

# THE IVANSK PROJECT e-NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 36      May – June 2009

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A new museum is taking shape in the former Warsaw Ghetto. It will open in 2011 and portray the history of Polish Jewry. Recently, The Museum launched its “Virtual Shtetl” site on the web to acquire and disseminate information about individual Polish shtetls. A link to Iwaniska (Ivansk) is already operational and holds the promise of generating new information about the lives of our ancestors.
- **“The Catholic Church and Antisemitism Poland, 1933-1939”** by **Ronald Modras**  
Dr. Modras’ scholarly assessment of the church’s anti-Jewish attitudes and actions during the interwar years is an important contribution to our knowledge of Polish-Jewish history. **Chapter 9: The Interwar Economy: Poverty and the Boycott** examines how the church attempted to stifle Jewish trade and commerce. His findings are a window to the powerful forces massed against our people on the eve of World War II.

## Announcement: The Ivansk Project Member’s Directory

Copies of the new Ivansk Project Member’s Directory have been e-mailed to readers who participated in the survey that was conducted in March-April, 2009. If you did not receive your copy, please get in touch with me: < [nstaichman@comcast.net](mailto:nstaichman@comcast.net) >.

If you did not take part in the survey and want to be listed in the directory, fill out and return the “Membership Application” to me. The link to the application is found on the Home Page of our web site: < <http://www.ivanskproject.org/> >. Instructions are given in the application.

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## Museum of the History of Polish Jews (Warsaw): “Virtual Shtetl” Site

In 2011 The Museum of the History of Polish Jews is scheduled to open in the former Warsaw Ghetto. It will tell the story of the 1000 year history of Jewish civilization in Poland. Using state of the art technologies the museum is certain to be a major attraction and resource center. More information about the museum and its plans can be accessed at:

< <http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/index.php?lang=en> >

In June the museum launched its “Virtual Shtetl” site: < [http://www.sztetl.org.pl/?lang=en\\_GB](http://www.sztetl.org.pl/?lang=en_GB) >. While still in earliest stages of development, this portal should become an important repository of Polish-Jewish life and culture. It will, for example, feature information on the history and demography of the cities, towns and regions where Jews once lived. It will list the names and biographies of individual inhabitants. It will identify the scattered remnants of their lives (cemeteries, shuls, artifacts, etc) as well as sites honoring their memory. The museum will acquire material from various archival sources but will depend heavily on worldwide Jewry to contribute photos, texts, religious and secular objects and other personal and family mementos of the past.

Here is a segment of the Virtual Shtetl’s Home Page showing some of the links that can be explored.



I entered the word “Iwaniska” in the Search window and was amazed when something came up. Several headings with new information appeared, and I have copied the material below. The organization and the text are fragmented in some sections, but I have retained almost all of the original material, only changing the font and type settings. It’s a promising beginning.

## Information About the Town

### 1. Location

**Iwaniska** – a village in Poland, located in the Świętokrzyskie Province, Opatów County. It is the seat of the Iwaniska Municipality.

It lies approximately 13 kilometers south-west of Opatów. The town is located on the Koprzywanika River, at the south-eastern end of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains. The Iwaniskie range of these mountains extends to the south and to the southern east of the town.

## 2. History of the locality

Iwaniska was established in 1403 by the Zborowski family, on the Koprzywianka River, by the trade routes from Kraków through Opatów to the east and through Iłża to Warsaw and Vilnius. In the middle of the 16th century it was a well known Calvinism center. The town was severely destroyed by the army of Rakóczy. In 1663 the town population amounted only to 416 people, and diminished to 311 inhabitants in 1674.

According to the article of Wojciech Saletra, during the November Uprising, in March 1831, the synagogue custody paid 20 złotych to the benefit of the forming division of the Sandomierz horsemanship<sup>[1.1]</sup>.

In 1869 the population of Iwaniska was only 1,088 citizens,<sup>[1.2]</sup> and due to this small number it lost its municipal rights.

In the interwar period Iwaniska was a town settlement in the Opatów County, situated by the line of the narrow-gauge railway Bogoria-Iwaniska, which was built in 1914. In the 1930's, approximately 2,800 people lived there. Mills and tanneries functioned in the settlement. A horse, cattle and swine fair took place once a week on Mondays.

