the political oppression of Jews. Landowners, private or government, often refused to rent gardens to Jews. Even those who had continued to rent one piece of land for years, now were sometimes suddenly turned down, the Poles using all possible excuses to avoid any renewal of these agreements. Even broken or boarded up, and rarely did anyone bother to renew them with new ones. During the winter months the cold would penetrate through the crevices. Daylight also penetrated feebly; and on snowy days oil lamps would be lit. Frequently people, too poor to buy a few pennies' worth of kerosene, remained in the dark. "...the wantonness and...the ruthlessness of hunger and want claimed these people as its victims.

Innumerable poor workers' families in Warsaw occupied but a little room, because of their pitifully low income. The seasonal workers and the unemployed were especially hard-pressed. When the season set in, these workers' first concern was their rent, for occasionally two, and even three families teamed up in a single room, or they would find themselves without a roof. They needed any sort of income; they did not hesitate to rent out a corner of their cramped quarters to some artisan during the day. 

"...Shamai the painter...who is employed only two months annually...lives with Aaron in a basement...in the Warsaw slums... Aaron did not earn anything during the past week..." Each family and its belongings would occupy one corner of the od room, with "...a rickety old iron bed and a torn straw
The poor lived primarily in basements or in garrets of dilapidated houses in the slums. The vestibules of such dwellings "... smelled of musty rags and... mold." The fragrant summer air in these areas was polluted by the offensive odors emanating from the crowded, ramshackle houses. Broken windowpanes were patched up somehow, or boarded up, and rarely did anyone bother to replace them with new ones. During the winter months the cold would penetrate through the crevices. Daylight also penetrated feebly; and on cloudy days oil lamps would be lit. Frequently people, too poor to buy a few pennies' worth of kerosene, remained in the dark. "...gruesomeness and...the ruthlessness of hunger and want claimed these people as its victims.

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"...Shamai the painter...who is employed only two months annually...lives with Aaron in a basement...in the Warsaw slums... Aaron did not earn anything during the past week..." Each family and its belongings would occupy one corner of the rented room, with "...a rickety old iron bed and a torn straw..."
Two or three members of the family would use the bed, while the rest of them were billeted on the floor. In some instances, the lid of a trunk served as a bed. The rest of the household effects usually consisted of a water jug and a few cooking utensils. The latter were rather scarce, so that the tenants shared them with one another. Now and then, the diners would take turns at the only available plate or spoon.\(^3\)

This practice applied also to other belongings. The alternating service became routine in many families, which were fortunate enough to possess any essential utensils and the like. Others were not so lucky.

"...Zelda went to a neighbor to borrow a match...to be returned after Sunday...There's not a match to be found in the house...."\(^9\)

Time and again, one lacked the few groschen with which to buy this or that product. The shopkeepers in the poor districts operated with limited capital and stock, and thus were in no position to extend credit. (Some outstanding debts were never repaid.)

The wretched situation of these people was aggravated especially during the winter months, when the inclement weather caused the moisture on the interior of the walls to freeze over. The undernourished, now plagued by the freezing cold, succumbed to all sorts of ailments. Quite often the poor had to do without coal or other fuel. As near a railroad station, or in the vicinity of coal yards. "...before long the jug of water turned to ice...."\(^10\)

When a room was devoid of any heat whatsoever, its "...inmates did not bother to get out of bed...."\(^11\) No one in the family undressed during a siege of cold, especially if the breadwinner was
unemployed. Every last bit of cloth was utilized to cover one's self with, to ward off the cold. Undernourishment undermined the health of the poverty-ridden. 12

"...The family of the unemployed spend whole days in bed, tucked under rags, in order to keep warm—there being no fuel with which to heat up the little stove... Some of Aaron's family kept warm that way in bed, while others were sprawled on the floor..." 13

The ill, whether adult or juvenile, depended entirely on bare rest for a cure, since few indeed could afford a doctor's fees.

"...Mrs. Finkel, the widow—Mina's mother—fell ill due to undernourishment... Basheh, the widow... is pulling the covers over her, in the hope of finding relief in the warmth... The mother awakened with a severe back-sore..." 14

In the poor districts there were quite a few youngsters afflicted with frost-bitten hands and feet. In the winter months they were confined indoors, "...peeping through the chinked windows into the deserted back streets..." 15

Coal was at a premium—if one was lucky enough to get it from time to time. There was more than one way of obtaining that precious commodity. If one had the means, one simply bought a few pounds of it in the open market. That was no mean achievement.

The impoverished, however, would resort to hunting for bits of coal on the streets, near a railroad station, or in the vicinity of coal yards. That was done at some hazard. The bits of coal falling off coal-wagons were sought by old and young alike. "...Laibka, the son of Basheh the widow... Feivka, the son of Aaron, the menial laborer in Warsaw..." 16 would frequently go hunting for a bag of coal.
The penetrating cold was another problem to cope with. The coal-pickers had to wait for a coal-wagon for hours on end sometimes. In order to ward off the bitter coal, meanwhile, youngsters would put on their fathers' garb, which usually consisted of a tattered coat and worn-out shoes. This attire served on weekdays as well as on the Sabbath. Feivke, in his father's oversized shoes; Leibka wearing his mother's shawl and gloves... braved inclement weather, in the hope of picking up a bit of coal. As ill luck would have it, "too many needy women carrying bags, and men with deep pockets, would show up..." A bag of coal, procured that way, afforded warmth not only for the individual, but for his neighbors who were welcomed as well. Adults and children warmed their frozen limbs before the friendly glow... The only change that the summer ushered into the homes of the impoverished was the banishment of the cold. Their economic status hardly changed at all. Unemployment continued to be their lot, regardless of the season. They could not afford to buy any clothing. "Barefooted, and in soiled, torn shirts...children are wallowing in the dust..." The youngsters hardly benefitted from the sunny atmosphere, because the sun did not penetrate into their dark, dreary basements and other cramped living quarters... During the inflation period, the wages even of workers who were employed steadily could barely sustain a family. The ever-
The housewives invariably returned with "...empty baskets..."\(^{24}\) Their funds were insufficient to provide food for the family. The deterioration of the currency made matters even worse for them.

This state of affairs brought in its wake a series of labor strikes. The cap-makers in Hortensia went out on strike; the railroad workers in Warsaw were on the verge of a strike. "...A bloody demonstration by the unemployed took place in Radom..."\(^{25}\)

The workers of the Moritz Meyerbach's tannery in Godlbozhit brought in its wake a series of labor strikes. The cap-makers in Hortensia went out on strike; the railroad workers in Warsaw were on the verge of a strike. "...A bloody demonstration by the unemployed took place in Radom..."\(^{25}\)

The workers of the Moritz Meyerbach's tannery in Godlbozhit threatened to call a strike unless they were granted a ten per cent pay increase. The employer at first resisted their demands, threatening to hire strike-breakers. Whereupon the aroused workers warned any would-be strike-breaker of dire consequences. Eventually, the employer yielded.

