OF 76 Church Matters
76c Jewish
Box 8 Sept. 1942

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September 9, 1942

46. C

Respectfully referred to the Department of Labor for appropriate handling.

x 15

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

wdh-mw

Tel. to Pres., 9-4-42 from

Gerald Harris,
Chairman, Educational Committee,
Local 365 UAW CIO
1175 Broad St.,
Newark, N. J.

Urges that Pres. ask opinion of high Rabbinical authorities on question of Jewish defense workers remaining at work during Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur. Says approx. 20% of employees at Brewster Aero. Corp., Newark Plant are Jewish and production would suffer badly by their absence. Says majority have agreed to remain at their benches if given special dispensation by national Jewish leaders.

x 195

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76-e

September 12, 1942

Dear Dr. Wise:

Please accept the President's thanks for your letter of September ninth with which you forwarded advanced copy of JEWISH AFFAIRS.

The President is delighted to receive this study of Hitler's attempt to destroy the institution of the Jewish religion, prepared by the Institute of Jewish Affairs established by the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress.

Very sincerely yours,

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise,
President,
American Jewish Congress,
330 West 42nd Street,
New York, N. Y.

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Mrs Ehrenwerth:

Mary: — I started to file this booklet — but when I saw Rabbi Wise sent it thought I better find out if you want it as he is a pretty big guy in "Jewry". B.B.

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B/B
Thanks - sent
to Study
M -

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ack
9-17

AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS
330 WEST 42nd STREET NEW YORK CITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 9th, 1942

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I send you herewith a copy of "Jewish Religion in Axis Europe," first documented account of Hitler's attempt to destroy the institution of the Jewish religion.

I beg you to read this story of the culminating act of Nazi brutality directed against seven million Jews in Nazi Europe, already the victims of the most brutal oppression, and who are finally being denied even the solace of observing their religion.

The study has been prepared by the Institute of Jewish Affairs, which has been established by the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress, the Director of which is a distinguished authority on minority problems, Dr. Jacob Robinson.

The date of publication of Jewish Affairs is September 11. The period under review covers the whole course of persecution of the Jewish religion since 1933, when Hitler came to power, and more particularly the accelerated reign of terror which began in Poland during the Jewish High Holy Days of September, 1939, and which has since swept across most of the continent of Europe.

We should be glad to have your comment.

Faithfully yours,

Stephen S. Wise

PRESIDENT

SSW:Ssw

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ACKNOWLEDGED

file

Rabbi Weiss

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JEWISH AFFAIRS

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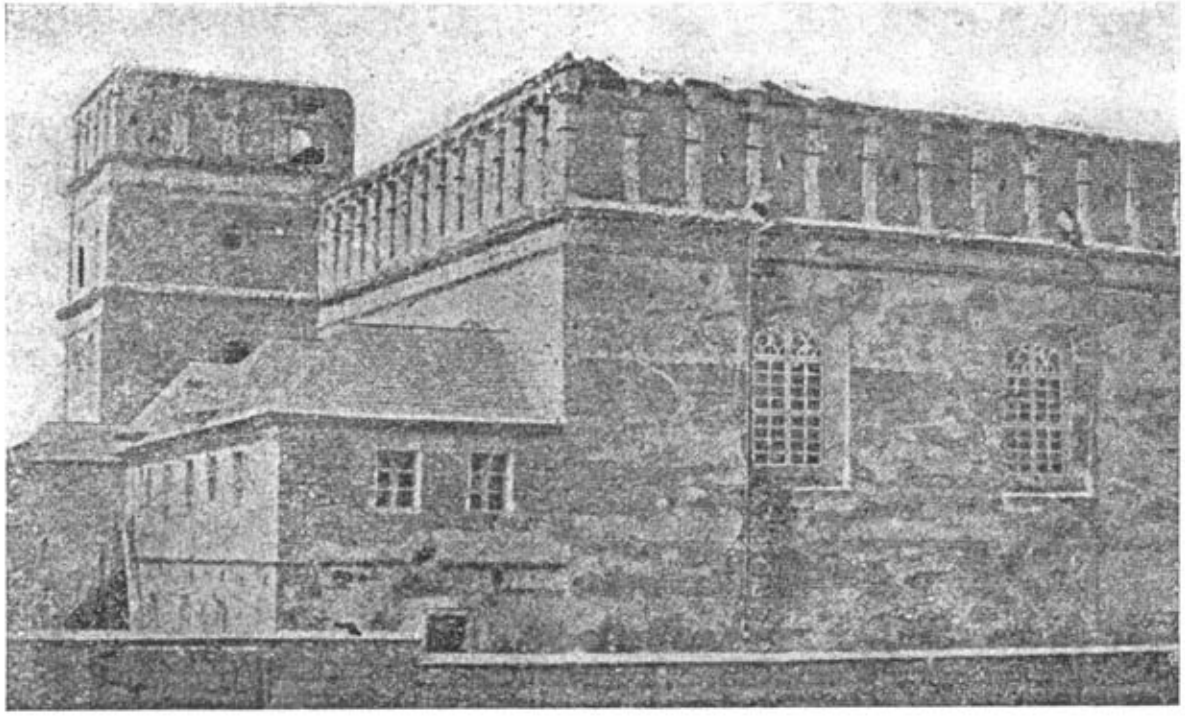
The Jewish Religion in Axis Europe

FORTRESS AGAINST BARBARISM



The fortified synagogue of Luck, Poland (1626)

THE INSTITUTE OF JEWISH AFFAIRS, launched by the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress, functions as a scientific and research organization engaged in analyzing fundamental aspects of Jewish life since the first World War in order to establish the facts of the present situation and to formulate the basis on which Jewish rights and freedom may be secured in a general post-war reconstruction. JEWISH AFFAIRS is published monthly.

Officers: Horace M. Kallen, Jerome Michael, Emil Weitzner, Beryl H. Levy.

Director: Jacob Robinson. Associates: Jacob Lestchinsky, Arieh Tartakower, Max Laserson, Zorah Warhaftig.

Editor: Boris Shub.

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THE JEWISH RELIGION IN AXIS EUROPE

This is the documented record of the Hitlerite attempt to extirpate the institutions of the Jewish religion—covering the persecutions in Germany prior to the outbreak of war, and the mounting terror throughout occupied Europe from September 1, 1939 to September 1, 1942.

IDEOLOGICAL WAR AGAINST RELIGION

The General Assault

The very essence of the Nazi attitude toward religion is to be found in Hitler's own words:

> "The religions are all alike, no matter what they call themselves. They have no future—certainly none for the Germans. . . . For our people it is decisive whether they acknowledge the Jewish Christ-creed with its effeminate pity-ethics, or a strong, heroic belief in God in Nature, God in our own people, in our destiny, in our blood. . . . Leave the hair-splitting to others. Whether it's the Old Testament or the New, or simply the sayings of Jesus, according to Houston Stewart Chamberlain—it's all the same old Jewish swindle. It will not make us free. A German Church, a German Christianity, is distortion. One is either a German or a Christian. You cannot be both."(1)

The ideologists of Hitlerism have always regarded all belief in a transcendent moral authority as incompatible with their aims. In their practical politics, however, the Nazi leaders were too shrewd to launch a frontal attack on Christianity until they were sure of their ground. Instead they contented themselves at first with concentrating their fire against Christian ideas which they claimed were of Jewish origin. Within the past year, however, they have discarded much of their previous camouflage. Last fall the world learned of the existence of a Nazi document, of which President Roosevelt said on October 21, 1941:

> "It is a plan to abolish all existing religions—Protestant, Catholic, Mohammedan, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish alike. The property of all the Churches will be seized by the Reich. The Cross and all other symbols of religion are to be forbidden. . .
>
> "In place of the Bible the words of *Mein Kampf* will be imposed and enforced as Holy Writ. And in place of the Cross of Christ will be put two symbols—the swastika and the naked sword. The god of blood and iron will take the place of the God of love and mercy."

Turning back to the official German record since 1933, it appears that in his first address to the Reichstag (March 23, 1933) Hitler assured the German people that the rights of the two Christian confessions would not be infringed. To all other confessions he promised "an attitude of objective justice."

Six years later — on January 30, 1939 — he declared:

> "No one in Germany has hitherto been persecuted for his religious views nor will anyone be persecuted on that account! . . .
>
> "The National Socialist State has neither closed any church nor prevented any service from being held, nor has it ever influenced the form of a church service. It has neither interfered with the doctrinal teaching nor with the creed of any denomination. . ."(2)

These words were uttered by the man who had already sent Catholic priests and nuns to concen-

(1) Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks*. Butterworth, London 1940, p. 57.

(2) *My New Order*, Reynal and Hitchcock, p. 586.

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tration camps on manufactured charges of currency smuggling and moral depravity; and had imprisoned Pastor Niemoeller for refusing to renounce the dictates of his conscience. In that six-year period, the Nazi government had exercised every form of pressure and cajolery to influence the content as well as the form of church services.

A decree of July 14, 1933 had welded the Evangelical Church of Germany into a single body more easily subject to state control.(3) To undermine the established Christian confessions, the Nazis had sponsored the German Christian Movement and the German People's Church. The creed of the latter was defined as follows by its leader, Dr. Krause:

> "National Socialism must not be judged from a Biblical or Ecclesiastical standpoint. It is the Bible and the Church which must be judged from a National Socialist viewpoint. The National Socialist State embodies the totality of God."(4)

In September 1938 a Nazi Party periodical had written:

> "It is said that the body belongs to the State and the soul to the Church or to God. This is no longer the case. The whole man belongs body and soul to the German nation and to the German State. The latter has also taken all matters of faith under its own control."(5)

A series of laws in 1938 and 1939 operated to destroy the highly developed system of Catholic schools in Bavaria and Austria,(6) and to rigidly restrict religious instruction in Austrian public schools.

Officially the followers of Hitler still professed that they were engaged in the 'dejudaization' of the Church,(7) but the Hitler Youth organization sang this hymn:

> "We need no Christian virtue. For our Leader, Adolf Hitler, is our Redeemer, our Intercessor."(8)

(3) *RGBl.* I, p. 471.

(4) Speech in Berlin—Pankow, January 17, 1934; *Protestantism in the Totalitarian State*, London, p. 17.

(5) *National-Sozialistische Monatshefte*, September, 1938.

(6) Compulsory school law of June 6, 1938 (RGBl, I, p. 799); introduced into Austria by the decree of February 1, 1939. These two decrees require attendance in a primary school, and with very few exceptions, this requirement can only be fulfilled by attending a public school.

(7) Walter Grundman, *Die Entjudung des religioesen Lebens als Aufgabe deutscher Theologie und Kirche*, Weimar, 1939.

(8) *National Zeitung*, Basle, October 31, 1935.