## 3. Maps of town, street names [no information provided]

### References

<sup>[1.1]</sup> Saletra, W. 2005 Żydzi wobec powstania listopadowego 1830-1831 roku – na przykładzie województwa krakowskiego i sandomierskiego, in: Z przeszłości Żydów polskich, edited by: Wijaczka, J. & Miernik, G., Kraków, page 95

<sup>[1.2]</sup> Sichniński, M. (ed.) 1965 Miasta polskie w Tysiącleciu, Warszawa vol. 1, page 508

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## Jewish Community Before 1939

### 1. History *[Editor: Several names are listed that have never appeared in previous e-Newsletters]*

The Jewish population was mostly involved in craft, trade, and, to a smaller extent, in agriculture. The Jews: **Dawid Akierman** and **Aron Rozenberg** were owners of the watermills, **Moszek Rozenberg** owned a motor-mill and **Josek Fajntuch** – a sawmill.

The craftsmen to be mentioned are: hat makers **Ch. M. Fuks** and **W. Zylberman**, a barber **M. Audajcz**, leather stitchers: **J. Frymerman**, **Sz. Goldwaser**, **J. Grynberg**, **Z. Rotenberg** and **M. Watman**, tailors: **K. Goldminc**, **A. Grunblat**, **J. Laufer**, bakers: **W. Floderwasser**, **A. Gajefogiel**, **N. Hochman**, **L. Sztajberg**, **Sz. Wajsdorf**, **M. Koperszyk**, saddler **Ch. Ehrlich**, butchers: **M. Bornsztajn** and **I. Grynszpan**, carpenters: **M. Fajntuch**, **I. Kryształ** and **S. Milgram**, shoemakers: **M. Ajdelkopf**, **H. Apolet**, **W. Rozenbaum** and **Sz. Watman**.

Major trading companies were lingerie shops of **B. Dyzenhaus** and **F. Podeszw**, a mercer's of **H. Golsztajn**, **F. Klajman**, **H. Lederman**, **J. Lederman**, **J. Rottenberg**, **M. Wajs** and **M. Wajsdorf**, and haberdashery shops of: **B. Blumenfeld**, **M. Blumenfeld** and **M. Zalcman**.

The following people were involved in large-scale cattle trading: **I. Birensztajn**, **M. Frymerman** and **S. Grynszpan**; in dairy products' trade: **Szmul Broner** and **Mojżesz Rotenberg**; in leather

trade: **Szmul Dyzenchaus, Szmul Goldwasser, H. Rotnberg, Z. Rotenberg and M. Watman**; in food: **M. Broner, M. Brygider, R. Goldhar, W. Hirszman, J. Lenart, A. Majerowicz, M. Majerowicz, M. Sztajman, J. Urman and T. Zajdenwar**; in tobacco: **M. Brygider, H. Goldman, L. Goldman, Ch. Grynbaum, I. Rotenberg and S. Rotenberg**; in grain: **Ch. Gutman, M. Sztajman, Ch. Weigman and M. Zalcman**; in iron: **J. Goldhar, M. Najman and L. Zalcman**<sup>[1.1]</sup>.

The community Board, elected in 1924, was composed of: **Nachman Zalcman, Szmul Wajsdorf, Lejbuś Goldman, Emanuel Grynszpan, Lejzor Watman, Berek Teperman and Szloma Czereśnia**. Apart from **Sz. Wajsdorf**, considering himself an Orthodox Jew, all of them were independent. Most of them were merchants<sup>[1.2]</sup>.

The county representatives supervising the Jewish kehillah reckoned the Board's activities as "incompetent", however, some of their projects were impossible to implement due to the community's poverty. That is why the fee for ox or cow slaughter was lower there than in other communities. In 1926, the Board, under the pressure of the county authorities to increase revenues, accepted a tax for cattle slaughter amounting to 6 zlotys, 4 zlotys for calves, and 0.5 zlotys for poultry<sup>[1.3]</sup>. Low profits from slaughter caused the decrease of the shochet' salaries to 1,300 zlotys a year.