"...but even the hard-won raise did not suffice to cover their bare subsistence..."\(^{26}\)

Privation was also the cause of strikes at the Nemzar wind-mill, situated in Dombrowka; the Okopowa tannery in Warsaw; the Handlish and Rubenfeld brick-kilns, and other workshops. The sporadic raises in wages that the workers secured from time to time did not alleviate their situation materially. They barely got along while employed, and fought for survival when out of work. Gaunt faces and tattered garb testified to their wretched lot.\(^{27}\)

"...their haggard faces reflected anguish and resignation..."\(^{28}\)

The wage-earners were the first to sense the approaching slump. By and large, they worked for small, struggling firms, which folded
...the Polish and German workers usually barred Jews--even from Jewish-owned establishments..."29

In the big industrial plants non-Jewish workers refused to work alongside Jews and threatened reprisals. The small workshops, accessible to Jewish workers, were not covered by the legal code.

"Panch Panczewski, the Governor, manipulated the unemployment compensation law in a way as to deprive Jewish applicants of any benefits..."30

The Federal Employment Bureau, which recruited workers for such projects as the digging of channels, the laying of railroad beds, and so on, discriminated against Jews. There were two deterrent factors: (a) the Polish unemployed restrained Jews from filing applications by physical means; (b) the anti-Semitic officials ruled adversely wherever a Jewish applicant broke through the first barrier.31

The employment offices that recruited coal miners and steel-workers to France, staffed with Polish administrators, likewise discriminated against Jews, on the ground that the latter were unfit for arduous toil. The truth of the matter was that among the Jewish unemployed there were "young, rugged men..."32 who were willing and able to tackle any difficult tasks, to accept jobs far away from home, in order to provide for their families..."33

"...'Why can't I go to work in France?' I asked the heavy-set man who registered the applicants. 'What's
your name?' he asked. "And when I told him my name, he commented that Jews are barred."\footnote{33}

Facing such restrictions, the Jewish unemployed were forced to apply to the Jewish community administration for relief.

In some instances, firms that were on the verge of bankruptcy withheld wages from their employees. The employer would justify his action with the excuse of the bad times. "...Meyerbach owes Yakov Aaron a month's wages..."\footnote{35}

Some wage-earners, otherwise eligible for some sort of compensation, were deprived of such benefits because their employers had not paid their share of the federal tax for unemployment or sick benefits.\footnote{36} Such employers would give preference to workers who consented to forfeit such benefits.\footnote{37}

Threatened by starvation, some workers readily accepted such discriminating conditions. If some workers wished to retain future rights of unemployment- and sick-benefits, they had to pay their employer's share of the federal tax, in addition to their own. Denouncing one's employer to the authorities in such cases meant the loss of the informer's job.

d. Artisans

Some of the houses in the slums served as working quarters as well as dwelling-places. Artisans established their shops in them. Weaving was the chief enterprise of the artisans in Lodz. In Balut—the Jewish district of the metropolis—the hand looms were operated right in the weavers' homes. Such an establishment had one or two looms, and also housed the yarn. The majority of these home weavers worked on order.\footnote{37a} (Several Lodz traders
supplied the one- and two-room weavers with yarn and related materials. The latter availed themselves of this service for two reasons: (a) to avoid applying for a license; (b) and thus steer clear of new taxes, negotiations with union labor, and payment of special labor taxes. Compare Dr. B. D. Weinryb, Jewish Vocational Education, p. 120.)

During the inflation period, these small entrepreneurs were kept so busy that a relative or apprentice was often called upon to help. Nevertheless, though they worked from sunrise to sunset, they would still fail to make ends meet. The reason for this was the steady depreciation of the currency. The artisan's earnings just about covered the barest necessities, let alone procuring new garments or shoes. The ever-rising cost of commodities made life hard for the small fellow.38

"...the millions (of Polish markas) did not suffice for the Sabbath repast...instead of white loaves, coarse rye bread had to do...there was no wine for the 'Benediction of the Cup'...herring was substituted for the Sabbath meat feast in the homes of the impoverished weavers..."39

They lacked the means for starting an independent business enterprise; they had no capital with which to procure yarn and related goods, in order to start production, be it even on the smallest scale.

The homes of the cap-makers and tailors in Ployme generally resembled those of the wage-earners. The artisan's home was poorly furnished; there were no luxurious items of any sort to beautify it. Even such cramped quarters as those of David Meyer, the cap-maker, had to have jammed into them "...beds and bedding, a table, a
In the course of the working day the artisan would keep his materials and tools on the furniture, for lack of other space, strewing about on his household equipment "...cut patterns of caps, visors, cardboard forms, measures, etc...." The trimmings for the caps and garments were not always new. The town artisans who catered to the village consumers had to manipulate in such a way as to meet the requirements of that low-income group. Old or used trimming materials enabled them to keep afloat in this struggle.

"...Bayla, David Meyer's wife, would rip worn headgear apart, clean out the seams, and spread the still useful parts on the bed..." Despite all the efforts to save money, the artisans' income was a rather limited one. They had to economize on food a great deal in order to make ends meet. The afternoon meal of most artisans consisted of "thin, dark noodles..." Both husband and wife had to pitch in to earn a livelihood; and as soon as the children grew up, they, too, had to lend a hand. Circumstances were so adverse that, unless all contributed their efforts, "...they would have to resort to begging..."

The shoemakers of Zelachow produced footwear for workers and peasants. They also used their homes as workshops. They obtained leather either from wholesale dealers, or directly from the tanneries promising to pay at a specified time. But since the shoemakers, too, had to extend credit to his customers, they were at times unable to meet their obligations. In such cases, they would endeavor to make partial remittances.
...finances would come, would remind (the shoemaker) about the debts. They paid a part... and pleaded for an extension of the balance..."45

In general, the artisans acquitted themselves honorably, occasionally parting with their last pennies, "...though the next day they had to pull their belts in tight..."46 The profits were paltry. And to make matters worse, the numerous artisans and commissionaires who acquired the shoemakers' products, in order to distribute them throughout the country, took advantage of the latters' destitution and forced them to sell at minimum prices.47

In Smollin, a town in the vicinity of Plotek, Jewish families produced sweaters, berets, and brushes, mostly by hand. This trade was chiefly in the hands of Jewish girls who had to contribute toward their families' support. Such knitters became the breadwinners when their parents had died, or were unemployed. The work was done at home; and the income derived thus afforded merely "dark bread and borscht," the standard meal on weekdays. These artisans were content to carry on at a subsistence level, so long as they could maintain an independent status.

When the budget had to be stretched to include extra expenses, such as someone's illness, the family would economize on food even further, especially if the girl-knitter chanced to be the sole provider.