War Against Judaism

The ultimate enthronement of Hitlerism in place of all religious faith is but the logical culmination of nearly a generation of Nazi assault upon the so-called Jewish elements in Christianity. In the *Myth of the Twentieth Century*—a work second only to *Mein Kampf* as the credo of National Socialism—Alfred Rosenberg wrote:

> "Once and for all we must get rid of the so-called Old Testament as a religious text. This will end the misbegotten attempt of the last millenium and a half to make us spiritually into Jews. Our Pauline Churches are essentially not Christian but a product of the Judeo-Syrian apostledom as begun by the Jerusalem author according to Matthew, and independently completed by Paul."(9)

In Nazi Germany the problem of eliminating the heritage of Judaism without sacrificing Christianity has led to many curious results. Thus one German writer asks:

> "If we desire to get rid of the Jewish influence in our medical and juridical activities, in education, in the study of the arts, in the theatre, movies and radio, if we do not wish to get our food and clothing from the Jew, how can we expect to get the most profound—our belief and religion, from the Jewish people?"(10)

Some have attempted to resolve the problem by arguing that because the Old Testament is of divine origin it is impossible to inquire why God chose to reveal his teachings through the Jewish people.(11) In this connection, Cardinal Faulhaber bravely wrote:

> "We must recognize that the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament contributed valuable and precious building stones to the social order of all the times. . . . He who does not believe in Inspiration and does not regard these books as God's Word and God's Revelation, must regard the people of Israel as the super-people of world history."(12)

(9) *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (9th edition) Munich, 1932, pp. 592-593.

(10) D. H. Hertzberg, *Der Deutsche und das Testament*, Giessen, 1934, p. 1.

(11) Johannes Hempel, *Fort mit dem Alten Testament*, Giessen, 1932; Gerhart Schmidt, *Das Alte Testament und der evangelische Religionsunterricht*, Munich, 1934, p. 3.

(12) *Judentum, Christentum, Germanentum*, Munich, 1933, pp. 75-76.

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German anti-Semitic ideologists, on the other hand, have attempted to overcome the dilemma by propagating the novel theory that the prophets were of Indo-German origin,[13] or even that the people of Israel were of Indo-German stock and have nothing in common with the Jews.[14] Others have accepted Chamberlain's theory that Jesus was of 'Aryan' blood.[15]

In his Nazified translation of the Sermon on the Mount, former Reichsbishop Mueller went much further. He not only eradicated all direct references to the injunctions of the Old Testament but 'germanized' such phrases as "blessed are the peacemakers" to read "happy are they who live in peace with their fellow countrymen (*Volksgenossen*)."[16] Bishop Weidemann did a similar job of 'dejudaization' in his translation of the Gospel according to St. John.[17] Both Mueller and Weidemann have been repudiated by the majority of leading German churchmen.

Even more vehement has been the Nazi attack upon the Talmud which, according to Rosenberg, has kept the Jewish race and its spirit unaltered for more than 2000 years.[18] Through the ages the Talmud has been a favorite target. The use of spurious translations and passages torn from their context has always provided grist for the anti-Jewish mill. German propaganda has made extensive use of thoroughly discredited forgeries of the Talmud. In so doing, there has not even been the claim of concern for truth. For as one writer has frankly admitted:

> "Our purpose is purely political. . . As a political tract it is necessarily one-sided. It therefore deals with Talmudic law only at the point where it may prove helpful in illuminating the attitude of Germany to Jewry.[19]

In the course of their unrelenting struggle against Judaism, German ideologists flagrantly contradict one another. Hitler denied that the Jews possessed a religion because of their alleged indifference to the immortality of the soul.[20] On the other hand, Bergmann in his Catechism states quite plainly "we therefore reject the belief in immortality and release . . . as irreligious and immoral. Such doctrines have nothing to do with religion."[21]

Again, while much of Nazi literature denies that the Jews gave the world the concept of one God—"*there is no monotheism in the Old Testament*," says one of their writers[22]—others have with equal vigor condemned the notion of one God. "Indeed within the German people time and again there arose a strong desire and will to see and feel its own God."[23] Bergmann declares: "Either we have a German God or none at all. The international God flies with the strongest bombing squadrons.. . . We demand our religion, our Bible . . . our God."[24]

As has already been seen, Hitler himself does not attach too great importance to the efforts of his disciples to 'dejudaize' Christianity. Nor has Nazi Germany been engaged in a mere battle of words against the doctrines of the Jewish faith. Hitler has repeatedly chosen to link his very destiny with accomplishing the physical as well as spiritual destruction of Judaism.

(13) Meinhold, *Bandyssin-Sestschrist*, 1918, p. 33.
(14) Fr. Doellinger, *Baldur und Bibel*, 1920.
(15) *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, p. 76; Fr. Delitsch, *Die grosse Enttaeuschung*, 1920.
(16) *Deutsche Gottesworte*, Weimar, 1936.
(17) *Das Evangelium Johannes*, Bremen, 1936.
(18) *Immorality in the Talmud*, Munich, 1920, p. 7.
(19) W. Fasolt, *Die Grundlagen des Talmuds*, Introduction, Breslau, 1925.
(20) *Mein Kampf*, Reynal and Hitchcock, p. 422.
(21) *The Twenty-Five Theses of the German Religion*, Leipzig, 1933, p. 65.
(22) A. Dinter, 197 *Thesen zur Vollendung der Reformation*, p. 19.
(23) W. Poetsch, *Die Grundlagen des juedischen Volkes*, Breslau, 1935.
(24) *The Twenty-Five Theses of the German Religion*, pp. 212, 238.

DESTRUCTION OF SYNAGOGUES

The synagogue is an ancient Jewish institution, dating back to the Babylonian exile period nearly six centuries B.C. But the synagogue acquired its full meaning during nearly nineteen centuries of Jewish wandering that followed the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary" (Ezek. 9:16) was interpreted to mean that in their dispersion Jews would have their synagogues to compensate in part for the lost Temple. Thereafter Jewish religious and spiritual life centered around the synagogue and the *Beth Hamidrash*—

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which was a place of religious study as well as a house of prayer. Wherever Jews wandered and settled, their synagogue and prayer house accompanied them.

The policy of annihilating ancient Jewish edifices, launched by the Nazis long before they came to power, was based among other reasons on their desire to alter the *Weichbild*, or architectural silhouette of every town were Jews had settled. Thus they intended to extirpate from the consciousness of Germany, and later of all Europe, the historic role of the Jews in the development of European civilization. For among the synagogues of Europe there are examples of all the great periods of Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque, Renaissance, New Classic and Empire construction. Entirely unique was the Mudeyar style—a Jewish adaptation of Moorish architecture—which found its most brilliant expression in the fourteenth century Synagogue of Toledo (later the Church of Santa Maria la Blanca). In the nineteenth century came a modified revival of this type in the modern synagogues of Europe. Its appearance changed with the centuries, but the common idea was always to recall something of the Jerusalem Temple. As the pivot of every Jewish settlement the synagogue and prayer house, or academy, served through history to preserve the essence of Judaism. Thus when the synagogue was destroyed, it was not only a blow to religious observance but also to all Jewish communal existence.

Synagogues in Germany

During the decade between the abortive beer-hall putsch and the advent of the Hitler regime (1923-1933), the Nazi Party conducted a systematic campaign of violence, arson and desecration against synagogues. Fifty instances of this kind are recorded.[25] The acts of desecration usually took the form of breaking window panes, tearing down and trampling the Torah scrolls and smearing the walls with swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans, such as "*Juda verrecke, Juda den Tod, die Rache naht.*" ("Perish Judah, death to Judah, vengeance approaches.")

During the lifetime of the Weimar Republic, the Nazi leaders never admitted responsibility for this work, but in every case where arrests were made and convictions actually obtained, the perpetrators were found to be their followers. Many of the early attacks upon synagogues took place immediately after National Socialist mass meetings. Synagogues were invaded directly after such demonstrations in Augsburg, Buchen, Rimbach and Labiau (East Prussia). Very often the Nazi Party sent youngsters to do this work with the knowledge that even if caught they would not be severely punished. Such indeed was the case. In fifteen of the sixteen instances when sentences were actually handed down for the desecration of synagogues and cemeteries, the penalty was mild.

Together with their early violence against synagogues, the Nazis conducted a campaign to destroy ancient Jewish tombstones which constituted evidence of the organic place of Jews in the history of civilized Germany. In such places as the ancient city of Wroclaw (now Breslau) there were Jews before the Germans came; the cemetery was striking proof of Jewish autochthonism. Between 1923 and 1932, 112 Jewish cemeteries in Germany were desecrated or seriously damaged.[26] Thirty-two grave stones were destroyed in the 600 year old cemetery in Koenigshofen, lower Franconia; and six in the five century old cemetery in Oberwisheim near Bruchsal. The graves of Jewish children were destroyed in Frankfort-on-Main, Dortmund-Wickede and Hamburg. Monuments erected in honor of Jewish soldiers who had given their lives during the first World War were destroyed in Gruenstadt. In some instances, cemetery walls and gates were destroyed; often, too, swastikas and obscene inscriptions were painted on Jewish tombstones.

From 1933 to the Pogrom of 1938

After Hitler took power there came a temporary lull.

The campaign of physical destruction began in the spring of 1938. Munich, the cradle of Nazism, gave the signal. The Ministry of Interior delivered an ultimatum to the Jewish community ordering that the principal synagogue, situated in the heart of the city, be vacated within twenty-four hours. The pretext was that the site was needed for a parking area. It was rumored that the order had come from Hitler himself. Upon

(25) In 1932 the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbuerger juedischen Glaubens* published a list of synagogues desecrated in Germany between 1923 and February 5, 1932.

(26) List published in 1932 by the *Centralverein der Deutschen Juden;* later many additional cases were recorded.

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the expiration of the time limit, a wrecking crew began its work.

Nuremberg, where Jews had been living for seven centuries, soon followed the example of Munich. In July 1938, Julius Streicher's *Stuermer* carried this caption beneath a picture of the principal synagogue of the city—a large structure in combined Moorish and classical style:

> "Like the man—his belief, his religion. Like one's belief and religion, so his house of prayer. Proud, soulless and insolent, rises the synagogue above all the dwellings of Nuremberg. . . .The city of the Reichsparteitage. . . . A bit of orientalism, a bit of shame engraved in stone."

On July 27, 1938 the municipal authorities decreed that the edifice be razed at once in accordance with a decree of October 4, 1937 regarding the rebuilding of German cities. Streicher made the occasion a public holiday. A large crowd assembled before the building and amid the jubilant shouts of Storm Troopers, the Star of David which crowned the dome came crashing down to earth.(27)

In September 1938 the local authorities of Dortmund followed the example of Munich and Nuremberg.(28) This was the prelude.

