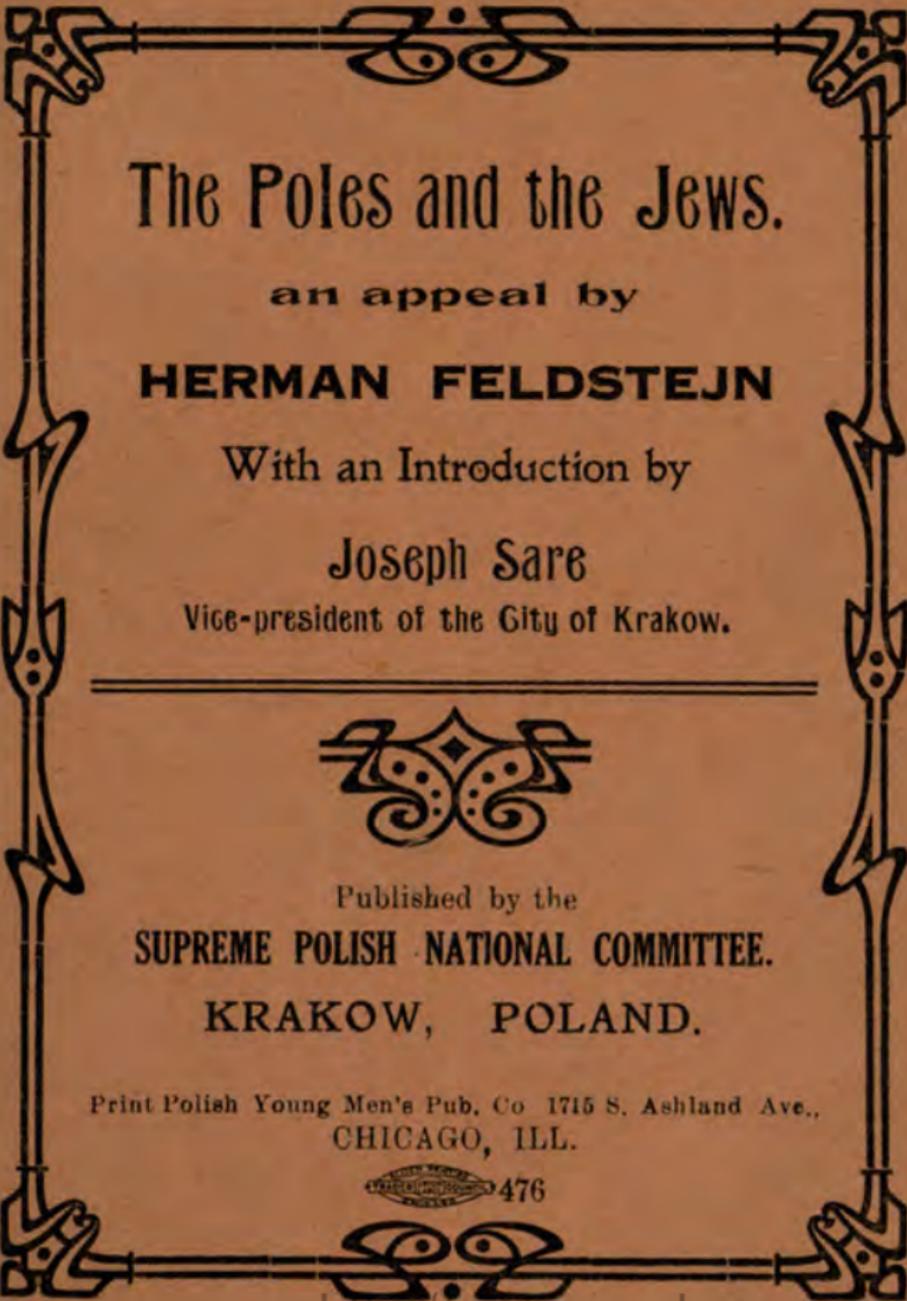


Sare The Poles and the Jews



The Poles and the Jews.

an appeal by

HERMAN FELDSTEJN

With an Introduction by

Joseph Sare

Vice-president of the City of Krakow.



Published by the
SUPREME POLISH NATIONAL COMMITTEE.
KRAKOW, POLAND.