"...Tzvettel, the knitter, is toiling and moiling at the sweaters... while Sarah Gittel (her sister) is seriously ill..."49

In order to meet the increasing demand for goods, the knitters had to work longer hours. But that did not alleviate
The bar-a-town buyers, cognizant of the economic struggle of these knitters, resorted to devious means to pay the lowest possible prices. "...Tzveitel is toiling for the benefit of the buyer..." It was these buyers who, in turn, distributed the products to the cities, and got the lion's share of the profits in the long run.

In one town near Lodz, Jewish families earned their livelihood as tinsmiths. The "cramped home quarters" would also house the workshop, in which the artisan and apprentices worked. On a par with artisans in other townships, they complained of their hard lot. They stuck to their calling simply because there was nothing else to turn to.

By and large, the economic status of the artisan, wage-earner, and apprentice, was a wretched one. As hard as it was to maintain one's own workshop, or pursue one's trade, all efforts were directed towards that, even if one could only get part-time work.

"...Berel, the barber, works only two days a week: Tuesday, when he cuts the peasants' hair; and Friday, when he caters to the Jews. The rest of the week he is free." This struggle for existence was undermined by the government's anti-Jewish policy. The harsh decrees of taxes, licenses, and other discriminations contributed to their ruin. They had to lug their personal belongings, akune, salt, chicken, briar, and other household effects from "the
and in some cases because of tax-delinquencies. You since the value of the household effects hardly covered the delinquent taxes, the workbench and tools would be confiscated as well. The authorities requisitioned the weavers' hand-loom's and the tailors' and shoemakers' tools, in Lodz, thus depriving the unfortunates of their last means of support. People sold their very last belongings; some turned to panhandling.

e. VILLAGE HAWKERS AND STALL-KEEPERS

The occupation of the village hawker involved buying various commodities from the village peasants, for re-sale to city inhabitants; and urban products for re-sale to the villagers. There were professional hawkers, as it were, along with bankrupted merchants and unemployed individuals of all sorts who had turned to this work. Those who plied their craft with a horse and a cart were considered wealthy. They could venture out over considerable distances. Others, who utilized pushcarts, or lugged the goods on their backs, were confined to their immediate vicinities. They set out at dawn and worked until all hours of the night. 54

In general, the village hawker purchased such commodities as: a pot of grain, a skunk, a calf, a chicken, bristles, a rabbit skin, "...old clothes, agrarian products, etc. ..." 55

Transactions were restricted by the inadequate transportation facilities and limited capital. The hawker who had to lug his wares on his back operated on a small scale. The one who owned a pushcart, or a horse, was more fortunate. But in any case the ultimate purchase was contingent upon the dealer's funds, which were in general a pitifully meager sum. The value of the village-hawker's merchandise--30 zloty, or $6.00--constituted his entire assets. 56
The hawker generally tried to dispose of their goods the same day, in order to obtain cash for the following day's transactions. Failure to dispose of his wares—or to collect payments promptly—was tantamount to the vendor's idleness the next day, with a resultant loss. The Polish peasants insisted on getting spot cash for the agricultural products. Only in rare instances, when mutual trust prevailed, did the peasant extend a couple of days' credit to the hawker. 57

Dawn generally ushered in the rag-picker's day's work.

"Hemiah (Nehemiah), the rag-picker... prepared to set out for the village, when white streaks of light... 58 had penetrated the grimy little windows of the basement, that served both as his dwelling and warehouse. Practically all the members of a family had to work in order to make ends meet. When a rag-picker's wife did not accompany him to the village, she was busy with some other task. Thus... Elke... the wife of Isaac Laizer, the rag-picker... 59 had to contribute something by peddling foodstuffs. And... Gelly, the wife of Hemiah the rag-picker... 60 scrubbed floors for the rich, or worked as a washerwoman.

The rag-picker left his home—the basement—with the few furnishings, consisting of... a cupboard with broken doors, a rickety old bed, a shaky table and bench... 61 after a meal of bread and black coffee. It didn't take long to clean the home, since it contained so little furniture; and the earthen floor needed only a little smoothing over and strewing with a bit of yellow sand.
There were few homes in such dwellings, since the household would 
be "snoring soundly on a heap of rags..."52

As the hawkers set out for the villages they would take 
long a handful of coins and a few sacks. One had to make haste, 
because there were a good many rag-pickers, and there was no mutual 
agreement about each one's territory. Occasionally several rag- 
pickers would enter a village simultaneously, and one would try 
to outbid the other. Those Jews must have been hard-pressed to 
resort to such tactics.

"...Vigdor (vigdor) grumbles: 'Why are you dillydally- 
ing? Pinchasel and Abba must have reached the village 
long ago and grabbed everything!'..."63

Thus, they made the rounds in the peasant localities, re- 
gardless of season, in quest of castoffs, odds and ends, and so on. 
Sometimes when all their drudgery was in vain, they would try their 
luck in another village, or turn back. In the evening they would 
dispose of whatever wares they had, through dealings with the 
town merchants.64

Their evening meal consisted of a yushka—a thin potato soup— 
after which they began to make preparations for the next day's chore.

Village-hawkers, rag-and-junk-pickers, as well as the buyers 
of such cast-offs as a "rabbit or a skunk..." would sometimes barter 
their goods for other wares such as needles, toys, glassware and the 
like, instead of being paid in currency. During the period of in- 
dustrial prosperity, when raw materials were in great demand, the 
rag-and-junk-pickers eked out a living somehow. Those fortunate 
enough to own a horse and cart managed to procure some foodstuffs from 
the peasants, at prices considerably lower than the town merchants
The moment a slump set in, it affected this group as sharply as everyone else. Diminished industrial activity meant a drop also in the demand for castoffs, junk, etc.

"...Isaac Laizer has been indisposed of late. Castoffs, junk—is all played out. The factories are at a stand-still—there is no demand for rags..."65

Rag-and-junk pickers endeavored to sell some of their wares to blacksmiths and other artisans on fair-days. Though these cast-offs brought in very little, they supplemented the hawker's usual meager earnings.

"...A fair-day in Smolin. In the midst of the harness-and-rope makers there stands Bertchik (the rag-picker) with his junk..."66

The latter spread their wares on the ground—in contrast to the stand-keepers who maintained permanent stall and table contraptions.

Village-hawkers who procured chickens, eggs, butter, cheese and related products, would dispose of them to town merchants, who maintained small food shops—or carried on their business right at home. On occasion they would also take their products directly to the marketplace. Theirs, too, was a hard life, and they cast about for some supplementary earnings. This category of trader had to set out for a village at dawn; he was liable to be assaulted by Polish hooligans; and was always in fear of being apprehended by the police or tax officials, because he lacked a license.67

"...Malkeh, the village hawker, a widow, occasionally received from relatives in the United States, a few dollars which...
covered her living expenses. Thus, she could save her earnings for a rainy day...