In 1925 **Rabbi Widerman's** salary was raised by the Ministry of Religions from 4,329 to 4,800 zlotys. The Ministry also reckoned that the 6,100 zlotys revenue from slaughter is underrated, and it should bring 10,000 zlotys. The auditor stated that: "...the people of Iwaniska are reluctant to pay the fee"<sup>[1.4]</sup>. The Starost complained, that "...there is no intellectual at all"<sup>[1.5]</sup> in the Board. The kehillah maintained a synagogue, a mikvah, a cheder and non-fenced cemetery with the area of 1 ha<sup>[1.6]</sup>.

In 1926 the budget was expected to have the revenue of 14,692 zlotys, including revenue from slaughter amounting to 9,000 zlotys. The fee was imposed on 226 Jewish community members for the total amount of 1,625 zlotys. The county comments, that this sum was insufficient, were scorned by the Board by saying that their debts for the fees of 1924-1925 reached 3,412 zlotys with no chances to recover.

**Icek Jankiel**, the rabbi, earned 5,133 zlotys a year, and the mohels earned 1,680 zlotys each. The renovation of a mikvah became an urgent issue. Hence, on the 30th of January 1927, the Board consisting of **Emanuel Grynszpan**, the president, **Lejbuś Goldman, Szmul Wajdorf and Nachman Zalcman**<sup>[1.7]</sup> decided to raise the slaughter fee for cows: from 6 to 8 zlotys, from 3.5 to 4 zlotys for calves, from 0.5 to 0.7 zlotys for ducks, and from 0.35 to 0.5 for hens.

In 1927 the planned inflows to the budget had to reach 18,408 zlotys, but the actual amount was 4,438 zlotys lower. The outstanding debt amounted to 3,070 zlotys<sup>[1.8]</sup>.

The following year, after having received numerous letters from the county authorities, the inflows from slaughter were estimated at 12,951.57 zlotys, and 1,150 zlotys from the fees of 147 payers. The expenses comprised salaries of 2,300 zlotys for each mohel: **Sztajnowicz and Chalupnik**, and 600 zlotys for the community's secretary. 300 zlotys were allocated for the rabbi's premises, 2,000 zlotys for the mikvah's renovation, and 325 zlotys for the medical treatment of the kehillah's members. Sub-rabbi was to be paid 5,288 zlotys a year.

In 1928 the community's Board changed, and **Nusyn Zalcman** became its leader<sup>[2.1]</sup>. The budget for 1928 granted higher remuneration for the sub-rabbi, by 700 zlotys, and for the mohels, by 20 zlotys. Moreover, benefits were granted to two widows. The **Szapiro's widow** received 730 zlotys a year, and mohel **Grynberg's widow** received 312 zlotys a year.

The audit of 1932 showed that the Board owed 500 zlotys to **Jakub Icek Widerman**, the rabbi; 72 zlotys to **Binem Lerman**, and 679.11 zlotys for treatment, which amounted to the total sum of 1,251.22 zlotys<sup>[2.2]</sup>.

According to the county authorities, the Jewish population in Iwaniska in 1933 amounted to 1,450 people. The budgetary income from slaughter should have come to 12,700 zlotys, from the fees – to 2,379 zlotys, from other sources – 1,429.44 zlotys, totaling to 16,336.44 zlotys. The expenses covered 5,690 zlotys for the rabbi, 6,532 zlotys for the kehilla's authorities, 530 zlotys for other fees, 2,200 zlotys for investments, and 1,286 for miscellaneous expenses<sup>[2.3]</sup>.

In 1937 the Board was monopolized by independent religious activists. The commune had 2,000 members, 152 families were obliged to pay the community fee, the movable property had an estimated value of 3,000 zlotys, immovable – of 24,000 zlotys, and the liabilities amounted to 919 zlotys.