The Pogrom of November 1938

The pretext for the pogrom of November 1938 was provided by the assassination in Paris of Ernst vom Rath, the secretary of the German Embassy, by seventeen year old Jewish refugee Herschel Grynszpan.

In the early morning hours of November 10, 1938 a highly coordinated wave of terror broke out in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland.

> "Beginning systematically in the early morning hours in almost every town and city in the country, the wrecking, looting and burning continued all day. Huge but mostly silent crowds looked on and the police confined themselves to regulating traffic and making wholesale arrests of Jews 'for their own protection' . . . .
>
> "In extent, intensity and total damage, however, the day's outbreaks exceeded even those of the 1918 revolution and by nightfall there was scarcely a Jewish shop, cafe, office or synagogue in the country that was not either wrecked, burned severely, or damaged."(29)

No outside filming of the acts of destruction was permitted. A foreign correspondent taking notes before a wrecked synagogue was assaulted by several uniformed men and taken to a police station. Storm Troopers, however, busily photographed and filmed these spectacles.

With detailed instructions given in advance, the mechanism of destruction functioned like clockwork. The pillaging squads were composed mainly of young men between 20 and 30 who arrived on the scene in large, open touring cars, generally used by leading party officials and their bodyguards. The wrecking crews were dressed in what the Germans themselves called *Raeuberzivil* or "bandit mufti", leather coats or raincoats over uniform boots or trousers. They worked in the presence and under the protection of uniformed Nazis or police. The performance was thoroughly organized, "sometimes proceeding under the direct orders of a controlling person in the street at whose command the wreckers ceased, lined up, and proceeded to another place."(30) In some cities, including Vienna, the work was done by men in S. A. uniforms. The wreckers forced their way into synagogues, sprayed the interior with inflammable material and set the buildings on fire. In many places, synagogues were bombed. In Vienna the second largest synagogue was blasted by an explosion so great that a huge piece of granite and stone masonry weighing about half a ton was thrown several yards, and the iron grill fence twisted as though by artillery fire.

Synagogues were blasted in Gailingen, Saarpfalz, Mannheim and Hindenburg. An eye witness told of three Jews being hanged on the belts of S.A. men in the blazing synagogue of Beuthen.(31) Jews were themselves forced to set fire to their synagogue, and those who refused were beaten and sometimes killed on the spot. Firemen confined their work to preventing the spread of conflagrations to adjacent property.(32) Before a number of burning synagogues, demonstrators

(27) *Der Stuermer*, No. 29, July, 1938.
(28) *New York Times*, September 25, 1938.

(29) Berlin despatch to the *New York Times*, November 11, 1938.
(30) *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 1938.
(31) *Deutschland—Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, No. 11, 1938, p. A39.
(32) Report of the British Charge d'Affaires in Berlin, presented by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in London. Germany No. 2, 1939.

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stood with Jewish prayer books, from which they tore leaves as souvenirs for the crowds.[33]

In Vienna alone, 18 synagogues were completely destroyed and six others severely damaged.[34] Among the edifices gutted by fire, was the reproduction of the Alhambra on the Zirkusgasse, which served as the place of worship for the Union of Turkish Israelites, a community established in 1737.

Significantly, the central synagogue on the Seitenstettengasse escaped serious damage—because it contained the vital statistics of the Vienna Jewish community which were needed by the Nazi authorities. Elsewhere in Austria, synagogues are known to have been set on fire in Linz, Salzburg and Graz.

In Berlin the attackers singled out the largest and best known edifices for destruction. Twelve synagogues were set on fire, seven were wholly or partly destroyed, and the others damaged.[35]

In Frankfort-on-Main, the third largest Jewish community and one of the oldest centers of the Jewish faith in Germany, five synagogues were set on fire. Among them was the historic synagogue near the old Rothschild house in the medieval ghetto. The main synagogue in the ghetto was completely destroyed, together with the fashionable west-end district synagogue.

The British Consul in Cologne reported that "the local fire brigade took no action save to prevent the spread of the flames to neighboring houses." He added that "personally, he had been more shocked by the collaborated and calculated manner in which action was taken than by anything else."[36]

In Stettin, after the fires of the temple had died down, army sappers were called to blast the ruins. In Freiburg, in the Black Forest area, the rabbi was routed from his bed at three in the morning and forced to watch the burning of his synagogue.[37] In Aachen the arson was accomplished under the supervision of the engineer of the fire brigade, a Herr Schneider. The Buergermeister—who was also the district chief of the Nazi Party—as well as the deputy Buergermeister and the chief of police and other high officials participated in the arson as 'private individuals.' The actual work was performed by S.S. and S.A. men who arrived in trucks bearing license plate numbers 4379, 1524, and 36389.[38]

In Oberbaden, in the Bodensee district, the work of destruction was performed by S.S. men quartered in nearby barracks. In Gaislingen, where the synagogue was too close to adjoining dwellings to be safely set on fire, dynamite was used. In Saarpfalz special dynamiting units worked for two days destruction begun by fire. In Saarbruecken the Jews were driven from their homes at night and compelled to carry straw to the synagogue. The rabbi himself was forced to throw in the lighted torch. In Koenigsberg the children of the adjacent Jewish orphan asylum, who were driven into the night, warmed themselves by the fire of the burning synagogue.[39] In Mannheim the stone synagogue was carefully blasted to bits. In Breslau the fumes of the burning synagogue compelled the United States Consulate to close for the day. In Beuthen the synagogue of the Polish Jews of the city blazed for three days. Members of the congregation were rounded up and brought to the scene to watch the conflagration. On November 14th the Jewish community of Beuthen was handed a bill for 15,000 marks for the removal of the synagogue ruins and the clearing of wreckage in plundered Jewish shops. In Gleiwitz the Nazi wrecking squads carefully removed the copper roof of the synagogue before setting it on fire. In Hindenburg the walls of the burning synagogue were blasted with hand grenades and dynamite by Hitler Youth units. About four tons of scrap iron, copper and other metals were delivered in a police truck to the Donnersmarck smelting plant.

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(33) *New York Times*, November 11, 1938.

(34) Synagogues and houses of prayer destroyed or damaged in Vienna during the November 1938 pogrom: Tempelgasse (the largest in the city); *Oise Chesed* (Humanitas) on the Schiffamtsgasse; *Cheurah Beth-Hatfilah* on the Muellnergasse; Untere Viaduktgasse; Schmalzhofgasse; Stumpergasse; Neudeggergasse; Humboldtgasse; *Beth Aaron* on the Siebenbrunnengasse; Kluckygasse; *Mikdash Meat* on the Franz Hochedlingergasse; Steingasse; *Beth Israel* on the Leopoldgasse (destroyed by a bomb); Neue Weltgasse; Pazmanitengasse; Schmelzgasse; Hernalser Hauptstrasse; Krummbaumgasse; Dollinergasse; Turnergasse; Hubergasse; Schopenhauerstrasse; Zirkusgasse; The Jewish Synagogue and Asylum for the Aged on the Seegasse.

(35) Among these were the great synagogue on the Fasanenstrasse built 1909-1912; the 1866 synagogue on the Oranienburgerstrasse of which Heinrich von Treitschke had said that the Jews "have the most beautiful house of prayer;" the large synagogue on the Luetzowstrasse and the synagogue on the Prinzregentenstrasse.

(36) Report of the British Charge d'Affaires in Berlin.

(37) *New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

(38) *Deutschland-Berichte*, No. 12/1938.

(39) *Deutschland-Berichte*, No. 2/1939, p. A96.

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The recently 'liberated' German population of the Sudetenland contributed its full share to the November pogrom. In Reichenberg the burning of the synagogue was a public festival attended by Reichswehr officers, soldiers, firemen and Henleinist Storm Troopers—all of whom busily photographed the scene. When the Star of Zion crashed in flames there was a storm of cheers. In Danzig, which was not yet officially in German hands, the synagogues in Zoppot and the suburb of Langfuhr were destroyed.

Synagogues were also wholly or partially destroyed in Munich, Geilinkirchen, Hersfeld, Eberswalde, Landsberg, Luebeck, Leipzig, Essen, Hamburg, Brandenburg, Potsdam, Kottbus, Dresden, Duesseldorf, Freiburg, Beyreuth, Frentlingen, Zweibruecken, Niederkirchen, Ingenheim, Elbing, Ratibor, Gross-Strelitz, Kreutzburg, Guttentag, Ulm, Chemnitz, Hannover, Randegg, Wangen, Konstanz and Karlsruhe.[40]

The most wanton act of destruction was the burning of the ancient synagogue of Worms, one of the oldest Jewish houses of prayer in Europe. The Worms synagogue consisted of three sections. The first, constructed in Romanesque style in 1034, was itself the reconstruction of a still earlier synagogue. A wing in the Gothic style was added in 1213 for women worshippers. In 1624 the Rashi Chapel was constructed in honor of the great Biblical and Talmudic commentator of the eleventh century who was reputed to have taught there.

The synagogue contained priceless religious and historical relics: the thirteenth-century Torah Scroll inscribed on buckskin by martyred Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg;[41] imperial documents of 1562-1776 granting Jews the right of residence in the city; rare works in medieval silver; a collection of unique religious books and chronicles of Jewish life in Worms; a holiday prayer book of the thirteenth century, ornamented in gold leaf; and Rashi's table and chair.

Before the Ark of the Worms synagogue burned two eternal lights in memory of the two strangers who saved the Jewish population of Worms in the fourteenth century by 'confessing' to poisoning the wells during the Black Plague—a common libel against Jews in that era. Symbolically, perhaps, these lights continued to burn from the Black Plague of the Middle Ages until the Nazi pogrom of 1938.

On the night of November 9-10, the Worms synagogue was set on fire. When the flames died out, only charred walls remained, and in the place of the Ark was a gaping hole. All 36 Torah scrolls, including Rabbi Meir's, were destroyed.

THE WORMS SYNAGOGUE

(1034—November 10, 1938)

There are various estimates of the total numb of synagogues destroyed or seriously damaged du ing the pogrom. The *New York Times* correspondent cites the figure of 520 Jewish religious edifices set on fire or dynamited within the space of twelve hours.[42] The most conservative count,

(40) This list represents only a small fraction of the total number of synagogues known to have been destroyed or severely damaged.

(41) One of the greatest Talmudic authorities of this time. He was confined in the Fortress of Ensisheim as a hostage by Emperor Rudolf from 1286 until his death in 1293. It was here that he inscribed the Torah scroll which was preserved until 1938 in the synagogue of Worms.

(42) *New York Times*, November 30, 1938.