Still another category of Jewish village-hawker brought to the village peasants such wares as: textiles, yarns, tailor- and shoemaker trimmings, fancy goods, etc. These commodities were generally ordered by the peasants. These peddlers had to possess considerably more capital than the others, since they had to extend credits to their peasant customers. But for these traders, too, sales were relatively small. This hawker’s lot was not to be envied either. Such a person, lugging his sack of merchandise, was exposed to the threats of some peasants. During the slump, some town merchants would be forced into this lowly calling, thus swelling the number of hawkers—and intensifying competition.

Jewish artisans, such as tailors, shoemakers, glaziers, and so on, proceeded to the villages in quest of work. Some would leave their towns for a whole week.

"...When the first stars appeared on the Ployne sky, a small-town tailor would pack a few belongings and be off for the village..."70

"The Yawotzge glazier followed suit..."71

Some Jewish artisans earned their livelihood thus for many years. Lugging their tools, they would make the rounds of one village after another. Some of them succeeded; and all of them would bring home food products—a great asset in itself.71a

Jews living in the villages often did some trading with their neighbors. These isolated settlers, in addition to working the plow themselves, would buy the neighboring peasant’s grain, cattle, and so on, or would maintain a small store. The assets of a Jewish
The single room that served as dwelling for a whole family was arranged most primitively. A chair was a rare sight; usually there were only a table and a bench made of rough planks. In the winter the family would gather about the huge brick oven. Mud-soaked shoes and clothing would be dried around it. Meals consisted of potatoes fried in oil and black bread. Meat was a rare delicacy.

"...Sholem Bendett runs a dairy in Volicza...that yields 180 quarts of milk daily..."

The milk would be delivered to the town in cans. Some Jewish farmers earned their livelihood thus for decades.

"Some village Jews, who did not do any farming themselves, carried on their business at home." They would make the rounds of the village and outlying regions and buy "a measure of grain from one, a hen from another." These items, in turn, would be sold to the village-hawker, or directly to the town merchants. In their single room dwellings, they would fashion a couple of shelves on a wall, which would be filled out with some textile remnants, or other bargain goods.

Fruit was among the products that village Jews acquired from their peasants. When the season came--

"...Sarah asked Dmitri to harness his team and take her to Sambor... There she and Dmitri were busy the whole day sorting, weighing, and filling sacks of fruit..."

The wagon-load of fruit would be brought to the market-place, where the stallkeepers were the first to buy. The buyer and seller in this instance both belonged to the poorest trader category, and
...Perspiring women vendors, hauling wicker baskets, made rounds of the loaded wagons. But the wagon drivers seemed in no hurry to open their sacks of merchandise. They were waiting for more substantial customers—the merchants of Borislav and Drohobitch...

However, both stall-keepers and street vendors were also in great need of merchandise. That was their only source of livelihood. In the course of their bargaining, buyer and seller remonstrated with and berated one another, but ultimately they came to terms—give or take a little. The impoverished stall-keeper had to acquire some merchandise to keep the ball rolling.

The village Jews who maintained little shops experienced rough sledding, and were often exposed to danger. The village shopkeepers were on the lowest rung of the merchant class. They operated with a minimum capital and their stock in trade was limited to the peasant's immediate needs. Yet these small traders had to extend credit occasionally. And some customers would not or could not repay. Eventually, the relations between shopkeeper and customer would often become strained. Some peasants, on being denied further credit, would murder a Jewish shopkeeper in a fit of rage. The prevailing anti-Jewish atmosphere contributed no little to such horrible acts.

"...A murdered Jew was brought in from a village...His wife wailed: 'If you had only let Marcin have the matches without money, you wouldn't have come to an untimely end..."
The economic slump, the discriminating taxes and fiscal laws were an additional blow on the village hawkers. They were bound by the village police because of a lack of proper license; and by the state police on their return home.

**g. MARKET SQUATTERS**

The women squatters in the market place could not properly be classified along with the other vendors who maintained permanent stalls on which goods were displayed. These women were too poor to pay even the smallest rental, and thus had to squat wherever the opportunity presented itself. Though they always sold wares in the market place, the women squatters also made the rounds of private homes. Their assets consisted of "two wicker baskets of winter apples..." or of "a wire basket containing yarn, buttons, needles and combs..." The market-place squatters were usually the only breadwinners for their families. Not a few of them were widows. In Warsaw they would post themselves in front of courtyards, "peddling oranges or herring." Such a squatter would arrange with some neighbor to supply her a meager meal during the day.

In Ployne the women squatters were located at the far end of the market-place. They had neither stall nor coverings, and either squatted on the bare ground or sat on small stools. In the winter they ward off the cold by "slipping their feet into long straw footwear, or wrapping them in sackcloth..." They envied the shop-keeper, or even the stall-keeper.

"Those women indulged in reveries of coming into possession..."
Their unsold merchandise--no matter what it was--would be stored at home.

"...Yente, the squatter's one-room dwelling was now the location for a heap of rotten little apples, and two trussed hens, that were pecking crumbs from the floor..."89

These living quarters were generally untidy in any case, because of the tenants' poverty. "...The end of a candle is guttering on a small table in the room of Yente, the market squatter..."

"...Over at Bling's, the plaster is peeling, and a wide, moist spot is visible on the ceiling..."90 When one of these market squatters happened to be confined to her home because of illness, the resultant loss in earnings was keenly felt. These breadwinners had no savings whatsoever.

Competition was another evil in their midst. The influx of new vendors complicated matters. Thus, "...Basheh, the widow... and Sarah Yenteh, the lame..."91 were chasing after the customers. The squatting vendors would praise their respective wares to the skies, and underbid one another, thus reducing their margin of profit.

Moreover, if one of them was apprehended "...with a basket of crullers (as was the case with Aaron, the carter, in Warsaw), she would be taken into custody..."93 Harried in every way, many street vendors were forced to relinquish their trade. They turned to menial labor; shoveling snow in winter; and other chores. But "...there are no jobs to be had...you can starve to death twenty times a day..."94

h. TEAMSTERS AND CARTERS

Teamsters

Jewish teamsters and carters who had eked out a living at
The auto gradually replaced the horse-drawn vehicle. The blow was felt especially by small-town coachmen who had transported the rail-road passengers from suburban stations to adjoining towns. When auto-taxis were introduced, the passengers switched their patronage to them little by little.

In addition to passengers, the teamsters had been wont to transport all sorts of merchandise. Long haul shipments of commodities from cities to town merchants, and vice versa, were handled by the railroad. The teamsters and carters attended to the short hauls from the suburban railroad stations to nearby small towns, and thus earned enough to sustain their families, as well as their feeble nags. In times of depression, some teamsters would deprive themselves of necessities in order to feed the old mare—their breadwinner. It was a herculean task for a teamster to acquire a horse, and he could seldom afford to exchange the old mare for a stronger beast.