## References

[1.1] 1930 Księga Adresowa Polski (wraz z W.M. Gdańskiem) dla handlu, przemysłu, rzemiosł i rolnictwa, Warszawa, page 211

[1.2] Source: State Archive of Kielce (APK), the Province Office of Kielce (UWK I), file no.. 1501, k. 199

[1.3] APK, UWK I, file no. 1625, k. 2

[1.4] APK, UWK I, file no. 1752, k. 359, 361, 364

[1.5] APK, UWK I, file no., k. 17

[1.6] Burchard, P. 1990 Pamiątki i zabytki kultury żydowskiej w Polsce, Warszawa, page 168

[1.7] APK, UWK I, file no.. 1625, k. 36

[1.8] APK, UWK I, file no. 1625, k.11, 19

[2.1] Source: APK, UWK I, file no. 1625, k. 36, 42 – 43

[2.2] Source: APK, UWK I, file no 1653, k. 136 a

[2.3] Source: APK UWK I, file no, k.

[Editor: *There are additional subheadings under the title, **Jewish Community Before 1939:***

2. **Demography**
3. **Organizations and associations,**
4. **Education,**
5. **Legends and stories,**
6. **Accounts, memories,**
7. **Culture texts,**
8. **Artifacts,**
9. **Unidentified,**

*No information was provided in these categories. The public is invited to submit text, photos or other materials on any of these subjects. However, the 10th subheading, contained the following:]*

### 10. List of names: **Chi Feleger**

Since 1844 the post of the rabbi was held by 19-year old Chi Feleger, born in Szczekocin. He wrote in his memories, dated August 1869: "I was born in 1825 in the town of Szczekocin. I attended the local schools, i.e. a Catholic and a Jewish one. I was learning Russian and Polish in the first one, and also Hebrew and religion in the other." In 1869 he officially took the post of the Iwaniska rabbi<sup>[1.1]</sup>. In 1890 he requested the administrative authorities to grant him the permit to wear a traditional rabbi's robe.

## Reference

[1.1] Penkalla, A. 1999 "O biegu życia rabinów" guberni radomskiej w okresie Królestwa Polskiego, in: Kieleckie Studia Historyczne, no. 15, page 173

## Historic Monuments

This section contains 4 subheadings; at present there is no information in any of them.

1. Synagogues, prayer houses and others
2. Cemeteries
3. Places of martyrology
4. Judaica in museums

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## Town Today

The final section deals with the current town under these subheadings:

1. Compatriots' Associations (Landsmannschaft)
2. Culture, social and educational projects
3. Local contacts
4. Transportation
5. Accommodation
6. Restaurants
7. Others

The Virtual Shtetl project is an ambitious undertaking. At present it is a little tricky to navigate through the site; the **Help Link** provides some help and outlines how to register and contribute information to the project. Many other useful connections are available; for instance, the **Glossary link** defined the meaning of words and phrases. The fact that Ivansk is already on-board is very encouraging, and we will do our part in sharing information about our shtetl. A trip to Warsaw in 2011 to tour the museum might be in the cards.

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### < The Interwar Economy > “The Catholic Church and Antisemitism Poland, 1933-1939” by Ronald Modras

**Editor's Comments:** The 20 years between the two World Wars were one of the most turbulent periods in Polish-Jewish history. While the Treaty of Versailles (1919) restored Poland's independence, the nation was confronted by formidable obstacles that stood in the way of achieving prosperity and harmony within its borders. The “Jewish Question” was near the top of the list; the “Jewish threat” festered in the minds of Polish nationalists and the Catholic church. To be Polish was to be Catholic; church and state could not be separated. Jews did not/could not fit into the “Catholic Poland” mold. From earliest times the Catholic church looked upon Jews with contempt...not only did they reject Christ but they constituted a secular, liberal force that undermined the church's authority and threatened the culture and faith of its followers. In the 1930s the gulf between the church and Jews was growing wider, and if not for WWII the tensions would probably have continued to escalate with Jews finding it increasingly uncomfortable to remain in Poland.

**Ronald Modras** documents the anti-Jewish attitude and behavior of the church during this critical period in, “**The Catholic Church and Antisemitism Poland, 1933-1939**”. I enthusiastically recommend Dr. Modras’ work, which appeared in 1994 (Harwood Academic Publishers), as one of the most illuminating and comprehensive studies of the church’s obsessive antisemitic ideology. A Professor of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University Dr. Ronald Modras has written on ecumenical and inter-religious topics, focusing primarily on Catholic-Jewish Relations. He has served on the Advisory Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations for the United States Catholic Bishops. In 1989, he received the Micah Award of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Jewish Committee and became a Fellow of the Annenberg Research Institute.