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based on compiled eye-witness reports, places the number for Greater Germany at 413.[43] The Berlin correspondent of the London *Times* declared:

> "Almost all the synagogues in every German town—very few were overlooked—were set on fire and destroyed."[44]

The official German news agency dryly stated that "the fire department in many cases was able merely to save adjoining buildings." In Munich, Nazi leader Adolf Wagner expressed regret that his city had been unable to do its share because the largest synagogue had already been demolished several months before. "It would have come down much more quickly and simply yesterday," he explained.[45]

When the synagogue pogrom was over the German press jubilantly proclaimed: "Jehovah is bankrupt!"[46] The Jews were told that they would have to pay the damages, but that for a few days the debris would be left "as a treat to Aryan eyes."[47]

On November 12, 1938 the German government issued a decree ordering the Jews to remove all damaged property at their expense, and confiscating all Jewish insurance claims.[48] Foreign underwriters of German insurance companies refused to pay out indemnity claims on the ground that the outbursts had been organized with the connivance of government, and represented an act of sovereignty.[49]

Several months later a second decree provided indemnity for non-Jewish property owners who had suffered because of the unavoidable spread of the synagogue flames. The same edict also conferred immunity upon the participants in the pogrom. This was thought necessary to make certain that no judge held the arsonists responsible.[50] The decree was based on a 1934 law, exonerating Nazis of all crimes committed in their party's cause under the Weimar Republic and compensating them for all damages and injuries suffered during that period.[51]

Of the remaining Jewish houses of prayer in Germany, some were seized and converted for other purposes during the pause between the November pogrom and the outbreak of World War II. On March 11, 1939 the Coblenz synagogue became a Hitler Youth dormitory; on March 30, the Wuerzburg synagogue became a school for house-painters. In the Sudetenland, it was ordered that all synagogues no longer in use as the result of the enforced Jewish exodus should be turned over to Sudeten German sport clubs.[52]

(43) *Juedische Welt-Rundschau*, Vol. 2, Jerusalem, January 12, 1940.
(44) *The Times*, (London), November 11, 1938.
(45) *New York Times*, November 12, 1938.
(46) *Amstetter Anzeiger*, November 17, 1938.
(47) *New York Times*, November 12, 1938.
(48) *Verordnung zur Wiederherstellung des Strassenbildes bei juedischen Gewerbebetrieben* of November 12, 1938 (*RGBl.* I, 1938, p. 1581).
(49) *New York Times*, November 30, 1938.
(50) *Vierzehnte Verordnung zur Durchfuehrung und Ergaenzung des Gesetzes ueber den Ausgleich buergerlich-rechtlicher Ansprueche* of March 18, 1939 (*RGBl.* I, p. 614).
(51) *Gesetz ueber den Ausgleich buergerlich-rechtlicher Ansprueche* of December 13, 1934 (*RGBl.* I, p. 1235).
(52) *New York Times*, December 15, 1938.

BARBARISM IN POLAND

Background

When the Germans invaded Poland they struck at the citadel of the Jewish religion in Europe. To the vast majority of more than 3,000,000 Polish Jews, their faith was their way of life, dominating and regulating their daily existence. Jews had been living in Poland about as far back as Polish history goes. They are mentioned at least as early as the eleventh century. Of their ancient synagogues, few survived the waves of Tartar, Turkish, Teutonic, Swedish invasion and the Cossack insurrection. Among the oldest still standing when this war began was the late fourteenth century synagogue in Kazimierz, a quarter of Cracow. A number of sixteenth and seventeenth century edifices also survived the turmoils of the seventeenth century. Polish kings and local rulers of that era sometimes authorized Jews to build synagogues upon the express condition that they be fortified as bulwarks against barbarian and other foreign onslaughts. In 1626 King Sigismund III granted the community of Luck a charter to construct a synagogue with this proviso:

> "The Jews have to make the proper arrangements to enable the location of guns on the roof . . . and have to buy for their money a cannon and to choose a certain number of people in order to defend themselves against inroads of the pagans . . . "

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Fortified synagogues, some equipped with counterforts, embrasures and parapets, were also built in Lwow, Brody, Tarnopol, Zolkiew, Luboml and other places. (*See illustration on cover.*)

Distinctive too were the wooden synagogues of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, many of which showed rich architectural imagination. In addition to intricate carvings, some contained primitive but expressive paintings intended to convey scenes of ancient Jerusalem.

Most typical in style was the oriental quadratic prayer hall and gallery for women, with windows set high to protect the worshippers from mobs. Sometimes legal restrictions on the height of synagogues made it necessary for Jews to construct their edifices considerably below street level.

In addition to the synagogues, Poland had a great number of prayer houses, each with its religious library. Not infrequently a group of synagogues, and prayer houses were concentrated in one area to form a Synagogue Square (*Shulhof*), about which centered the life of the entire Jewish community.

During the decades preceding this war, large modern synagogues were built in Warsaw, Poznan, Tarnow, Bydgoszcz and many other cities.

German Occupation

In the brief but devastating Battle of Poland (September 1939) a great number of synagogues and houses of prayer were reduced to rubble. Synagogues were destroyed in Wielun, Jablonna, Luck, Warsaw, Tarczyn and many other cities. Frequently these were deliberate acts of destruction devoid of any military value.

After the military campaign was over, the razing of synagogues proceeded according to prearranged plans. In the annexed districts of Poland the Germans have been eradicating both Jewish and Polish houses of prayer as a part of their policy of extermination. Before the war this area was populated by about 600,000 Jews. It contained the great Jewish communities of Lodz, Czestochowa, Sosnowice, Bedzin, Kalisz, and the old Jewish settlements of Poznan, Grudziadz, Torun, Bydgoszcz. In the Poznan district not a single Jewish religious edifice has remained intact. The great Poznan Synagogue was converted into an indoor swimming pool for the Nazi Elite Guard and Gestapo aristocracy, after the Germans had paraded through the city to celebrate the removal of the Star of David from the synagogue dome. Announcing that the metal was being turned over to the munitions industry, the German press gloated that "The Posen Star of David helps beat England." ("*Posner Davidstern hilft England schlagen.*")[53]

According to one estimate, about 100 synagogues were destroyed in the annexed Polish districts.[54] A compilation of eye-witness reports indicates that this figure is conservative. Many other edifices have been turned into barracks, power stations, stables and public latrines.

Conforming to the stock formula used during the November 1938 pogrom, German newspapers described the burning of Polish synagogues as follows:

> "A few nights ago the synagogue and prayer house in Tomaszow . . . went up in flames. The fire brigade was able to prevent the fire from spreading to neighboring buildings."[55]
> "The synagogue on the Kosciuszko Alley [a noted synagogue in Lodz] burned yesterday morning. The first and third fire brigades prevented the fire from spreading to neighboring buildings."[56]

In a number of cities and towns, Jews were compelled to set fire to their prayer houses. Often they refused to do so despite the threat of death and vainly attempted to save their synagogues from destruction. In Mielec, Dynow, Mszczonow, Pilzno and Tarnow, Jews were herded into synagogues and burned alive behind locked doors.

Many synagogues were set on fire during the High Holy Days that fell in the midst of the Battle of Poland. Frequently German soldiers stood by to film the spectacle. On the morning of September 23, 1939, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), when the entire Jewish population of the town of Szczucin was assembled for prayer, lorries bearing license plates RW 12008, RW 43876, AI 5604 and HH 2531, drove into the market place and discharged about one hundred

(53) *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*, April 4, 1940.
(54) *Zionist Record*, March 28, 1941.
(55) *Krakauer Zeitung*, November 29, 1939.
(56) *Lodzer Zeitung*, November 16, 1939.

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S.S. men armed with submachine guns and revolvers. Some surrounded the synagogue, others forced their way inside, tore the prayer shawls from the bodies of the worshippers, seized the prayer books, scrolls, and embroidered vestments and tossed them on a heap of straw. Silver and gold ornaments were loaded into the trucks. After being driven into the street and forced to dance around the pile, the oldest among the Jews were ordered to set fire to the straw. When they refused, they were beaten, kicked, slapped and spat upon, and their beards ripped from their flesh. The Germans then stripped the young girls of the town and forced them to run naked through the market place. From time to time the Germans fired a volley of shots into the air. When the vicar of the local Roman Catholic church appeared on the scene in his sacerdotal vestments, imploring that the Jews be released to continue their prayers, the S.S. men laughed and a Reichswehr officer told the churchman that his time would also come. Finally the Germans themselves set fire to the scrolls, the prayer shawls and the synagogue. Within an hour only a heap of ashes remained.(57)

In Wloclawek on the day after *Yom Kippur*, the large synagogue on the Krolewiecka Street, and the prayer house on Zabia Street, were blasted by dynamite and set on fire. High German army officers photographed the scenes with their private cameras. Later twenty-five Jews were arrested, compelled to sign a confession of guilt, and a heavy fine was imposed upon the Jewish community. In Gniewoszow, Makow and Gora, synagogues were turned into stables; in Dombrowa and Ciechanow they were converted into garages and public latrines. Among the synagogues destroyed were ancient edifices in Zamosc, Rzeszow, Sandomierz and Szczebrzeszyn.(58)

Desecration of Torah Scrolls

The scroll upon which the five books of Moses (the Torah) are inscribed is the most sacred of Jewish religious symbols, representing God's law to man. For thousands of years the reading of a passage from this part of the Bible three days weekly and on holidays served—together with the Talmud—to preserve the identity of the Jews and to give them the name of "The people of the Book."

Because of the sanctity of the Torah, Jewish religious regulations define the qualities which a man must possess to inscribe a copy of the text. The type of parchment, the pen and ink to be used, as well as the size of the margins, are also meticulously prescribed. If an error is found during a reading in the synagogue, services cannot be continued from the same scroll. The Torah must not be kept exposed. It is girded with a strip of silk or velvet and robed in a vestment. Two hardwood rollers, known as the Tree of Life, hold and protect the edges of the parchment. Over the top of the rollers, when the scroll is closed, is the Crown of the Law. A curtained Ark provides added sanctuary. When the Torah is taken from the Ark during services, the worshippers rise; when the Torah passes, they kiss its vestment. If the scroll chances to fall to the floor, it is deemed a common sorrow and the entire congregation is expected to fast a full day.

Christians have respected the sanctity of this symbol. Alluding to the desecration of Torah scrolls, in a sermon in Munich on December 3, 1933, Cardinal Faulhaber said:

> "Nobody must tread with his feet on the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. The Name of God is written there."

In their march through Poland and other parts of Europe, the Germans have desecrated, trampled and burned thousands upon thousands

(57) This incident is also reported in *Documents relating to the Administration of Occupied Countries in Eastern Europe*, No. 4: "German Persecution of Religious Life in Poland." Polish Information Center, N. Y., p. 27.