Print Polish Young Men's Pub. Co 1715 S. Ashland Ave.,
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<http://rcin.org.pl>

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INTRODUCTION.

The holiest and deepest feelings, the fervent patriotism, the hope and belief in a bright and steady future, as well as all human passions, high and low, have been aroused by this great War, which shook whole Europe in her foundations. No country has been more affected by the war than my native land, and none has to be more anxious about its future than Poland. Will she always be a plaything of the interests of others?

Only foreign interests in this time of bloody struggle for a future could accuse a whole civilized nation of a hatred toward three and a half million Jewish fellow citizens, my co-religionists, that for centuries have lived in peace in Poland, where they found a complete freedom of faith and in fact their second Native Land.

The relation of the Jews to the Poles is being explained in this booklet by one of the leaders of the Jewish intellectuals of Lemberg. Herman Feldstejn was some thirty years ago at the head of the Jewish University students, which started the movement of a cultural and national amalgamation of Jews with the Poles. As editor for many years of the Polish Lemberg weekly "Ojczyzna"—Our Country—and later as secretary of the educational institution of Baron Hirsch, Mr. Feldstejn is one of the best authorities upon the Jewish question in Poland. For many years a member of the City Council of Lemberg and director of a great bank is Mr. Feldstejn one of the most prominent citizens of the capital of Galicia. No other writer could

be better qualified to expose in so impartial a way the relation of the Polish Jews to the Polish nation as a whole. No other man could be guided by a greater love for his country and for his co-religionists.

May this pamphlet lead to the discovery of the truth.

JOSEF SARE,
Vice-President of the City of Cracow.

The great war is raging through the Polish lands. Neither town nor village, palace nor hut has been spared. Where only a year ago the country pulsed with work and life, nothing is left but ruin and devastation. The fields were made over into trenches; factories and workshops were turned into cemeteries; town dwellings and country palaces that escaped by some chance the cannon fire have been pillaged and demolished—the last provisions requisitioned by passing armies. In place of yesterday's prosperity came hunger, want, suffering and all kinds of sorrow. Hundreds of thousands of families were compelled to leave their homes under unspeakable privations and to become a burden on public charity far away from their homes in some stranger's land. Hundreds of thousands that remained on the spot had to flee into the deep of the forests to save their bare lives from fire and sword.

In the face of this calamity, which befell whole Poland with scarcely any exception, all are equal, all classes of the population—the rich as well as the poor, the city dwellers and the peasants; all differences between classes and religions disappear be-

force the common sorrow and distress. For, if not all have been affected alike by the devastation, all suffer alike under the strain of anxiety for the fate of those millions of men who stand in the field and saturate with their blood the soil of their own country and of others; equal is the sorrow of the wives and mothers of those who fell in battles, or disappeared, perhaps never to return; equal the pity for the endless ranks of those maimed and crippled for life by the war.

Happy are those who stand in the field. They give their lives and their blood for a happier future of their nation, united as they are by their love of their country, which protects them and to which they belong with every fibre of their beings, united through the consciousness of their community in serving the highest ideals that can stir the souls of men. But not even this comfort has been granted to the Polish nation. Theirs is the lot to fight in the ranks of their enemies and to draw the deadly weapon, brother against brother. Hundreds of thousands of Poles fight under the banners of the two Central Powers; hundreds of thousands are opposed to them in the ranks of the Russians; and only the tens of thousands of volunteers of the Polish legions which fight against Russia show to which side the sympathies of the Polish nation incline, from where she awaits the realization of her hopes, her regeneration and unification in order to be able to live her own national and economic life, and, furthermore, never to have again to fight in another great struggle, brother against brother, at the will of foreign

powers. And the fighting of brother against brother is in this case not to be taken figuratively; this great war which shakes whole Europe has shown it to be a literal, terrible truth.

In this great struggle for its national resurrection, for which the Polish nation is striving, where so much young blood is being shed, where hundreds of thousands of mothers are resignedly prepared to lose their dearest and their best, where all forms of horror, want, misery and terror are being endured, what should we care for all the small differences of every day; how small should look to us all the class and confession quarrels of yesterday. They are all there, in the ranks of the great armies, even in the ranks of the volunteers of the Polish legions—the great land-owner and the peasant, the aristocrat and the commoner, collegemen, writers, artists of renown, professors, school teachers, artisans and working men, Christians and Jews, all united by the thought about the future of their country, by the hope for free Poland. Never would my son have joined the Polish legion at the first day of the great war, if he did not feel, as I do, that free Poland will be an equally just and loving mother to all her sons, even for those who have been disinherited the first day they were born.