Dr. Modras’ approach to his subject is described in the preface to his book (p *xiv-xv*):

This is not a book about Poland. I am not a student of Polish history. My training has been that of a theologian, and, as an American Roman Catholic, I have spent much of my professional life studying and reflecting on the history and theology of the Roman Catholic church. Three of my grandparents came from Poland, however, and I have expended considerable time and effort toward understanding the historical stance of my church toward Jews. This is a book about one aspect of the Catholic church – in the 1930s, when Jews throughout Europe constituted a "question"; in Poland, where no other institution could claim an even comparable moral authority in forming popular attitudes and opinions.

I have limited my research almost exclusively to published works and to the years circumscribed by the Nazi rise to power and the German invasion of Poland. I have concentrated on Polish Catholic periodical literature to create a window on the public Catholic consciousness of that most Catholic nation. My research is based on some two-thousand pages of material, photocopied from virtually every important periodical published during those years under Catholic auspices. They were gleaned from thousands of pages more, perused for any significant reference to Jews, Judaism, or antisemitism. No one, of course, read all those periodicals. (In some instances I found myself opening journals previously uncut.) And it is methodologically impossible to determine the precise influence they had on their readers, let alone the broader Polish Catholic consciousness. But taken collectively they tell us not only what individual Catholic writers thought about Jews but what their readers, especially priests, were wont to think. They are indicative of the clerical mind-set at the time. How much influence the church’s pulpit exerted on Catholics at the time is even more indeterminate, but it was hardly negligible.

Previous e-Newsletters featured articles on the economic status of Polish Jews in general and of Ivanskers in particular. In Chapter 9 of his book Dr. Modras summarizes the state of Poland’s economy in the 1930s. He questions whether the majority of Jews were any worse off than their Polish neighbors; both were being pummeled by economic stagnation. However, there is no question in his mind on the church’s determination to remove Jews as a force in Poland’s economy. The church failed to appreciate the positive and indeed the critical role that Jews could play in stimulating Poland’s economy. Modras concludes: “*For the Catholic leadership of the 1930s, poverty in a Catholic Poland was preferable to prosperity in one that was secular.*” (p. 242)

I have copied Chapter 9, **The Interwar Economy: Poverty and the Boycott** (pages 213-242) from Dr. Modras’ book. For me the most interesting aspect of his study stems from his survey of the Catholic press. The reports and editorials reflect the position of many church leaders whose opinions influenced Polish clergy and people on the street. The author’s presentation of the repugnant material exuding from the pages of these periodicals conveys a sense of being there while it was happening.

Most of the articles cited by Dr. Modras were published in the *Mały Dziennik*, a daily Catholic newspaper whose antisemitic bent can be appreciated by this headline which it printed in 1938:

**“If we don’t declare war on them, the Jewish rope will strangle us.”**

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## Chapter 9: The Interwar Economy: Poverty and the Boycott

From the outset of Poland's recorded history, Jews played a crucial role in its economy. Anti-Jewish outbreaks brought an influx of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Bohemia, and by the twelfth century coins with Hebrew letters circulated Poland.<sup>1</sup> The Poles were overwhelmingly agrarian, numbering only a small number of native townfolk, prompting successive rulers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to invite Jews to create towns and develop trade. The Statute of Kalisz (1264) granted Jews, along with protection and religious freedom, the right to practice free trade. If persecution in Germany made Poland a Jewish haven, Poland at the same time profited from Jewish skills. Jews served Poland's rulers and landowners as craftsmen, bankers, managers, and tax-collectors. By the end of the sixteenth century, it is estimated that there were nearly two hundred thousand Jews in Poland. They constituted somewhat over six percent of the entire population but sixteen percent in the towns.<sup>2</sup>

Because Poland required the development of trade and crafts, not more agriculture, Jews were barred from settling the land. By the fifteenth century Poland had a flourishing middle class, but most of it was Jewish or German with each group competing with the other. The few Poles who engaged in commerce and industry abandoned the occupation as soon as they became wealthy enough to pass into the class of the land-owning nobility. For the Polish aristocracy, land ownership and agriculture were the only respectable occupations. Commercial and industrial activities were despised as demeaning to their status. A succession of laws in the sixteenth century actually forbade the gentry from engaging in them under penalty of losing their privileges. This attachment to land remained strong in Poland right up through the nineteenth century. Romantic writers, like Krasinski, Slowacki, and Reymont, contrasted the bleakness of urban living with supposedly carefree village life. Even in the 1930s a native Polish bourgeoisie did not exist on a scale comparable to that in western Europe.