(58) The following list of synagogues destroyed in Poland is based mainly on eye-witness reports collected by the Vilno Office of the World Jewish Congress:

Bydgoszcz; Bielsk-Biala (all synagogues); Belchatow; Bilgoraj; Bodzanow; Czestochowa; Aleksandrow; Ciechanow (two synagogues); Dombrowa (two synagogues); Dynow; Frysztat; Grodzisk-Jagielonski; Gora near Warsaw; Grudziadz; Grodzisk Mazowiecki; Grojec; Gniewoszow (two synagogues); Krosno; Krasnystaw; Knyszyn; Kock (two synagogue); Konin; Kalisz; Kazimierz; Jaroslaw; Jablonna; Lodz (ten synagogues); Lublin; Lask; Luck; Makow; Mlawa (two synagogues); Mszczonow; Mielic near Tarnow; Myslenice; Ostrowiec; Otwock (three synagogues); Ostroleka; Poznan (four synagogues); Przemysl; Pabianice; Piotrkow; Pilzno near Tarnow; Rajgrod; Raczki; Sokoly; Szczebrzeszyn; Szydlowiec; Szczucin; Sosnowiec (three synagogues); Sanok; Torun; Torczyn; Tomaszow; Tychow; Rzeszow; Wegrow; Wierzbnik; Sandomierz; Wloclawek (two synagogues); Wielun; Warsaw; Zgierz; Zamosc; Brok; Brzeziny; Belz; Lelow; Kurow; Markuszow.

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of Torah scrolls. Where synagogues were not destroyed, but used for German stables and other profane ends, the Torah scrolls were snatched from the Ark, desecrated, and destroyed. As already indicated, this was done throughout Germany and Austria during the pogrom of November 1938. In Poland this outrage has been repeated in almost every city, town and village. Prodded by German bayonets and submachine guns, Jews have been compelled to burn their scrolls and to dance around the leaping flames. In one Polish town, German soldiers erected a pyre for the Torah scrolls, cut the beards of venerable Jews to mock their faith; compelled them to wear the vestments of defiled scrolls upon their heads and to dance and sing to the flames. Such scenes were repeated with various sadistic refinements in Kalisz, Mogielnica, Parczew, Piotrkow Trybunalski and Zdunska Wola. Torah scrolls were unrolled upon the sidewalks and trampled. In one town, parchments remained to be trampled on the streets for an entire week. Jews who attempted to interfere or to save scrolls from burning synagogues were shot.

DESTRUCTION IN OTHER AXIS DOMINATED COUNTRIES

In the summer of 1941 bombing outrages were committed against synagogues in Vichy, Marseilles and Nice in unoccupied France. On October 3, 1941 six synagogues in Paris were wrecked by bombs. Investigation pointed to the followers of pro-Nazi Jacques Doriot. They were arrested by the Vichy authorities but given only nominal sentences. Doriot has not attempted to deny responsibility for the attack upon synagogues in occupied as well as unoccupied France. His newspaper, *Le Cri du Peuple*, reported on November 4, 1941 that members of the Doriot Popular Party broke into the Bordeaux synagogue on All Saints' Day. His men also invaded the Amiens synagogue and used it as a party meeting hall. To these acts there was little official reaction on the part of the Petain government. French public opinion, however, expressed its indignation. The conservative *Journal des Debats* wrote:

> "Christian France cannot tolerate such blind gestures in contradiction with tolerance, honor and fraternity. Such attackers are offensive to our most venerated national and religious traditions and nothing can justify them."

Mgr. Delay, Bishop of Marseilles, wrote to Grand Rabbi Selzer of that city:

> "My dear Grand Rabbi:
>
> "I wish to express my deep indignation at the criminal and cowardly act committed last night against the synagogue in Marseilles. Our moral sense cries out against such an outrage . . .[59]

Since the German occupation of Prague in March 1939, a number of acts of destruction and desecration have been committed against synagogues in Bohemia-Moravia. Here, however, the Germans have had to deal with determined opposition on the part of the Czech populace. In Plzen, for example, Czech workers guarded the local synagogue against an expected German assault. Nevertheless the synagogues have not all escaped destruction or damage. Moreover, the famous *Alt-Neu-Schule* of Prague—whose precise age is unknown beyond the fact that it was partly rebuilt seven centuries ago—has been forced to close down.

In vassal Slovakia, at least 17 synagogues have been destroyed by fire or dynamite, including four in the city of Bratislava. Furthermore, as will be seen below, Slovakia has enacted legislation which threatens the existence of virtually all remaining synagogues and houses of prayer.

In Rumania, which has gone further than any other Axis satellite in its persecution and murder of Jews, there was a mass destruction of synagogues during the pogrom of January 1941. Authentic data is lacking, however, on the full extent of the holocaust. Moreover the Rumanian government has also enacted legislation imposing severe restrictions upon the continued use of synagogues.[60]

(59) This letter was smuggled through the Vichy censorship and released by the Free French.

(60) See also: *Cold Pogrom in Rumania*, JEWISH AFFAIRS, Vol. 1, No. 7.

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RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC WORSHIP

Public worship is a fundamental pillar of all religion. From the earliest times, religious persecution has been directed mainly against the freedom of public worship. Rome drove the Christians to the catacombs for their common prayers. Jews have had to fight for this right throughout their history. In almost every land and every age, they have had to petition kings and local lords for the right to congregate for prayer. In modern times, however, practically all civilized countries permitted public worship to every faith, and this right was embodied in almost every European constitution.

Immediately after the annexation of Austria, the Nazi authorities ordered that all synagogues and prayer houses in Vienna be closed. They remained shut for a full month.(61) After the November pogrom the German government ordered a ban on all Jewish religious services except the rites of marriage and burial.(62) It was not until the following January that services were again allowed in the remaining synagogues.(63)

In May 1939 the Jewish communities of Germany were forbidden to celebrate Pentecost. On March 2, 1939 the German Minister of Education issued a decree forbidding the Jews of Berlin, Vienna and other cities to read the Book of Esther on *Purim*—the day commemorating the fall of Haman, the ancient enemy of the Jewish people.

Passover was also singled out for German attack because it reminded them of the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian taskmasters who had long since turned to dust. The baking of unleavened bread (*matzoth*) required by Jews for the observance of Passover, was banned in Germany and the Sudetenland in 1939. Unleavened bread imported from Hungary was confiscated.

German troops overran Poland during the High Holy Days of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. The Germans at once outlawed public worship on these most sacred Jewish holidays. In many cities and villages, Jews congregated in forests, in the cellars of bomb-demolished buildings, and in deserted warehouses in order to secretly pray together. In Jadow, in the district of Radzymin, Jews who were found engaged in common prayers on Rosh Hashanah were seized, their Torah scrolls burned, and they were consigned to forced labor. This consisted of collecting pieces of broken glass which the Germans scattered again as soon as the Jews completed their work. In Piotrkow Trybunalski, sixty Jews, seized while praying together, were sent to a German concentration camp.

In Wloclawek on the eve of *Yom Kippur*, private homes were searched, and Jews found secretly engaged in prayer were driven to the military barracks and compelled to mop floors with their prayer shawls. Such abominations were repeated in many places. In one town a Jew in his ritual prayer shawl and phylacteries was hoisted on a ladder and other Jews were compelled to carry him through the streets. Later he was forced to polish a German automobile with his prayer shawl.

More than a year after the German occupation, the Jewish community of Warsaw was compelled to publish a notice warning Jews that organizers and participants in common prayers would be punished in accordance with the German decree of January 26, 1940.(64) In Cracow the Germans allowed the Jews to hold common prayers on the High Holy Days of October 1940, but only in their own homes.(65)

Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto were finally permitted in March 1941 to hold common prayers in private apartments and in houses of prayer on specified holidays.(66) Only three synagogues in the Warsaw Ghetto were permitted to reopen for this restricted purpose.(67) Of these, the largest was the Tlomackie Synagogue. According to very recent first hand reports, however, the Tlomackie Synagogue is no longer within the altered boundaries of the Warsaw Ghetto and presumably is closed.

In Rumania, a ministerial decree of September 9, 1940 ordered all synagogues and other Jewish

(61) *New York Times*, April 16, 1938.
(62) *New York Times*, November 23, 1938.
(63) The population of Catholic Bavaria was said to have reacted strongly against the closing of the synagogues.

(64) *Gazeta Zydowska*, November 8, 1940.
(65) *Gazeta Zydowska*, No. 24, November, 1940.
(66) *Gazeta Zydowska*, May 27, 1941, and September 5, 1941.
(67) *The Warsaw Ghetto*, Jewish Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 5.

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houses of prayer to close down unless they could obtain a new permit from the Ministry of Arts and Public Worship. The same decree stated that only synagogues absolutely necessary for the religious worship of the members of the local community would be permitted to remain open. Necessity was defined as:

> "The worship of four hundred Jewish families in the case of an urban community, and two hundred Jewish families in the case of a rural community."(68)

As a result of this decree, many small Jewish communities were deprived of their prayer houses.

The same decree also provided (Article 7) for the expropriation of closed synagogues, "taking into consideration the needs of Christian worship exercised in the locality."

The Rumanian government was apparently somewhat wary of the reaction of Christian clergymen, because Article 8 provided:

> "Any person belonging to the clergy of a Christian confession who tolerates or harbors those who violate the regulations of the present decree, will be immediately dismissed from his office as guilty of a violation of the elementary rights inherent to his office and calling."

In Slovakia, Chapter 10 of the comprehensive Jewish Code of September 10, 1941(69) provided:

> "Confessors of the Israelite faith, members of the Jewish religious communities are permitted to exercise their religious practices in such buildings only whose external appearance does not indicate their purpose."

This provision would cover almost all Jewish synagogues and houses of prayer in Slovakia. There are few indeed whose "external appearance does not indicate their purpose." The same provision gave the Jews until July 1, 1942 to remodel their synagogues. On that date all edifices still distinguishable as Jewish houses of prayer were to become the property of the Slovak state.

(68) *Monitorul Oficial*, September 17, 1940.

(69) *Slovensky Zakonnik*, No. 198, 1941.

VIOLATION OF THE SABBATH

The Jews were the first to give the world the notion of a universal day of rest—a contribution whose full importance can only be measured today by recalling that this idea sprang from the Jews in an era when slavery was the foundation of the social order. Applying equally to all, the commandment to rest on the Sabbath marked a social innovation of the first magnitude. The Old Testament proclaimed that "the seventh day is a sabbath . . . . In it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, . . . nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant . . . that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou." (Deuteronomy 5: 14)

"Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy"—is a commandment whose fulfillment requires of observing Jews that upon that day they abstain completely from all worldly labor. This religious prescription always created serious problems for Jews. Some of the minorities treaties of 1919-1920 contained specific provisions to protect this right. The aim was to prevent discrimination against observing Jews who could not work, appear in court, vote, attend state schools or exercise other economic or civic functions on their Sabbath. The minorities treaties did not wholly solve the problem. Poland, for example, circumvented its treaty obligation by enacting a law which made Sunday a compulsory day of rest for the entire population. This placed the Jews at an obvious economic disadvantage by compelling them to keep their shops closed and to remain away from their jobs two days a week.