Why should anybody bring a discord into our ranks in the very moment when they have to stand closer together than ever before? Why should anybody listen to slander at a time when the truth must needs to be ascertained? We need and we want to hear at this time encouragement and not discouragement.

ment from our friends, from the friends of the Poles as well as of the Polish Jews.

* * * * *

The prominent Danish writer Brandes and the distinguished Italian statesman Luzzati charge the Polish nation with anti-semitism; they accuse the Poles of persecuting the Jews, with arranging "pogroms" with the open or at least an implied approval of the educated classes in Poland. This accusation, which could deprive the Poles of the sympathy of the entire enlightened and educated humanity, is grave enough and can be utilized by all evil-minded elements as an argument against the right of the Poles to regain their political independence. That is why such an accusation cannot be left without an adequate explanation and an emphatic refutation.

But where in all the world have the pogroms of Jews taken place in Poland? Where and in what manner have the Jews been persecuted in Poland? In Prussian Poland, in the Province of Posen, the Jewish population constitutes such a small percentage that the Jewish question simply does not exist there. Economical conditions, which do not come within the compass of this small paper, have brought forth a steady, peaceful emigration of the Jewish element from this part of Poland into the great German industrial centers. In Prussian Poland the Jews do not constitute for many years any important factor of the population, either in national or in economical direction. Where there are no Jews, or where they are so few as in Prussian Poland, there

can exist no persecution of Jews, and the accusers of the Poles did not look for it in that part of Poland.

The conditions are different, however, in Galicia, in Austrian Poland. The Jews constitute in that province (1910) 10.86 per cent of the whole population; their proportion in the cities reaches often 30 per cent, and exceptionally, as for instance in Brody, they represent the majority of the population. The Poles, who constitute in West Galicia 98 per cent. (in Galicia as a whole the Poles represent 58.50 per cent, the rest being the Ruthenians in East Galicia and the Jews), enjoy in that province an extended self-government; there is a Polish diet (Landtag) and an executive body in Lemberg for the whole province; the cities, as Lemberg and Cracow, have their own statutes; in no other part of the old Republic of Poland do the Poles in such a degree possess the influence over the social and economical life of the country. In Austrian Poland the Poles alone would be responsible for any persecution of the Jews, for any pogroms.

What is then the condition of Jews in Galicia? In the economic sphere, which, here, as everywhere, is the main field of friction between different classes of the population, the emancipation of the peasantry in the last thirty years has not been accomplished without some loss to Jewish trade. Some few Jewish industrial circles had been impoverished through this domestic economical process, and it took years to heal those wounds. But nowhere and in no case this process of internal development took any form

that could be interpreted even by the most sensitive party in any way as a persecution of Jews. On the contrary, while in the last quarter of the last century the differences between the economic interests of the peasantry and the Jews were propitious to the existence of an anti-semitic peasant press, led by an influential agitator, Father Stojalowski, and while in those times some anti-Jewish outbreaks occurred in West Galicia, which were unmercifully suppressed by the local Polish authorities, the influence of that anti-semitic priest sank so low with time that he remained thoroughly isolated in the last years of his life. On the other side, the struggle with Stojalowski was instrumental in creating a strong and independent Polish People's Party, which counts at present the great majority of Polish peasants in her ranks. The opposition of this party to Father Stojalowski is characteristic of its attitude toward the Jews. The Polish People's Party got rid so thoroughly of all anti-semitic tendencies and exorcences, it was active so successfully in the work of enlightenment of the Polish peasantry, that, when several years ago the party split on account of some discrepancies inside of itself into two inimical factions, none of those factions came back to the poisoned arms of Anti-semitism. In the Polish cities of Galicia—and in almost all cities of that province the Poles constitute a majority—the anti-semitic propaganda never was able to take root since the beginning of the autonomous era. In no city of Galicia were there ever any anti-semitic outbreaks. In spite of many questions of competition that dis-

turb the unity between the Christian and Jewish merchants and tradesmen, the consciousness of the solidarity of their common interests in the cities grows so extensively that an interdenominational class feeling sprang up and is manifestly on the increase.