It is a commonplace that at least up to the end of the sixteenth century, the situation of Jews was better in Poland than anywhere else in Europe. Disturbances against Jews, generally caused by their German competitors, were economically rather than religiously motivated. Laws discriminating against Jews, usually passed to please the Germans, frequently went unenforced. But with the 1648 Ukrainian uprisings and Chmielnicki massacres, Jewish fortunes declined with those of the rest of the nation. A series of wars, economic stagnation, and political anarchy rendered the situation in the eighteenth century even more disastrous. Before it was over, there were only six towns in Poland that had more than ten thousand inhabitants. The gentry, never more than ten percent of the population, had become supreme and acted more in their own class interest than in that of the nation. The peasantry, representing seventy-five percent of the population, were bound to the land and little better than serfs.

The partitions of Poland only aggravated an already grim economic situation. Policies of systematic oppression and neglect on the part of the partitioning powers, especially Russia and Austria, made it difficult for the Poles to throw off their feudal institutions. The enormous technical progress which characterized the nineteenth century in the west left Poland virtually untouched. Austrian-occupied Poland (Galicia) experienced little industrial progress. Russian-occupied Poland, though subjected to ruthless political oppression, enjoyed almost free access to the vast Russian market and became quite possibly the most developed part of the Russian empire. By western standards, however, it was underdeveloped and its people poor. Łódź, for example, a textile center and the second largest city in Poland, had no system of sewers until the First World War.<sup>3</sup>



For the rest of Europe, that war ended in 1918; in Poland the fighting continued nearly two more years. In economic terms the military conflict with the Soviet Union was arguably more disastrous to Poland than the previous four years, since it had to be financed from already depleted domestic resources. Even before the end of the Great War, large areas of the country had been devastated by battle. Two years later, with mines and factories idle for lack of raw materials and machinery, the country was in economic chaos. In the first years of the new Polish Republic's existence, the entire economic system had to be reconstructed from scratch. There was no integrated infrastructure, no common currency, no established financial institutions, no government agencies.<sup>4</sup> And in less than a decade Poland was struck by an international depression.

Jewish historians writing on interwar Poland have generally focused on the economic plight of the Jews. Contemporary Jewish accounts, usually journalistic, did the same.<sup>5</sup> Readers, for example, of the *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*, a national weekly, were informed regularly by its correspondents in Poland about Jewish poverty: how almost eighty percent of the Jewish population could not afford the dollar a year community tax, how "a potato a day is a luxury to thousands of them."<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Bernard Kahn, European Director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, in an appeal to American Jews, wrote that at least one million of Poland's Jews were completely destitute and looked to soup kitchens to fend off starvation. Kahn placed the blame for their plight on the policies of the Polish government and the establishment of governmental monopolies in industries such as lumber, tobacco, liquor, and salt. Jews who had previously been active in these industries were now out of work. To relieve the effects of the world depression on Poland's massive peasant population, the government issued a fifteen year moratorium on their debts, resulting in severe losses for Jewish creditors. A system of taxing urban areas at a rate higher than the impoverished countryside meant that the government was taxing precisely those areas where Jews were concentrated most heavily.<sup>7</sup>