In Nazi Germany, Jews are compelled to work on the Sabbath in concentration camps and in the factories where they are still employed. Except in certain Ghettos, the Jews of Poland are compelled to work on Saturday as well as on their High Holy Days. The Germans ordered a census of the Warsaw Jewish population to be held on Saturday, October 28, 1939. In the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia, the Prague Jewish community was compelled to conduct a complicated registra-

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tion of the Jewish population on *Yom Kippur*—the most sacred of Jewish Holy Days, normally marked by 24 hours of fasting and prayer. On October 3, 1940 the Cracow Jewish Council was compelled to warn Jews that work was compulsory on the Jewish New Year and on October 12th—the Day of Atonement.(70)

The Warsaw Jewish Council was permitted in April 1941 to establish Saturday and several Jewish holidays as legal days of rest within the segregated confines of the Ghetto. But this decree specifically excluded labor which Jews were required to perform under the direction and control of the German forces of occupation.(71) Sabbath rest with similar restriction was also introduced in the Cracow Ghetto.(72) There is no available evidence of similar decrees in other ghettos, where the former Polish Sunday law seems to continue in force.(73) Outside ghetto walls, in forced labor detachments, Gestapo prisons, concentration camps and penal colonies, Jews are forced to work on their Sabbath and religious holidays.

The Sabbath has also been assaulted in Axis Rumania. As early as 1938 the Rumanian governor of Czernowitz (Cernauti), a city with a very large Jewish population, ordered Jewish stores to remain open on the Sabbath and on all Jewish holidays. In the same year a similar order was issued for the entire province of Bukovina. Later this was extended to Bessarabia and Moldavia. After Rumania joined the Axis compulsory work on the Sabbath was enforced.

(70) *Gazeta Zydowska*, October 11, 1940.
(71) *Gazeta Zydowska*, April 29, 1941.
(72) *Gazeta Zydowska*, June 27, 1941.
(73) *Gazeta Zydowska*, August 25, 1941.

PLUNDER OF LIBRARIES

Religious libraries are a part of practically all Jewish houses of prayer. During the nineteenth century, many great central libraries were founded in connection with theological seminaries and the large Jewish communities. Notable among these in Germany were the libraries of the *Hochschule fuer Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Hildesheimer Seminary in Berlin; the great Hamburg and Berlin Jewish community libraries, and the collection of the Breslau Theological Seminary. In Warsaw, the Library of the Tlomackie Synagogue contained some 30,000 volumes on every phase of Judaica and Hebraica. In recent years, a new building, facing the synagogue, was erected to house a museum and Institute of Judaism. The Tlomackie Library contained many rare old editions, a number of priceless first prints of important works, and many unpublished manuscripts. In Vilna, the Strashun Library contained one of the world's largest collections of Jewish religious works. Many general libraries also contained large Judaica divisions. Among these, the city library of Frankfort-on-Main, the Berlin State Library, and the Vienna National Library were of particular note.

When the Third Reich returned to the book-burning practices of the Dark Ages, Jewish religious works were among the first to suffer. But this was only the beginning. On July 30, 1937, the German Ministry of Propaganda issued a decree forbidding the printing or mimeographing of any Jewish publications without a special license.(74)

In October 1939 the Slovak government ordered the destruction by fire of all issues of the Bible translated by Prof. Fischel, Rabbi of Novomesti. The Slovak Jewish Code of 1941 imposes an outright ban on all Jewish books and periodicals, except the organs of the Central Office for Jews which carry the text of decrees affecting the Jewish population.(75)

In June 1940 the German forces of occupation in Poland ordered the burning of all copies of the Old Testament used in courts of justice to administer the oath to Jewish witnesses.(76)

Late in 1939 the Germans burned the great library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Lublin. The *Deutsche Jugendzeitung* reported this event as follows:

(74) *Juedisches Gemeindeblatt fuer Berlin*, 1938.
(75) *Sl. Zak.* 198, 1941.
(76) *Gazeta Warszawska*, May 8, 1940.

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"For us it was a special pride to destroy the Talmudic Academy which has been known as the largest in Poland. . . . We threw out of the building the great Talmudic Library, and carted it to the market. There we set fire to the books. The fire lasted for twenty hours. The Jews of Lublin were assembled around and cried bitterly. Their cries almost silenced us. Then we summoned the military band. The victory march of the band and the joyful shouts of the soldiers silenced the sound of the Jewish cries."

Many great libraries of Jewish religious learning had been seized by the Germans and turned over to the so-called Institute for Research on the Jewish Problem in Frankfort-on-Main. By March of last year the Institute had amassed a collection of about 300,000 volumes.(77) Consisting primarily of Jewish libraries confiscated in Germany and throughout occupied Europe, this Nazi collection includes the archives of the *Ecole Rabbinique* and the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* in Paris; the collection of the Frankfort Library; the library of the Hildesheimer Seminary; and most of the archives of the Rothschild house in Frankfort and the Rothschild Bank in Paris. The archives of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* and the *Ecole Rabbinique* alone contained over 60,000 volumes, including the records of the Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon in 1807.

The Nazified University of Posen, which has a department for the study of the history and language of the Jews, has also shared in the cultural booty. It has received some 400,000 of the estimated total of 1,000,000 volumes confiscated by the Germans in Poland. According to an authoritative German source, books in the Polish language—some dealing with Jewish matters — are kept in a vault for the benefit of 'reliable' persons only, in order to avoid their use against the German cause.(78)

(77) *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Wochenausgabe, March 28, 1941.

(78) *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Wochenausgabe, March 7, 1941.

DISSOLUTION OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Until the rise of Hitlerism, Jews generally enjoyed the same rights of religious organization and association as the members of all other confessions. In Eastern Europe particularly, Jewish religious communal organizations played a very important role. In many countries they represented the entire Jewish population, collected taxes, and administered religious, educational and welfare matters. They maintained parochial, secondary, and professional schools, and seminaries for teachers. They furnished medical aid, organized hospitals and clinics and gave legal aid. They provided subsidies for libraries and museums, and for other cultural and social work.

Foreshadowing a change in the status of German Jewish communities was Hitler's first Reichstag speech in which, as already seen, he drew a sharp distinction between the Christian confessions and other religions. State aid for Jewish religious purposes was abolished as early as April 1933 and funds previously allotted were not paid out.(79) Ensuing legislation was even more discriminatory.(80)

By decree of March 28, 1938,(81) Jewish religious communities in Germany ceased to be public law corporations and were reduced to the status of ordinary associations subject to the same restrictions as business corporations. The same edict subjected them to strict state control over matters of organization, the appointment of officers and the disposal of "objects of historical, scientific, or artistic value especially of archives or parts of such."

This decree operated to strip Jewish religious communities of many important rights they had previously enjoyed in common with the communal organizations of other confessions. They could no longer levy taxes but could thereafter only exact

(79) *Voelkischer Beobachter*, April 7, 1933.

(80) *Steueranpassungsgesetz* of October 16, 1934, *RGBl.* I, p. 925.

(81) *RGBl.* I, p. 338.

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contributions from members. Membership no longer extended automatically to the entire Jewish population of the locality. Thenceforth it was to be regulated by provisions of the civil code. Moreover the Jewish religious communities now lost their tax exemptions and became subject to all discriminatory measures imposed upon private Jewish property.[82]

Nuremberg legislation regarding citizenship as well as subsequent ordinances[83] raised the problem of communal representation for Christians of Jewish blood who had no central body to help them in their efforts to emigrate. Neither Germany nor its satellites have permitted this class of persons to establish their own organization. In Hungary, for example, where there are some 33,000 'racial' Jews, their appeal for authorization to do so was recently rejected.

Efforts to establish a recognized central body of Jewish religious communities did not meet with Nazi approval, and the Union of Jews in Germany (*Reichsverband*) remained a private organization.[84] Instead, a decree of July 4, 1939, created a new secular body, *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland*, as a virtual agency of the Ministry of the Interior.[85] Before the war, its main task was to provide the machinery for Jewish emigration. The *Reichsvereinigung* embraces within its jurisdiction all persons defined as Jews by German racial legislation. The decree also subordinates local Jewish religious communities to the status of local branches of this central secular body.[86]

The *Reichsvereinigung* was entrusted on August 4, 1939, with the supervision of all Jewish religious communities in Germany.[87] The latter must now deal extensively with non-religious matters.

In Poland, the liquidation of Jewish religious communities was accomplished with much greater speed. They were immediately deprived of their tax exemptions.[88] On December 6, 1939, the German forces of occupation published an ordinance regarding the creation of secular Jewish Councils to replace the religious communities.[89] These Councils also were to have jurisdiction over Christians of Jewish origin, although their number in the non-annexed part of Poland was no greater than about 5000. The edict provided that the function of the new Councils was "to encounter the orders of the German authorities." Nevertheless the Jewish Councils have continued to perform religious tasks on the theory that the Polish decree concerning Jewish religious communities was not formally repealed.[90]

In occupied Czech territory, Jewish religious communities were also assigned jurisdiction over Christians of Jewish origin. Under the terms of a decree of March 5, 1940,[91] their function was largely to expedite the departure of Jews. The Prague Jewish community was recognized as the central organization but at the same time a Central Office for Jewish Emigration was also established. This German-controlled secular body was empowered to supervise as well as to dissolve Jewish religious communities.[92]

In Rumania a decree of September 9, 1940 listed nine confessions entitled to state protection and to the public exercise of their faith. This included not only the dominant church, but also a number of minority confessions including the Moslem. It did not include the Jewish faith, stating instead:

> "The Rumanian state confines itself to state the fact of the existence of the Mosaic confession, whose exercise will be regulated by subsequent ministerial decrees."[93]

The small subsidy for Jewish religious purposes had already been abolished by a ministerial edict of July 1940. On December 16, 1941 the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities of Rumania was dissolved. In its place came the state-controlled secular Central Office for Jews in Rumania.

(82) As a result, real property of Jewish religious communities became subject to a house-rent tax decree of April 23, 1938; land, with the exception of cemeteries, became subject to taxation in accordance with the order of the land tax decree of March 29, 1938 (*RGBl.* I, p. 360). Moreover they were forbidden to acquire real property for religious purposes, and their existing property was made subject to compulsory sale (December 3, 1938, *RGBl.* I, p. 709.

(83) First decree to the Reich Citizenship Law of November 14, 1935.

(84) *Juedisches Gemeindeblatt*, Berlin, July 31, 1938.

(85) *RGBl.* I, p. 1097.

(86) *Ibid.*, p. 1350.

(87) *RGBl.* I, p. 1350.

(88) *VDBl. des Generalgouverneurs* of November 30, 1939, No. 8, p. 60.