When asked about conditions in his calling, a teamster would generally reply: "...Not good! The *samochods* the horseless vehicles—an auto will push us out of business. As a matter of fact, they're doing it already..." Another year or two, and the last Ployne coachman will vanish from sight. Instead of coach drivers, you'll see graduate chauffeurs..." "

There could be no question of a teamster, or several of them, pooling resources with a view to purchasing a somochod, a self-propelled vehicle. "...The combined assets of all the Jewish teamsters would not suffice to buy an auto..." Moreover, a single
It eventually came to such a pass that the average teamster did not earn enough "to feed his nag..." Coachmen would mark time all day long around some suburban railroad station. They would offer to transport a passenger to town for a mere 50 groschen (less than 3 cents), or even for 20 groschen.99

In some areas, railroad stations catered to two townships simultaneously. The teamsters and carters of the respective localities would then endeavor to "snatch" the prospects. That would lead to high words and sometimes to clashes between the old line teamsters and the new auto owners.

The slump hit the horse-teams operating within the city as well. The merchants now favored the samochods in the transporting of goods from factories and railroad station to their establishments.

"...Drivers of horse-driven vehicles, ranged along the platform, have been marking time since early morning. They keep cursing their meager earnings under their breath..."100

The general economic decline also affected the carters and the porters who toted crates and sacks of goods on their backs. These human beasts of burden would, on such Warsaw main streets as Gesia, patronized by provincial merchants. When trade had been at its peak, the carters had earned enough to get along. But when a slump set in "...the carters stood by idly. There wasn't a stitch of work..."100a They were unable to keep the wolf from the door; starvation was looming ahead. Their only alternative would be to apply for relief.

1. MINORS

During the depression period, teen-agers had to shoulder some
...In David Meyer's cramped cap-making establishment (his son) Laibe was bent over a machine... Feivke peddles candy in the streets... Laibke Beryl Moshe's, who has not yet turned thirteen, is already apprenticed to Boruch Laib, the teamster... Around the rickety little table are seated the father and his three young sons, the oldest of whom is already earning a little money. The other two do without schooling (for lack of tuition fees). Vigdor, Chemya the rag-picker's young son, is lending a hand by rummaging through trash piles and dumps, all day long... "

j. JUVENILE STREET VENDORS

Children armed with small baskets or crates, filled with such commodities as matches, shoe laces, cookie, candy, and so on, were a common sight, prowling through the streets. They haunted those thoroughfares that swarmed with passers-by. They were on the alert, day and night. During the day they ran in a motley crowd; at night their prospects were mostly strolling couples.

Street peddling was a hard chore. The police hounded the minors as well as adults for lacking licenses, tax delinquency, blocking traffic, etc.

At the approach of an officer of the law, even a juvenile street vendor would run for cover. Evading the police by dashing in and out through the crowds occasionally resulted in partial loss...
In order to attract the attention of pedestrians, the young vendors would rend the air with their praises of their merchandise. When business was slow, they would try to excite the pity in would-be patrons, through their shabby appearance and by referring to the poverty at home. In the summer months, "...some juvenilee vendors would limp on a soiled, bare foot...; and in the winter, they were conspicuous in their fathers' over-sized caps..." As an added spur to patrons, the youngsters would proclaim that "...an ailing mother with infants..." was waiting at home for a few groshen with which to buy food.

The inflationary period with its high cost of living and depreciated currency, left its inroads on the street vendors. Sales were at a minimum, "...At the present high cost of living, a day's income can only fetch a pound of bread..." Many homes could not carry on without the youngsters' contributions.

"...Aaron's livelihood is in a great measure contingent upon (his son) Flevke's earnings." In some families the young vendors were the sole bread-winners. These unfortunates thrived on bread and potatoes.

During the ensuing slump, the street vendors suffered alike with the rest. The system of taxation became more and more coercive; the internal revenue officials used harsh methods. The consumers had no money with which to go on shopping; the street vendors too suffered from this. The evil of unemployment brought about a new crop of vendors, and that increased competition in turn spelled doom for all of them. There could be no talk of normal
competition under such circumstances. The juvenile hawkers... did not let go...they clung like leeches... which, in the main, was ineffective. Consumers wriggled out of "...youngsters' trade tricks for wangling a few markas... The net result was that "...Feivke had just come back from the market place, without encountering a single customer for his candy... Poverty and hunger frequently drove the minors to petty thievery.

"...Children made off with loaves from the bread hawker's stall..."

Among the carters and porters squatting at the railroad stations there was a sprinkling of youngsters who had to supplement their parents' income. Some of them were "hunchbacked"; while others were still mere children. They were on the alert for incoming merchants with valises and parcels, and would offer to carry the luggage for a few groschen. They would crawl out from "under soiled bedding" at dawn, in order not to miss the first incoming train, which always carried the greatest number of passengers. Sometimes it was no easy matter to awaken the children, because of their exhaustion from overwork. Once more, however, it didn't take the young workers long to slip into their tattered clothes—especially since they had no shoes to wear. With the parents also leaving for the whole day to eke out some sort of a living—and no one left to prepare a meal—the juveniles would hug a chunk of black bread and be off. The young had to subsist on this same dry bread during the day. On some days the young crew were lucky to bring home a few groschen, thus supplementing their parents' meager earnings.
Chapter VI

Other Occupations

The makler operated in the market-place. He had to make himself known to the various business establishments and hobnob with the tradesmen; he had to ascertain what merchandise was offered for sale, and then try to find a buyer for it. Sometimes such a transaction was a mere routine for the makler. At other times, he would

Leaving any established business, a makler like ... She had sometimes be pacing the streets, and come home with an empty purse... In the morning such a luft-menach had to be concerned with money... for rent, for the grocer and for the milkman... In means of support at home, when earnings dwindled, consisted of borrowing— if credit was still available. In some instances, such as that of ... Rachel and her husband who hadn't a coin of food for the day..., the destitute had to beg a piece of bread from his or her neighbors.
The economic insecurity of Jews in Poland, the lack of a permanently dependable source of income, manifested itself in the sphere of the mekler, or middleman. The mekler was the typical luft-mensch, the bench warmer, the fellow who twiddles his thumbs, hunting for a new job every other day. His calling consisted of helping purchaser and seller completing a business transaction, locating merchandise or dwelling places, etc.; in short, somehow earning a commission that would see him through for the day. The mekler had to have business contacts, he had to gain the confidence of his fellow men; and, at times, had to arbitrate grievances between two traders.1

Lacking any established business, a middleman like "...Simul would sometimes be pacing the streets, and come home with an empty purse..."2 In the morning such a luft-mensch had to be concerned about money "...for rent, for the grocer and for the milkman..."3 The means of support at home, when earnings dwindled, consisted of borrowing—if credit was still available. In some instances, such as that of "...Rachel and her husband who hadn't a morsel of food that day...",4 the destitute had to beg a piece of bread from kin or neighbors.