Equally disturbing to Jews in 1936 was the apparent change of governmental policy with regard to the boycott of Jewish merchants. Under Roman Dmowski the National Democrats had been encouraging a boycott of Jewish enterprises since 1912. With a slogan amounting to "patronize your own," (*swój do swego*), Endeks sought to convince Poles that Jews were the primary obstacle to their own economic advancement. But Pilsudski had kept the National Democrats on a short leash, and the boycott had little effect. It was only after his death in 1935, that the Endeks saw an opportunity to make the boycott work. They heated up their campaign until, to all appearances, the government finally caved in to Endek pressure. In a June 6, 1936 speech to the Polish Sejm, Premier Sławój-Składkowski declared: "An honest host does not allow anybody to be harmed in his house. Economic struggle-yes (*owszem*)! But no harm." Similarly the government (February 21, 1937) condemned "arbitrary and brutal anti-Jewish acts" but went on to endorse "cultural self-defense" and the "tendency of the Polish people toward economic independence."<sup>8</sup>

In the wake of this apparent change in governmental policy, the American Jewish Congress addressed a memorandum (July 12, 1937) to the U.S. State Department. It accused the Polish government of being "directly responsible for the present plight of the Polish Jews." The memorandum charged the government with discrimination in its hiring practices: Jews made up only one percent of the national civil service; two percent at the municipal level. The number of Jews employed in the state monopolies was similarly negligible. Although less than four percent of the employed Polish population was engaged in commerce, two-thirds of all direct taxes were levied upon commercial enterprises, in which those chiefly engaged happened to be Jews.

As a result, the memorandum continued, Jews, though only ten percent of the population, paid approximately forty percent of all direct taxes. There were Jewish traders too poor to pay their license fees and Jewish bakers denied the government credits being granted to non-Jews. The cumulative effect of the unofficial boycott and official discrimination concluded the memorandum, was the "utter impoverishment" of Poland's Jews. "Forty percent of them are unemployed and unemployment among them is more than twice as great as in the population at large." The memorandum, signed by Stephen S. Wise, requested the U.S. government to intercede with the Polish government on behalf of Poland's Jews.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the statistics cited here by Wise took into consideration only the unemployed urban population and not the masses of Polish peasants.

At a distance of some fifty years, historian Joseph Marcus has subjected interwar Poland's economic situation to more careful scrutiny and analysis. His research has led him to criticize the majority of interwar Jewish commentators on Poland for preferring political interest to objectivity. He faults them for being "champions of the Jewish cause, at a time of great economic and political difficulties." They "wrote both aggressively and plaintively, hoping to arouse compassion for and bring help to their suffering fellow Jews." In the case of Jewish relief organizations, their reports were promotional in purpose. "Polemic and protest took precedence over fair selection of facts." Marcus points out how frequently references would be made to the inferior political status of Polish Jews (which was partly due to their leaders' internal policies) but not to their superior economic status. No attention was given to the fact that the impact of the Jewish minority was greater on the majority population than vice versa.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to the conventional wisdom on the matter, Marcus' research demonstrates that "between the end of the eighteenth century and 1929, the last year before the Great Depression, per capita income of Jews went up by 350 percent, while that of the non-Jewish urban population declined" (p. 13). The credit lay with the Jewish entrepreneurs who were largely responsible for developing industry in partitioned and interwar Poland. There was a greater disparity of wealth among Jews than within Christian urban society, and certainly by western standards the average Polish Jew was poor. The main reason, however, was not Polish antisemitism. Marcus' findings are rather: "Even if all the Jews who were unemployed in 1929 had held gainful jobs at average wages and salaries appropriate to the occupational groups to which they belonged, only about eleven percent would have been added to the total Jewish national income in that year...leaving the people as a whole only slightly less poor than they actually were. That Jewish poverty was mainly the result of accumulated discrimination against them is a myth and it is time to expose it as such" (p. 231).

The fundamental weakness of Poland's economy was its agriculture. Thirty-four percent of all farms were five acres or less, clearly not enough for a peasant family to support itself (p. 25). In 1935 a leading agrarian expert in the Polish government estimated that a full forty-two percent of the total farm population was superfluous. A League of Nations study concurred, estimating that for the years 1931-1935, the yield of Poland's agriculture was twenty-five percent of Germany's and fifteen percent that of England and Wales. Besides the underdeveloped state of farming methods, the problem was overpopulation. The same League of Nations study concluded that to achieve the average European per capita yield, Poland would have to remove 51.3 percent of its peasants from agriculture (p. 21).