(89) *VDBl. des Generalgouverneurs fuer die besetzten polnischen Gebiete*, No. 9, December 6, 1939.

(90) *Gazeta Zydowska*, November 1, 1940.

(91) *VDBl. des Reichsprotektors*, March 8, 1940, p. 77.

(92) *VDBl. des Reichsprotektors*, March 8, 1940, p. 77.

(93) Bucharest *Timpul*, September 11, 1940.

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All Jewish religious communities are subject to its control.[94] Membership was made compulsory and registration on or before February 20, 1942 required under the penalty of ten years' imprisonment and a fine of 200,000 lei.

In Slovakia the existing Central Chancellery of the Autonomous Orthodox Jewish Religious Communities and the Union of the Status Quo Communities (Jeshurun) were allowed to remain in existence. A new secular Central Office for Jews with a department for 'non-Israelites' was established for the purpose of supervising the removal of Jews from Slovakia.[95] In occupied Belgium a central secular organization embracing Christians of Jewish origin has also been established.[96] Here too the main purpose is the removal of Jews. For both occupied and unoccupied France a similar body, with central offices in Paris and Lyon, was established late last year.[97]

(94) *Cold Pogrom in Rumania*, Jewish Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 7, p. 4.

(95) *Sl. Zak.* No. 49, 1940, p. 371.

(96) Decree of November 25, 1941 regarding the creation of the *Association des Juifs en Belgique*, *VDBl.* No. 63, December 21, 1941, p. 799.

(97) Decree of November 29, 1941 establishing the *Union Generale des Israelites de France.*

LIQUIDATION OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Old Testament and the voluminous literature of the Talmud constitute the fundamental subjects of Jewish religious study. Acquiring a mastery of the Talmud is a full-fledged education in itself demanding years of intensive study.

Jewish religious instruction was given in the public schools of most of pre-Hitler Europe, either on an obligatory or voluntary basis. (Rumania which did not permit Jewish religious instruction in its public school system, was an exception.) The leading role, however, was played by the private schools which Jews maintained in most of Europe.

The *Heder* and *Talmud Torah*, which provided primary religious education, included such secular subjects as were necessary to satisfy state compulsory education laws. There were many schools of this type in Poland, Carpatho-Russia, Rumania and Hungary. In Poland alone there were more than 150,000 pupils [98] attending such schools on the eve of the war. In Poland, too, extensive religious education was given in Jewish high schools.

The modern confessional schools contained a full secular curriculum in addition to a large program of religious education. These schools were widespread in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Lithuania and, to a lesser extent, in Germany. In Poland they had 16,000 pupils in 1936.[99] There were also intermediate and high schools of this kind in Poland, Lithuania, Germany and Czechoslovakia. In more recent years, schools for girls were organized. There were some 225 in Poland with about 25,000 pupils, most of whom attended evening classes.[100]

For higher learning there was the *Yeshiva*—one of the oldest Jewish institutions. The *Yeshiva* is a Talmudic Academy, attended largely by men between 17 and 30. These academies issued rabbinical diplomas (*semicha*), but only a fraction of its students became clergymen. For most of its students it was an institution of learning for its own sake. The great Hebrew poet, Bialik, has called the *Yeshiva* the "laboratory of the soul of the Jewish people." These Talmudic academies were developed to the greatest extent in Lithuania, Hungaria and Poland, (the last had 197 with 18,758 students.) [101] There were also important *Yeshivas* in Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, Belgium and Greece.

In recent years, a number of rabbinical seminaries were established in France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Italy and Poland. Seminaries were also established in Bialystok,

(98) Statistical data of the Economic Section of the Jewish Scientific Institute. *Contemp. Jewish Record*, No. 5, 1939. This figure includes both private schools and the *Horeb* Orthodox School Organization.

(99) Op. cit.; These schools were maintained by the *Jabne* Zionist Orthodox School Organization. Besides, religious instruction was given to some extent at schools maintained by several other organizations.

(100) Op. cit.

(101) Op. cit.

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Vilna, Warsaw, Cracow and many other cities, to train teachers for Jewish confessional schools.

Together with the general banning of all but primary education for Jews, virtually the whole structure of Jewish religious education has been destroyed in Axis Europe. As early as 1933 Jewish religious instruction in German public schools was severely restricted.(102) Later this became a purely academic point when Jews were excluded from the entire public school system. On July 4, 1939 all allotments of public funds for purposes of Jewish religious education were abolished.(103)

During the November 1938 pogrom, two rabbinical seminaries in Berlin were closed down. Since their complete expulsion from the German public school system on November 15, 1938(104) Jews are permitted to attend Jewish schools only. These are organized by the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland.*(105)

In Poland, all Jewish religious and secular educational institutions alike were closed down soon after the Nazi occupation. On August 31, 1940, however, an ordinance charged the Jewish Councils with responsibility for Jewish education. Later, the Jewish Council of the Warsaw Ghetto was permitted to establish elementary schools for 5,000 pupils only. But this concession has had little practical importance to date.(106)

In Rumania many Jewish educational institutions were closed down by local authorities as early as 1938. In October 1940 a decree provided that Jews could maintain elementary and intermediate schools only.(107) The effect was to outlaw the Talmudic academies.

A decree of the German forces of occupation for Belgium and Northern France, dated December 1, 1941, limited Jews to segregated elementary schools only.(108)

In Slovakia, Talmudic academies were banned in May 1939. A later decree (August 30, 1940) provided that Jews be limited to primary school education, and that no higher learning for Jews should be provided even on a private basis.(109) The establishment and maintenance of such primary schools was to be the duty of the Jewish religious communities. These provisions were later incorporated into the general Jewish Code of Slovakia.

(102) *Hoche-Sammlung* No. V, p. 799.
(103) *RGBl.* I, p. 1097.
(104) *Voelkischer Beobachter*, November 16, 1938.
(105) *RGBl.* I, p. 1097, par. VI.

(106) *VDBl. des Generalgouverneurs*, No. 51, 1940.
(107) *Bucharest Universul*, October 7, 1940.
(108) *VDBl.* No. 63, December 2, 1941, p. 802.
(109) Sl. Zak. No. 54, October 16, 1940, p. 405.

THE BAN ON RITUAL SLAUGHTER

Background

Jewish religious practice prescribes a specific method known as *shehitah*, for the slaughter of animals to be used as kosher food. Jewish ritual provides that unless the animal is free of specified defects, ailments or injuries, it cannot be slaughtered for consumption. According to these regulations, the common non-Jewish practice of stunning cattle before slaughter by a sledge-like blow, causes an injury which renders the animal unfit for use.

The Jewish method of slaughter has often been misunderstood and criticized on the ground that it causes needless suffering to cattle. Acting on this assumption, Switzerland introduced a ban in 1893 on slaughter without previous stunning, and Norway enacted a similar law in 1929. In both cases only a very small Jewish population was affected; no restrictions were imposed on the importation of kosher meat for Jewish use.

The charge of cruelty was authoritatively exploded in 1925 by a three-man investigating commission set up by the British House of Commons. It came to the conclusion that there was "no cause for complaint on humanitarian grounds against the Jewish method of slaughtering, if efficiently carried out, as was usually the case."(110) In 1927 a group of German experts independently arrived at the same conclusion. If humane considerations

(110) Berman, *Shehitah*, p. 240.

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only had been involved, the subject would have been dropped at that point, but agitation for anti-shehitah laws began anew for more sinister reasons. For here was a major weapon of assault against the very existence of observing Jews. The Nazis on the one hand, and Polish, Rumanian and Hungarian anti-Semites on the other, were quick to exploit it.

Germany

The first action came in Bavaria on May 17, 1930 when a decree was enacted requiring the previous stunning of all cattle.(111) This superseded a Nazi-inspired regulation of 1926 which permitted shehitah for a quota of cattle purporting to correspond roughly to the needs of the Jewish population of Bavaria. The unsuccessful battle against the new measure was led by the Catholic Bavarian People's Party whose spokesman, Papal Chamberlain Dr. Anton Scharnagl, pointed out that it violated the constitutional guarantee of freedom of conscience. Under increasing Nazi pressure, similar laws were soon enacted in Braunschweig,(112) Oldenburg,(113) and Thuringia.(114)

Within two months after Hitler came to power the ban was extended to Wuerttemburg,(115) Baden(116) and Saxony.(117) On April 21, 1933, a general anti-shehitah law was enacted for the entire Reich.(118) For the first time the prohibition was also extended to fowl, although it had never previously been argued that the Jewish method as applied to poultry was anything but speedy and painless. German commentators explained that the new prohibition was intended to prevent Jews from substituting fowl for meat.(119) Still paying cynical lip-service to the humanitarian excuse, the Nazi police president of Frankfort-on-Main made the following statement:

> "I will no longer tolerate that animals born on German soil shall be tortured to death through the sadistic-Asiatic method of slaughter. If the Jew cannot eat our meat, let him eat . . . turnips and potatoes. . ."(120)

The decree of April 21, 1933 was later extended to the Saar territory,(121) Memel(122) and parts of the Sudetenland.(123) It was applied to Upper Silesia as soon as the German-Polish Convention protecting minority rights expired.(124) In Austria and in the remainder of the Sudetenland, shehitah was outlawed by the local authorities in Jewish-populated districts.(125)

A law requiring previous stunning was decreed for Bohemia-Moravia almost immediately after the German occupation.(126) But peasants who slaughtered cattle for their own use were exempted, despite the professed concern for the suffering of cattle.

Persons who violated the ban have been severely punished.(127) For a time German Jews attempted to import kosher meat from abroad and set up a special central body for this purpose. But this became increasingly difficult and soon entirely impossible.

Poland Before the War

A law restricting shehitah was enacted in Poland on April 17, 1936.(128) This decree banned ritual slaughter in districts with a Jewish population of less than three percent. Elsewhere, a quota was to be allowed commensurate with the needs of the Jewish population, as defined by the local authorities. In the debate in the Polish Parliament, it was frankly conceded that the motive was entirely economic, namely to deprive Jewish butchers of their important place in the meat trade. (Accord-

(111) *Gesetz ueber das Schlachten von Tieren* (*Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt*, p. 133).
(112) *Gesetz ueber das Schlachten von Vieh* of June 27, 1931 (*Gesetz- und Verordnungen-Sammlung*, p. 143).
(113) *Bekanntmachung des Staatsministeriums ueber das Verfahren beim Schlachten* of October 5, 1932—*GBl. fuer den Freistaat Oldenburg, Landesteil Oldenburg*, p. 1055.
(114) *Gesetz ueber den Tierschutz* of December 15, 1932 (*Gs.* 1933, p. 1).
(115) *Verordnung des Innenministeriums ueber die Toetung des Schlachtviehs* (*Reg. Bl.*, p. 50).
(116) *Verordnung des Ministers des Innern ueber das Schlachten von Tieren* (*Bad. Bl.*, p. 47).
(117) *Verordnung ueber Unzulaessigkeit von Schlachtungen ohne Betaeubung* (*Saechs. Bl.* 1933, p. 19).
(118) *Reichsgesetz ueber das Schlachten von Tieren* (*RGBl.* I, p. 203).
(119) Psundtner-Neuberg, *Das neue deutsche Reichtsrecht* I, b3.