The economical contrasts, which generally conceal their propensity for excesses under the cover of religious differences, are being handled presently in a peaceful way with ever increasing success; if they did not cause any outbreaks in the last fifty years, there certainly cannot be any talking about the persecution of Jews in Galicia.

In no country are the Jews more free to follow their love of learning than in Galicia, a country which is under the control of Poles. The percentage of Jewish students in public schools, in high schools and universities exceeds twice and often three times their percentage in the population of the province, because no obstacles are being put in the way of Jews, neither by law nor by fact, to enjoy all the educational facilities. There are teachers and professors of Jewish blood in all institutions of learning; Jews teach as "professores ordinarii" at the old Polish University of Cracow, established five hundred years ago by King Wladislaw Jagiello. The Polish University of Lemberg elected for the year 1812-13 a Jew to the dignity of "Rector Magnificus." What can be more characteristic of the attitude of the Polish educated classes in Galicia toward the Jews? Or have I to remind the readers of the fact that the Polish Academy of Sciences in

Cracow, the highest Polish autonomous institution of learning, elected many Jews to its membership? Or have I to recall that the autonomous Chamber of Attorneys-at-Law in Lemberg, with a majority of Poles, elected a Jew for its president? Or that the autonomous capitals of Galicia, Lemberg and Cracow, with their exclusively Polish City Councils, elected more than once Jews to the office of their vice-presidents? That numerous cities with a Christian-Polish majority elected Jews to the office of presidents? Or that Jews occupy high offices in the courts of justice and constitute a conspicuous part of the renowned membership of the legal as well as the medical professions? Those examples are numberless, and they all go far to demonstrate how far Galicia, a province governed by Poles, is from any persecution of Jews.

This picture, superficial as it is, would not be complete if we did not point out the position of Jews in the political life of Galicia. Of all the great political parties we mentioned already the attitude of the People's Party toward the Jews. The more radical Polish Socialist Party, which includes also almost all Jewish workingmen, is, as everywhere, one of the most liberty loving parties, and no kind of anti-semitism did ever find there the slightest footing. Inside of that party no economical differences between the Christian and Jewish laborers ever made themselves felt.

Really characteristic of relations between the Poles and the Jews in Galicia has been until not long ago the standing of the party which holds in

her hands the political power in the province, which gives to the country the Chief of the autonomous government and the Statthalter, which had until a short time ago the majority in the Legislature, in the County Councils and in the Polish Club in the Parliament of the Empire—the Conservative Party. We can state, to the honor of that party, which for many years has been ruling Galicia, and which, even now, in spite of the growing influence of liberal parties, has still the greatest influence, that never, since she has been organized as a political body, did she allow herself to be polluted by any anti-semitic propaganda, or even by any anti-semitic tendencies.

With the increasing democratization of the country liberal parties gained considerable influence in the last decade of the last century, chiefly in their proper domain, i. e., in the cities. The Polish Democratic Party sprang up of the traditions of the last Polish Parliament and of the free constitution adopted by it in 1791. She is the heir of the struggle for freedom under Kosciuszko in 1794, in which already the Jews took part by raising several Jewish regiments under the command of their own colonel, Berko Josielowicz; she is the successor of Polish insurrections in 1830 and 1863, in which so many Jewish soldiers and officers fought and bled for the freedom of Poland. She is the follower of the great leader from the time of the struggle for political freedom in 1848, the great Polish Democrat, Smolka, who was later for many years president of the Austrian Parliament and whose celebrated speeches in the Legislature of Galicia for the granting of equal

rights to the Jews could even now be studied elsewhere. To that party naturally the Jewish educated classes and the Jewish tradesmen generally felt themselves attracted; inside of that party the process of national amalgamation of Jews and Poles started and grew. The Polish members of Jewish faith in the Galician Diet and in the Parliament of the Empire, elected often from cities in which the Jews did not have a majority at all, joined mostly the Polish Democratic Party. In later years the leader of the Polish Club in the Austrian Parliament was also a member of that party. All that shows the attitude of that party, the strongest and most influential at present in the political life of Galicia, towards the Jews.