The mekler operated in the market-place. He had to make the rounds of the various business establishments and hobnob with traders; he had to ascertain what merchandise was offered for sale, and then try to find a buyer for it. Sometimes such a transaction was a mere routine for the middleman. At other times, he would
some middlemen were forced to ask for an advance of 5 złoty (approximately $1.25), to pass on to their wives, for purchasing food...7

Some middlemen specialized in one field, as for instance, serving the gentry. The wealthy landed proprietors used to engage such Jews for the sole purpose of estimating and disposing of their yearly crops. Thus, "...Yehaiah, the mekler, engaged by Kishilewski, the squire..."8 or the mekler catering to the country gentlemen, Dombrowski and Hallik..."9 earned few guldenas..."10 in such items as cucumbers.
The leading merchants constantly utilized the services of meklers. When there was a great demand for goods, such an intermediary could be of great service in procuring merchandise, and in the event of a surplus of goods, in helping to dispose of it. These intermediaries performed a useful function. A certain commodity might be gathering dust in one business establishment, and be in great demand in another. Or, a trader pressed for spot cash, might be willing to dispose of his accumulated wares at a sacrifice. In such instances the middleman, keeping an eagle eye on local affairs, could steer the transaction to a successful conclusion.10

Thus, when "a mekler returned home, tired... and the day was not at all bad..."11 all was well. But unfortunately, such days were rare. To make matters worse, the trade bristled with newcomers. Bankrupt merchants, drifters and others were drawn to this field. This situation brought about cut-throat competition. Occasionally, several middlemen would work on the same project, unaware of one another's efforts. That naturally stirred up dissension.

"...Yonah, the mekler, fetched Shmul a blow, for butting in on the negotiations for a small food-shop."12

In due time the category of middlemen was augmented by individuals devoid of any skill or money "...and with all other sources of income dried up..."13 Success for these people depended a great deal on luck. As is the case with individuals falling from their high estate, they would team up in partnerships, in any hit-or-miss way. They had little to lose. But if such a venture took a favorable turn, the cheered luft-menschen would continue to trade with "...the newly earned few guldens..."14 In such items as cucumbers,
The mekler category also included those who eked out a living as money-lenders. They were popularly known as "discounters", "percenters" and "brokers". Merchants who were denied a loan in a bank would turn to these "discounters" as a last resort, since they charged a much higher interest rate. Some men had enough spare cash for loans to earn a livelihood thus. "...Feivle (the discounter of Godlebozhitz) has considerable money, and reaps great profits through his manipulations..." Others, without any funds of their own, acted as intermediaries between merchant and money-lender. Interest that ran as high as 15% per month caused the money lenders to be frowned upon as "...usurers and skinflints..." Some traders who had borrowed from them were driving to bankruptcy because of their exorbitant interest rates.

In numerous cities and trade-concessions served as another source of income for Jews. Such agencies represented manufacturers or wholesale dealers, both in procuring raw materials and in disposing of the finished products. In Lodz such agents rated as intermediaries between the provincial retail trader and the manufacturer or wholesaler in the metropolis. In contrast with the meklers who would pound the sidewalks of the market-place, soliciting trade, these agents ran their business from established offices. The out-of-town retail merchant preferred to trade with an established
that except for a few of the local market situation and could serve him in accordance with his specific needs. The established agency was more reliable, and technically more conversant with the fluctuating prices and quality of the diverse commodities and thus in a better position to serve the small trader. Some of the Lodz agents specialized exclusively in handling certain merchandise, such as wool cloth, cotton yarn, or kindred textiles.\textsuperscript{19}

The commiss-voyageurs, the traveling salesmen, toured the country, armed with their firms' samples, making the rounds of local dealers and "drumming up trade." These commercial travelers, such as \"...Eli, who traveled on behalf of Schneller & Co., manufacturers of technical items...\"\textsuperscript{20} worked on a commission basis. Their calling was arduous. \"Forever en route, away from home, some were apprehensive \"lest the revenue officers would harass their wives\"\textsuperscript{21} during their absence. \ldots Subject to federal tax laws on a par with others, they were frequently delinquent in their tax payments.

COMMISSION MERCHANTS

In numerous cities and townships Jews earned a living as commission merchants. These agents would receive goods on consignment from a manufacturer or wholesale dealer. Thus, \"on the sale of a box of boots or shoes, they would realize a profit of 3 zloty...\"\textsuperscript{22} Commission merchants preferred to deal with the artisans who plied their trade at home. And the latter were also pleased, as they could thus dispose of their entire stock all at once. Some commission merchants operated single-handed, both in purchasing and disposing of the commodities, except for an occasional helping hand from relatives. On the other hand, there were commissioners who operated on...
...Israel, the boat commissioner (in Zhelechow) used to delegate Pinchas to the border provinces... where some of his customers resided... When one doesn't drop in on them (to collect) they pretend to forget..."²³

The rivalry among the commission merchants led to dissension. Thus "...Israel and Lipish (in Zhelechow) have become bitter enemies...²⁴ When both factions incurred too many losses as a result of this rivalry, they patched up their differences. But the moment one could circumvent the new pact of cooperation, he endeavored to lure patrons again through a more attractive offer than the other fellow had made. Such trade wars were bound to have their casualties: some lost their managerial assets, and dropped out of the race.

D. WHITE COLLAR WORKERS

The havoc wrought by World War I on industry and commerce also of course disrupted the lives of the workers engaged in these fields. Numerous business establishments had to shut down, thus swelling the ranks of the unemployed. A few people exploited the newly-created warr conditions in the field of commerce, and were lucky enough to make a fortune. The majority simply tried to weather the storm in one way or another, a few being hired by the German authorities.

The status of the white collar class changed very little during the post-war years of independent Poland. The evils of speculation, smuggling and blackmarketeering continued to plague the white collar class. A good many of the latter category could not find employment, because "...the firm went out of business..." Those still fortunate
Mina works for the Bureau. But all she earns there is a bare subsistence...

It was no easy matter for a clerk to provide for a whole family during this period of inflation. Even a lifelong employee as "...Jakub Winkler, the bookkeeper, of the banking firm of Koenig Brothers in Warsaw..." had an uphill struggle. Housewives had to mend old, torn underwear.

"...The children wear torn shirts; the husband's overcoat is frayed and shabby... And the housewife has not bought a new garment since her marriage..."

The frozen wages of the white collar worker were another disadvantage in his struggle for existence. Despite the devaluation of the currency, employers were reluctant to raise an employee's wages, on the pretense that "...the business conditions don't permit it (?)..."

And even when a raise was granted to a clerk, it was not commensurate with the spiralling prices of food and other products.

"...Whenever he (Jakub Winkler) starts contributing a little more toward the household expenses, it is clear that he received a raise. Yet his wife continues mending the children's shirts and knee-pants..."

Very few, indeed, could afford a vacation. One could avail himself of such luxury only once in two or three years. "...Jakub Winkler remarked that he cannot afford such a thing (as a vacation)..."

When someone became ill, he didn't have the money for medication.

The low-paid clerk who had to contribute to the support of his family would find himself in desperate straits upon losing his job. The unskilled clerk's earnings permitted of no savings for a rainy day.
When hard-pressed, such an individual resorted to selling household belongings, as well as economizing wherever possible.