(120) *Frankfurter Zeitung*, March 21, 1933, quoted by *Das Schwarzbuch*, p. 60.
(121) September 27, 1935 (*RGBl.* I, p. 1204).
(122) March 23, 1939 (*RGBl.* I, p. 559).
(123) *RGBl.* I, p. 745.
(124) July 15, 1937 (*RGBl.* I, p. 717).
(125) *New York Times*, March 19, 1938; *Der Stuermer*, August 1938.
(126) *Sammlung der G. u. V.* No. 38, April 13, 1939, No. 106.
(127) *New York Times*, November 21, 1938; *Der Stuermer*, No. 47, 1938.
(128) *Dz. Ust. Rz. P.* No. 29, April 21, 1936, *Pozycja* No. 237.

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ing to the 1931 census, about 30% of the butchers in Poland were Jews.) This law did not appease anti-Semitic extremists who demanded a complete ban. In a parliamentary session on the proposal late in 1938, Dudzinski, their spokesman, explained: "We desire to plunge a knife into the vital nerve of Polish Jewry and to make their lives unbearable." A law providing for the complete abolition of shehitah by 1942 passed the Lower House on March 22, 1939, but before the Senate could take action, Poland was overrun by the German Army.

Hungary

The Hungarian Minister of Agriculture issued an edict in August 1938 which provided that Jewish ritual slaughter was no longer to be exempted from the stunning law.(129) On February 13, 1939 this was extended to the former Czechoslovak provinces annexed by Hungary, despite the protests of the Hungarian Farmers' Federation. On October 24, 1940, the law was extended to territory obtained from Rumania, with the exception of two districts. Jews were entirely excluded from the cattle trade and forbidden to sell meat in February 1942.

Rumania

Shehitah was in effect prohibited by an order of the Minister of Agriculture on March 24, 1938, requiring the previous stunning of cattle and poultry. This order was temporarily suspended upon the plea of the Chief Rabbi of Rumania, but was re-introduced for cattle in July 1940 and for poultry in November 1941. In the meantime the Rumanian Ministry of Economics had already forbidden Jews to sell poultry, and thus rendered it impossible for them to obtain kosher fowl.

Italy

A law had been enacted in 1928 which prescribed that cattle had to be slaughtered in "the most expeditious and painless manner." Under this definition the legality of shehitah was not questioned for more than a decade. But on October 19, 1938, a circular was suddenly issued explaining that the Jewish method could not be considered "expeditious and painless." Previous stunning or shooting was required, thereby rendering shehitah impossible.

Extension of the Ban

Indicative of the abnormal attention which the Germans attach to the matter is the fact that wherever the swastika has been planted by force of arms, a ban on Jewish ritual slaughter has quickly followed. In Poland this occurred on October 26, 1939, the decree appearing in the very first issue of the Official Journal for occupied Polish territory.(130)

In every occupied territory the Germans have issued decrees similar to the Reich law of April 1933. In Danzig this was accomplished on September 1, 1939 by the law applying all German legislation to the Free City.(131) On October 23, 1940 the Germans issued an anti-shehitah decree for Belgium,(132) and on the same day the ban was extended to Occupied France. A similar ordinance was issued for the Netherlands in August 1941.(133) On December 3, 1940 the prohibition was applied to Luxembourg,(134) and on April 10, 1941 to Alsace.(135) An added irony is that in most of these territories today, Jews receive no meat or fat rations, so that the purpose of the decrees is purely propagandistic.

In Slovakia an anti-shehitah law enacted in June 1940(136) expressly forbade ritual slaughter as such, whether or not the cattle had previously been stunned. Later (October 18, 1940) a decree allowed the Minister of Economics to exempt meat destined for export from the prohibition because of the economic benefit of such trade to Slovakia.(137) The anti-shehitah law was subsequently

(129) *Ergaenzung und Abaenderung von Verfuegungen der Veterinaerverordnung*, 1938.

(130) *Verordnung ueber das Schaechtverbot, Verordnungsblatt des Generalgouverneurs fuer die occupierten polnischen Gebiete.*

(131) *RGBl.* I, p. 1547.

(132) *VDBl. des Militaerbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nord Frankreich fuer die besetzten Gebiete Belgiens und Nord Frankreichs*, No. 18, of December 25, 1940, p. 251, No. 1.

(133) *Herald Tribune*, August 24, 1941.

(134) *VDBl. fuer Luxemburg* No. 69, December 16, 1940, p. 405.

(135) *VDBl. des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in Elsas*, No. 15, April 23, 1941, p. 320.

(136) *Sl. Zak.*, No. 30, June 26, 1940, p. 238, No. 153.

(137) *Sl. Zak.* No. 61, November 19, 1940, p. 460, No. 295.

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included in the Jewish Code. Later Slovakia enacted various restrictions regarding the purchase of meat by Jews; and finally all meat rations for Jews were abolished. In Bulgaria the Minister of Agriculture prohibited shehitah in July 1941, four months after the arrival of the German army. In Croatia one of the first acts of the vassal Pavelich government was the order of May 13, 1941 which banned ritual slaughter of both poultry and meat.(138)

(138) *Uradne Novine* No. 2, July 5, 1941, p. 89, No. 125.

MARTYRDOM

Persecution of Rabbis

The rabbi is the leader of the Jewish religious community, but he is not looked upon in any sense as an intermediary between God and the conscience of man. Jews may perform their prayers and other religious obligations without his aid. His authority rests entirely upon his character and his religious learning, as attested by the diploma (*semicha*) issued to him by an academy or a recognized rabbi. He is elected to his office by the vote of his community. Usually he holds that office for life. While he possesses no *potestas ecclesiastica*, nonetheless the organized life of the religious community demands his leadership. For it is he who supervises religious education, performs marriages, directs the observance of ritual regulations, and resolves religious questions.

In some parts of Europe his jurisdiction as a judge over religious matters was legally defined. In most countries his status was fixed by law. In Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia the Chief Rabbi was a member of the Senate.(139) In Poland each community was required by law to have at least one rabbi.

Today the Jewish clergymen who minister to their tortured flock in Axis Europe have been shorn of most of their long-recognized rights and privileges. But that is only a negligible part of the agony they have endured. In every pogrom organized by the Germans or their satellites, rabbis have been singled out for particularly brutal treatment. Their distinctive attire—especially among the Orthodox—has made them easy targets. During the pogrom of November 1938, they were dragged from their homes at night to witness the desecration and burning of their synagogues. The rabbi of Chemnitz was subjected to a merciless beating when he attempted to rescue the Torah scrolls from the flames.

In the concentration camp of Buchenwald one rabbi was flogged for refusing to sign his name on the Sabbath; another "when offered his release declined to leave the camp before the last of his flock."(140) The rabbi of Hindenburg, East Prussia —a man of nearly seventy—was forced to watch his synagogue destroyed. After they had cut off his beard, the Nazis told him he was free to go home. He refused and joined his congregation in the concentration camp. Upon his release, he defied the S.A. men and led the Jewish children of the town to the ruins of his synagogue so that they might together bid it farewell.

In Poland rabbis have been subjected to unspeakable torture and abomination. As soon as the Germans moved into Warsaw, Gestapo men broke into the homes of aged Rabbis Kahane and Gutszechter, beat them, cut off their beards, and trampled upon the Torah. They flung religious books from the shelves, taunting Rabbi Kahane with "This is Jewish filth!"

The list of the crimes against Jewish clergymen committed by German soldiers, Gestapo officials, S.S. and S.A. men, and their Axis accomplices cannot be compiled at this time. In hundreds of Jewish communities the Germans hold rabbis as hostages. In Podebice on September 14, 1939 a

(139) Chief Rabbi Safran of Rumania was inducted into the Senate as late as March 8, 1940. In Hungary the decree of May 5, 1939 restricting Jewish participation in political and economic life, made an exception for rabbis, but they too were excluded from parliament in 1940.

(140) Report of the *British Charge d'Affaires in Berlin.*

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crowd of Jews led by Rabbi Rotfeld and Poles headed by their priest were locked in crowded quarters for three full days. Then rabbi and priest alike were compelled to remove the excrement with their bare hands. On *Yom Kippur*, Rabbi Oselko of Mogielnica was forced to head a procession of Jews to the market place. There the Germans compelled them to undress, burned their coats and forced the rabbi and his followers to clear the market place. In Lipsk, in the district of Radom, the rabbi and 49 Jews who had been hiding in the forest, were seized by the Germans, brought back to town and shot to death. In Ryki near Garwolin, 90-year-old Rabbi Romer was murdered by the Germans.

The rabbi of Brezeziny was tortured to death by German soldiers after his synagogue had been burned to the ground, because he refused to furnish them the names of Jews "responsible" for the fire. He died without speaking. In Wegrow, Rabbi Morgenstern was seized by the Germans on the night of *Yom Kippur* while he was secretly praying with members of his congregation. He was driven to the market place and publicly tortured before the members of his congregation. Then he was compelled to collect excrement with his hands, to fill his fur cap with it, and to put it back on his head. Meanwhile, he was whipped and finally slowly stabbed. He uttered no cry, but told those about him: "Jewish brethren, do not look at my tortures. I suffer no pain. I only sympathize with you. . ."[141]

In Bucharest during the Iron Guard pogrom of January 1941, Rabbi Gutman saw his two children killed before his eyes. Quietly he visited other stricken homes, arranged funeral services for the victims, and then returned to recite the burial service for his own murdered children.[142]

The Unsung

In Saarbruecken, a Jew named Moreal Loewy was beaten to death when he refused to set fire to the synagogue. In the Polish town of Krasnik, a Jewish butcher who was ordered by German soldiers to burn a Torah scroll, welcomed death instead. In another Polish town, four Jews were shot down when they attempted to enter the flaming synagogue to save their Torah. In still another, a crowd of unarmed Jews who tried to prevent German soldiers and police from destroying their synagogue were answered by a volley of shots which left half their number dead. How many times such scenes have been reenacted in Axis Europe may never be known.

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(141) *Documents Relating to the Administration of Occupied Countries in Eastern Europe*, No. 4, German Persecution of Religious Life in Poland, page 28; Eye-witness report to the Vilna Office of the World Jewish Congress, No. 44.

(142) *New York Post*, February 3, 1941.

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THE WARSAW GHETTO (No. 5—December)
JEWS IN THE FAR EAST (No. 6—January)
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