Besides that old Democratic Party, another that styles herself as democratic, arose some ten years ago—the National-Democratic Party—which imported her leaders from Russian Poland. That party, in opposition to all other political organizations, has been trying from the beginning to arouse the lowest instincts of the masses, to emphasize in a most atrocious manner the economical antagonism between the Jewish and the Christian parts of population, to put the patriotism of the Jews under suspicion, and to do all she could to remove the Jews from the public and economic life of the province, as a foreign body, of minor worth, or directly detrimental to the community. No matter how strenuously the Polish National Democrats had been denying their tendency to preach in Galicia the race hatred, a thing thoroughly foreign to the Polish

national character, although they defended themselves in their press against the charge of anti-semitism, although they have been concealing not without dexterity and success their true tendencies under the cover of their anxiousness to serve the national interests in all political, social and economic domains, which enabled them to lead astray the public opinion for a long time, the anti-semitic tendency of their activity and their publications burst finally through and manifested itself in a clear way. In the person of the National-Democratic Party an influential anti-semitic party in Galicia arose from which one could expect everything. That party did not even refrain in the election time from trying to intimidate the Jews with a menace that the Christian population would lose its patience if the Jews did not submit to the will of the National Democrats. The Jews refused to submit, and, lo, the promised anti-semitic excesses failed to materialize. And, what more, the Polish anti-semitics that were masquerading under the mantle of National Democracy lost the support of the Christian burghers, in spite of all their promises to protect the Christian tradesmen and merchants against the Jewish competition. The Christian business men of Cracow published even an open renunciation of the National Democrats on account of their anti-semitism, and the Christian burghers of Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, where the Polish National Democracy established her headquarters, could not be induced by any efforts to join that party. So the only chauvinistic Polish party in Galicia suffered a breakdown

through her anti-semitism, in spite of the activity of her press, in spite of her terroristic methods, in spite of the appeal to all modern demagogic ways and means, in spite of flattering the popular humors of the moment, and finally, in spite of the assistance of the powerful similar movement in Warsaw, which they were trying to transplant to Galicia. All their provocation was powerless to create a persecution of Jews, a pogrom in Galicia, which remained free from any of those shameful excesses, so much the more, as there was absolutely no ground for them in the disposition of the public opinion of that province, ruled, as she is, by the Poles. No Asiatic under-currents could find their way into it, in spite of all plotting of the National Democrats. Certainly complaints, more or less justified, can be met with in Galicia as elsewhere in western countries, about social, political or economical neglect of the Jews; but since the Jews in Galicia joined the Poles politically, some by virtue of their education or their actual belonging to the Polish nation, others led by a desire to live in peace with the Polish population (out of 878,000 Jews in Galicia about 850,000 proclaimed themselves as belonging to the Polish nationality at the census of 1910), the Jewish question in that country loses more and more its poignancy and the actual equality of Jews in all fields of public and private life becomes with every day a more acknowledged fact.

There are 2,600,000 Jews in the Kingdom of Poland. They constituted 13.90 per cent of the population in 1890, and notwithstanding a considerable

emigration their percentage in 1910 was 14.64. The main cause of this strong increase of Jews in the Kingdom of Poland is to be looked for in the policy of Russia, that continues to exclude the Jews out of the whole empire with the exception of the Kingdom of Poland, of Lithuania, White and Small Russia, Bessarabia and the province of Cherson. Through consistent, sporadically organized pogroms Russia drives gradually the rest of the Jews that live in other provinces into Poland. The immigration of Russian Jews in great numbers into Poland did not result into any advantage to the Polish Jews. Not only their economical situation became impaired, for the native Polish Jews were the first to suffer under the competition of their numerous Russian coreligionists; but, what is more, the Russian Jews through their influx into Poland impaired the peaceful cohabitation of Polish Jews with the native population by their Russianizing tendencies. While the first generation of Russian Jews in Poland, in spite of all that they suffered in Russia, adhered to the Russian language and insisted upon using it in their relations with the Poles, there was some hope, that their children will acquire the Polish language and will drop the practice, that was being looked upon as provocation by the native population, which in spite of all Russianizing efforts of the Russian authorities, of the confiscation of Polish estates, and of other forcible measures, remained Polish to the extent of 73.8 per cent. But this expectation did not materialize, because the Russian Government gave its support and encouragement to the Russian Jews