"...The widowed Mrs. Finkel asked the grocer for flour for the afternoon meal. On hearing the price, she became alarmed and turned on her heel. She proceeded to sell household belongings and garments, in order to tide her over a difficult period." 33

With the stabilization of the currency, the economic situation of the white collar worker improved considerably. For one thing, the fluctuation of commodity prices ceased then also. But even this economic reform did not make it possible for white collar workers to live in comfort.

"...Pinchas earned ten zloty a week... His wife racked her brains on how to make ends meet with that sum." 34

Such was the situation in Zhelechow.

The pharmacist-clerk in Godlebozhitz fared no better. Living quarters on the premises were a part of the remuneration that"Panna [Miss] Mina received from the Isidore Zonshein"Pharmacy. If a drug clerk had to support some of his kin, it was difficult for him. Twenty zloty (approximately $5.00) would just about provide bare subsistence for a family of three. Nothing could be spared from that sum for clothing, children’s tuition fees, or coal for the winter. 35

When one had to replace a tattered garment, especially on the eve of a holiday, one had "to pawn things, and get over head and ears in debt." 36

In view of the low standard of living of white collar workers, especially in small towns, a nominal salary rise would have proved a
...If only he could have earned another 5 gulden ($1.00) a week, he would have been satisfied..."38

The young white collar workers, who started as apprentices in various offices were especially exploited. Young office clerks had to work for a year or two without compensation, under the pretext that they were apprentices. Then followed a monthly wage of 40 to 50 zloty ($8.00 to $10.00). Even head bookkeepers in "Feivele Shpielman's Co-operative Bank..."39 earned only 100 zloty a month, after holding this job for a year. The highest raise granted white collar workers, say, in a provincial co-operative bank amounted to 20% to 30%. To show the disparity in salaries, it may not be amiss to mention that a bank director received 800 zloty a month.40

Despite the low salaries which were also paid by the Jewish public agencies, white collar positions in these organizations were coveted by the Jewish middle class as a solution to the difficulties with which many of them had to grapple. A steady income, be it ever so small, was a great boon to a struggling breadwinner. Another reason why the middle class welcomed even such low-paying jobs was because they were barred from federal and municipal employment.

c. ACADEMIC YOUTH

The Jewish student body was another category whose economic
The newly-fledged doctor was anxious to live for a few years in a big city, with its great hospital facilities. But these facilities were already crowded to capacity; and Jews were barred from government-controlled hospitals and infirmaries. It was inevitable that such young doctors as "...Dr. Gabriel Priver—the doctor without a practice..."42 should return to the small towns, from which they had hoped to get away. Nevertheless, though "...there would be no dearth of sick people..."43 in a small community, medical practitioners hesitated to settle there. For one thing, they felt some awe for the metropolis, because "...in Warsaw such things as good medical facilities are a dime a dozen..."44 They did not relish the idea of being stranded in a provincial town. The restricted practice there and the local poverty did not especially appeal to a young medico. The independent doctor could choose his domicile. A young doctor would return to his native town, presumably just for vacationing; but in reality to sound out possibilities for permanent settlement. In the long run, "...after spending twelve years in dormitories studying on an empty stomach, sleeping at railroad-stations,..."45 one often remained an unemployed doctor, without prospects for economic security.

d. THE CLERGY AND ITS SUPPORTING STAFF

This Jewish clergy was maintained by the kehillah, or local community. The rabbi, the beadle and the ritual slaughterer, were public officials in all the Jewish communities. Their number depended
upon the will of the Jewish populace. The larger the community, the greater the number of assistant-rabbi, beadles and ritual-slaughterers—but only one rabbi, one spiritual leader. A small community had fewer functionaries, apart from its one spiritual leader.

The outbreak of the war which laid waste numerous Jewish communities, also undermined the economic well-being of the Jewish religious functionaries. The expulsions did not spare the rabbis, who went along at the head of their congregations of refugees. In some communities, the rabbis were real victims of the Czarist despot and his hordes, being taken as hostages and either exiled or put to death. In some communities, the rabbis were real victims of the Czarist despot and his hordes, being taken as hostages and either exiled or put to death. During the occupation period the status of the Jewish clergy varied. Some communities, unable to provide any more for the upkeep of their rabbi, their beadle and the ritual slaughterer, enjoined them to shift for themselves. With the exception of the rabbis, religious functionaries also were drawn into the sphere of smuggling and speculation. The spiritual leader, representing the community, was granted some concession which was calculated to benefit the public as a whole, by the forces of occupation. Thus, "the Rabbi of Godlebozhitz was authorized by the Austrian authorities to import a carload of flour for the Passover matzoth." However, in some communities where the rabbi avoided profiting from such special privileges, he not infrequently suffered hunger and want.

In independent Poland the Jewish clergy once again became officials in their communities. "The rabbi receives an allowance (pension) from the community." Yet this class continued to be sorely pressed. Their allowances were insufficient to make ends meet, especially during the periodic slumps. In Smolin, for instance, the
ordinarily the co-operative basis. Thus, their spiritual leader substituted black bread and cucumbers. Ordinarily, rabbis looked for supplementary sources of income, such as a concession on yeast (for baking purposes), trading in books of Holy Writ, and so on. In Poland, the ecclesiastical group occasionally earned a few złoty through officiating at engagement and marriage ceremonies, at circumcision rites, arbitration procedures, and the like.

POSTSCRIPT

The lot of this class, just as of other social groups, depended upon the general economic conditions of the country. In prosperous times the theatre, the writers' group, and those dabbling in other fine arts, fared well. In times of economic depression, attendance at the theatres would fall off; and the sale of books, magazines and newspapers, as well as artistic products, would decline considerably. Taking into consideration that their main income derived from the broad masses, whose economic position had always been sub-standard, it is not hard to fathom the lot of the actors, who, at best, had to make the rounds of the various leading communities, which they referred to as Auftritt.

In general, however, actors worked on a co-operative basis. Thus, the proceeds of each performance were apportioned among the members of the troupe, according to a certain schedule. The meager resources of a wandering dramatic troupe were evident when it arrived in a small town. In the absence of regular theatre facilities, such halls generally belonged to the local sports or firemen's society; or the company might have to perform in an old wooden barn. Their costumes were mostly shabby and tattered, and the actors had to use their ingenuity to keep things going. Timely they did not overlook the bright The front seats which were higher priced generally remained...
wants in the small towns..." Even the cheaper seats frequently stayed empty. Occasionally, the attending public would be consulted as to whether "the show was to go on." The proceeds, at best, "barely covered the expense of food and lodging." Such performances rarely yielded profits for a rainy day.

POSTSCRIPT

The Yiddish authors of Poland, who hailed chiefly from the plain people, endeavored to mirror in prose and verse their milieu "...from the thistles to the divine spark that flashed occasionally for a fleeting moment..." They wanted to set forth the meaning of true beings, the aspirations and rebuffs of their arduous lives. But only a few succeeded in this, through the medium of the autobiographical novel. Usually the author and his problems were disguised in the characters and action of his short stories.