in Poland for their clinging to the Russian tongue. The same Government that was doing its best to drive the Jews from Russia by the means of special legislation and of pogroms, has been lending its protection to the same Jews in Poland in order to profit from their Russianizing influence. Russia in doing this had two different objects in view: first to deflect the hatred of Poles from the Russians towards the Jews; and second to implant a new ferment in Poland through the creation of a new Jewish question.

The Jewish question in Poland has never been one of religious or racial differences; it has always been an economic and national question. During the short period of independence of the so-called Congress-Poland (1815-1830) and even afterwards, until the year 1863, that was the year of the second Polish insurrection against Russia, the national freedom in the first period and the ever so small amount of self-government in the second brought forth a complete national amalgamation of Jews with the native population and a peaceful competition on the economic field. Warsaw, the capital of the Kingdom, was at the head of the movement of treating the Jews as equal to the Poles. The Jews were admitted there on equal terms to all fields of activity—scientific, economical, industrial and social. Nationally united with the Poles, working together and peaceably competing with them upon all fields of public life, the Jews constituted an acknowledged integral part of the community in the Kingdom of Poland, in such a degree, that until the end of the last century one

could contemplate the Jewish question in Poland as generally solved and therefore nonexistent. In no other literature in the world did the Jews meet with greater sympathy than in the Polish literature of the XIXth century; the glorification of the Polish patriotism of Jews found nowhere a more emphatic expression, than in the greatest Polish national poem—“Pan Tadeusz” of the king of Polish poets, Adam Mickiewicz. Great is the number of the most celebrated Polish poets and writers that praise the love of Polish Jews for their country, or describe their life and sorrows in words of deepest interest and sympathy. The Polish literature of the XIXth century is also in her attitude to the Jewish question a memorial of the most sublime humanism.

This delicate net of understanding between the Polish Nation and the seventh part of the whole population and the third of the population of the cities was a thorn in the side of the policy of Russia, upon which the Poles had no influence at all; and Russia found a way to destroy it. Special laws against the Jews in Poland were promulgated which limited substantially their right to practice free professions; the admission of Jewish youth to all public educational institutions was limited to a small percentage of the whole number of students. Those laws were calculated to create a differentiation between Jews and Christians in the Polish community and to lessen the chances of a Jew to make a living in Poland. The result was an ever growing pauperization of the Jewish element; a dangerous ferment arose, which on one side had the unexpected effect

of driving the Jewish younger generation into the arms of revolutionary parties, and on the other the expected and sought for effect of poisoning the minds and disturbing the friendly relations of the two different parts of the population. The crowding of Russian Jews into Poland and the national opposition between them and the Poles did not fail to aggravate the unpleasant situation. The Jewish question in Poland, after having been almost solved in a satisfactory way by the Poles, has been resurrected by Russia.

The great movement for freedom in Russia, after the unfortunate war with Japan, which awoke so many hopes in the hearts of all peoples of that empire, not only did not change the situation to a better one, but made the things even worse than before. As it brought Russia only a caricature of a Constitution, so it gave to the Jews a deterioration of their situation in the whole empire and an aggravation of their relation to the Polish population in Poland.

The forcible dissolution of the first and the second Duma, until a Government's majority was created out of the darkest and most retrograde elements, followed by the cunning deflection of the general dissatisfaction upon the Jews through atrocious pogroms repeatedly organized under the patronage of the authorities, put a characteristic stamp upon the so-called constitutional era in Russia.

A reflex of these conditions did not fail to manifest itself with irresistible consistency in the Kingdom of Poland. In order to win the sympathy

and the support of that kind of majority in the Duma for the national tendencies of the Poles, the Polish members of the Russian Duma, which were elected in the Kingdom of Poland upon a national platform and belonged mostly to the National-Democratic Party, wrote "war with Jews" upon their banner. That party, originally an oppositional and liberal one, yielded in the third Duma to reactionary currents and became ultra anti-semitic. Under the pretext that it will be a struggle against nationally foreign or directly dangerous elements, a pretext rendered certainly palpable by the behaviour of the Russian Jews settled in Poland, the National-Democrats turned also against the Polish Jews, charging them with being nationally "unreliable." This movement was crowned with success in Warsaw, where the National-Democratic Party became predominant in the course of few years, for it did not shrink from any way, even from denunciation and the most flagrant terrorism, to silence all its opponents. That part of the press of Warsaw that remained true to old Polish traditions and was trying to protect the Jews from the false charges, was declared, according to the approved standard, to be a Jewish press. The most prominent men, that were bold enough to oppose the National-Democrats, were declared to have been corrupted by Jewish money and styled "hired men of the Jews." As the Russian Government naturally gave its support to the National-Democrats, which were preaching a reconciliation of Poland with Russia and propagating a pro-Russian direction of Polish national policy, all

oppositional elements, men most distinguished in science, literature (all but two), also numerous members of liberal professions in Warsaw, all leaders of liberal and labor parties, were compelled to withdraw from public life. Whoever thought differently was not able to stand his ground both against the activity of the National-Democrats and the notorious lawlessness of the Russian authorities. Even the "underground" Poles, the Polish revolutionists, saw themselves forced to assume a waiting position.

The anti-Jewish activity of the National-Democrats reached its climax in 1812, as a consequence of the election in Warsaw to the fourth Duma. The acknowledged leader of that party (Dmowski) found himself unable to win the election against the coalition of Jews, radicals and labor parties. The National-Democrats struck back by proclaiming a boycott against Jewish trade. But even that ultra anti-semitic party did not dare to preach and to organize a pogrom in Poland, although probably she was not averse to such a proceeding. They knew very well that the Polish population of the Kingdom would refuse to follow them on that way, in spite of all that they would do to excite the passions of the masses. There have never been any pogroms in Poland; there were no psychic elements for such a thing as a pogrom in the Polish character, no matter what one would do to excite the passions of the people.

The Poles never did hate the Jews during those all centuries of their history, and a pogrom is unthinkable without the undercurrent of hatred. It

is notable and characteristic, that the extreme excretion of the anti-semitic agitation by the National-Democrats, the boycotting of the Jews in Warsaw and in other cities of the Kingdom, brought the people to their senses. The boycott, inaugurated as it was with great animosity, broke down in a very short time. The economic bands between the both parts of the population of the country proved stronger than words; the Christian population of Poland refused to follow the command not to buy from Jews. The boycott fell flat and very soon voices arose in the public that condemned it openly. The waves of the anti-semitic agitation began to fall, and a more reasonable way to handle the question took their place. Even the anti-semitic press quieted down when the National-Democratic party became aware that she was on the way to a disintegration, as her ranks began to thin out and the most intelligent members began to desert their leaders.

But before the complete disappearance of that party could materialize, the great war came and the party took the advantage of it to hang on the nail the Jewish question, especially as from the beginning of the war the Russian Government took into its own hands the business of persecuting in the most atrocious manner the Jews in Poland. From that moment the National-Democratic Party in Poland put herself without any restriction at the service of the Russian Government. That this will kill the party in the eyes of all Poles of different opinion, in fact of the great majority of the Polish Nation, will be seen after the war, if this war brings with it

the complete separation of the Kingdom of Poland from Russia, the emancipation of the Poles from the pernicious influence of Russian officialdom. The freedom of Poland means freedom for the Jews.

I appeal to all friends of Poland, to all friends of Jews. Do not believe a word of all that calumnies, that tell you about a hatred towards the Jews in Poland, a hatred that degenerated into pogroms. It is all a lie! Three and a half million Jews, more than in any other country in the world, live for hundreds of years in Poland, and enjoy there prosperity and happiness. That much poverty and misery is to be found in that mass, is it not the consequence of poverty and misery amongst other parts of the population? If hundreds of thousands are compelled every year to leave their native land to win their daily bread in far, foreign countries, is it a wonder that there are Jews amongst them? Contribute with your voice and your influence upon the public opinion of the world to the emancipation of Poland, help Poland to become free politically and strong economically, and you will also help the Jews in Poland to regain and enjoy their human dignity, their civic freedom and their economic independence.

May, 1915.

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