The majority were thrust by an invisible hand onto the dusty, bustling fairday. "...They suddenly found themselves in the labyrinth of life, the life of the masses, from which they (the authors) had emerged. The author was himself 'a slave among slaves...'"

As one of them, his interest was first focused on the masses, and "...he completely forgot to tell about himself..." These writers expressed the grief and anger of the oppressed individual and the harassed multitude. Now and then, they would raise their "...clenched fists at the heavens...and at the masters of the world..." in connection with the injustice and outrages committed against Polish Jewry. But at the same time they did not overlook the bright and cheerful side, the ardor and kindness, ethical standards which
These literary men served the common people and, inspired with faith and courage, they dreamed of "filling...the gap...of attaining perfection."61 But the Nazi holocaust that engulfed Europe silenced their voices.

The tragic period reflects the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows, the struggle and decline, and the workings of the Jews in Poland. The common concern, as expressed by all writers of the period, was that the Jewish community in Poland was in a state of decline, a decline beginning with the First World War which brought physical destruction to hundreds of Jewish communities. The survivors of that war inherited misery and poverty (notwithstanding those few who made capital of the war; those smugglers and speculators to whom war is life). The masses, of Jews left desolate by it—all masses suffered.

Contributing to the decline of the Jewish community in "occupied" Poland, more than anything else, were a rising materialism among the Poles and the plan for an economy which included the ultimate elimination of the Jew. The areas in which private initiative was possible were diminished year by year, as economic activities of the Government increased. The State rose to the greatest business entrepreneur and the deciding factor in the economic life of the country. The individual, in his search for employment, becomes more and more dependent upon the Government,
CONCLUSION

The study of Jewish fiction literature written in Poland during the period between the two world wars has proved unquestionably the value of literature as a source of historical data. It has enabled the recent past of Polish Jewry to be reconstructed within the closest boundaries of the truth.

As true literature should, the Jewish literature of that troubled period reflects the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows, the struggle and decline, and the workings of the Jews in Poland. The common concern, as expressed by all writers of the period, was that the Jewish community in Poland was in a state of decline, a decline beginning with the first world war which brought physical destruction to hundreds of Jewish communities. The survivors of that war inherited misery and poverty (notwithstanding those few who made capital of the war: those smugglers and speculators to whom war is life). The masses, of Jews left desolate by it—the masses suffered.

Contributing to the decline of the Jewish community in "resurrected" Poland, more than anything else, were a rising nationalism among the Poles and the plan for an economy which included the ultimate elimination of the Jew. The areas in which private initiative was possible were diminished year by year, as the economic activities of the Government increased. The State became the greatest business entrepreneur and the deciding factor in the economic life of the country. The individual, in his search for employment, became more and more dependent upon the Government,
which practiced open discrimination against Jews. The doors of employment, controlled more and more by government, were closed to ruined Jewish businessmen as well as Jewish industrial and white-collar workers and professional men.

Furthermore, private and cooperative Polish businesses found it convenient to follow the Government's suit in discriminating against the Jews, contributing greatly to the displacement of Jews from Poland's economic life. Jews in Poland found themselves in the middle of one of the biggest struggles in their history. They were discriminated against from all sides. Thanks to constant agitation, and even force, the Polish populace found it more than prudent to bypass Jewish business enterprises. The enormous taxation on the Jews, the many newly-enacted economic laws (such as the "Moratorium" and the confiscation of Jewish-owned monopoly concessions)--all these, together with the national boycott, hastened their economic downfall.

They were powerless to resist the mounting pressure from without because of their decline as an indispensable economic factor. Their influence disappeared as their economic functions grew less.

To say the situation called for a curtailment of education and such luxuries as marriages is an understatement; often there was not money enough for food. The enervating process of pauperization made deep inroads among Polish Jews. The vast majority lived a hand-to-mouth sort of existence; their major concern was somehow to meet the demands of each day, while each day saw their hope grow less. The number of bankruptcies and suicides multiplied.
Perhaps the first, and for a while, the only Jews to feel the brunt of the economic crisis were the artisans, and those of the lower social strata. Never sufficiently endowed with capital even when times were "good," and the demand comparatively great, they were the first to face collapse with the advent of economic crisis. Not the least of their harassments were new laws requiring them to prove "sufficient knowledge" of their trades. The examination boards consisted mainly of non-Jewish Polish artisans, competitors in the field. Obviously, the times were not propitious for the establishment of Jewish workshops.

But it was on a point somewhat further down the economic ladder the Jewish writers of the day focused. Jewish factory workers, street vendors, hawkers, peddlers—persons to whom misery and poverty were never total strangers—became appealing to writers because they seemed for once to mirror the plight of great segments of the Jewish population. However mean had been their existence, government propaganda succeeded in making them even more miserable. Especially affected among this group were those who for their living relied on trade with Poland's rural population; those itinerant businessmen who were spat upon and kicked by customer after customer. And the Jewish factory worker suddenly found himself deprived of social security because his place of employment "did not meet the requirements of the Law."

But whatever the concern of the writers, it is important not to forget that the Government's economic policy toward the Jews did not omit the wealthy manufacturers and merchants, those comparative few who could forestall the ineluctable for a time and who were perhaps the fairest game of all. The Jewish manufacturer was
Many Jewish industrialists followed "suggestions" to take in non-Jews as partners, or hire them as representatives, in order to obtain government contracts. Jewish wholesalers, or wholesalers' representatives, were not able, however, to protect themselves even that little. Non-Jews in the field found it easy enough, thanks to government support and encouragement, to step in and take over whole businesses.

Yet in spite of discrimination and economic strife, Jews set a remarkable record in the field of Culture. Theatre, art, education, and literature enjoyed an access of appreciation among Polish Jews. And there were social institutions set up for public welfare. Perhaps, and for many of the wrong reasons, one of the most glorious periods in Polish-Jewish history was that period between the two world wars.

The writers were aware of the fact that there were too many merchants, too many craftsmen, too many among the Jews who looked for livelihood in the same places. They hoped that a relief could be found in a large scale emigration and restructuration of Jewish economic structure. While the former depended on external factors, the latter could eventually be achieved through extensive efforts of the Jewish community itself. Almost to the last, Jewish writers during that period embraced what they called the "real Poland," the Poland which had once provided a safe haven for Jews fleeing oppression, discrimination and hate. Despite the fact that there was more poverty than wealth, that there prevailed
helped. Dr. Julius Hirsch believed that even in the last days of the anti-Semitic propaganda, Polish Jews could still live in peace with the Polish masses. But the distant specter of Hitler grew very real one day and destroyed all hope for peace for the Jews in Poland, and ultimately the Jews themselves.


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19. Ibid., p. 75.

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30. Loc. cit.

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I bid.

See below about children.

43. I bid.

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