Poland was in glaring need of radical agrarian reform. Simon Segal, writing at the time, estimated that five and a half million peasants in Czechoslovakia bought three times the quantity of industrial goods purchased by twenty-three million Polish peasants.<sup>11</sup> Although half the agricultural land in Poland was controlled by a handful of private landowners, they went untouched; the government

limited itself to parceling out state-owned lands.<sup>12</sup> The industrial workers did not fare much better. At what was then the exchange of five zlotys to a dollar, the average hourly wage was a little more than a half zloty or twelve cents. The average earnings of all the workers in Warsaw in 1935 amounted to 36.89 zlotys (\$7.35) a week. Fifty percent of all the public employees had debts amounting to six months of their wages.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of the unemployed work force in interwar Poland were ethnic Poles, many if not most of them resentful of Jewish predominance in trade and crafts.<sup>14</sup> To the Polish authorities, it seemed unexceptional in the distribution of government jobs to give priority to unemployed Poles. What to Jews could only appear as discrimination, to the authorities was a policy that today they would likely describe as "affirmative action." Their motives, in Marcus' words, "were not to depress the Jews but to lift up its own nationals" (p. 238).

As mentioned above, the National Democrats campaigned for a boycott of Jewish enterprises throughout the interwar period. Encouraged by the example of the Nazis in Germany, individuals and splinter groups from the Endeks (like the eventually outlawed National Radical Camp) tried to use terror tactics and physical abuse to enforce the boycott. Right-wing students and common thugs would attack Jewish stores and market stalls and threaten Poles who dared to patronize them. Poles seeking the services of Jewish doctors and lawyers would be photographed and their pictures published with derogatory captions in hate sheets and pamphlets. At the same time, Christian merchants would advertise themselves as such by displaying pictures of Jesus or Mary in their windows or signs with slogans like "patronize your own." As Celia Heller admits, however: "it was not easy to convince Poles to abstain from patronizing Jewish enterprises."<sup>15</sup>

Guided by their common sense, the ordinary peasants knew very well that their plight was not due to the Jews but to oppressive governmental policies. The National Democrats did not have much success in the countryside, and antisemitism was felt much less in villages than in towns. Even during the 1937 peasant strikes, no Jews were harmed according to Marcus (p. 369). Indeed there were towns where Polish traders in 1939 petitioned local authorities to rescind regulations which for several years had required stalls at markets and fairs to be located by religion. This discriminatory legislation had led to a concentration of Jewish stalls in one recognizable section of the marketplace. Although the original purpose of the regulations had been to facilitate the boycott, they had the opposite effect. The Polish farmers would head straight to that section of the market where the Jewish stalls were to be found (pp. 244-45).

The general failure of the boycott was hardly due to philosemitism. There was widespread envy and resentment of Jews who were prospering in business, and there was a widely-held notion that Jewish goods were shoddy. But the Polish masses could ill afford expensive products and were anxious to obtain the goods they needed at the cheapest prices. In the end, Marcus concludes that the price factor was usually decisive. "Apart from a few fanatics, most Polish consumers ignored all other considerations" (p. 245).

Government support of the boycott is generally dated from 1936 and Premier Składkowski's speech, in which he said, "Economic struggle--yes (*owszem*)! But no harm." Składkowski later wrote in his memoirs that this was not a call to boycott but merely an attempt to ward off extremists. But once the Jewish leadership and press interpreted his word as an endorsement of the boycott, it was politically expedient not to deny it (p. 366). The approach of the government was Polish self-interest, and that above all meant improvement of Poland's desperate economic situation. Although nationalization of Poland's economy was undoubtedly a long-range goal, the authorities realized that not many Poles were qualified to replace Jews in large-scale commercial enterprises, and they were left alone (p. 243). On balance, Marcus' research indicates that, during

the years 1929 to 1938, though the population of Poland's Jews fell slightly, "their share of the total national income substantially increased (from 13.33 percent to almost 15 percent) At the end of the period, the proportion of income that accrued to the upper half of the Jewish population was larger than in 1929, and the prosperous minority of Jews also owned, in real terms, more wealth" (p. 247).

In short, even in the late 1930s, the Jewish middle and lower-middle classes were holding their own. The majority of Polish Jews were more comfortable than most ethnic Poles. Government policies detrimental to Jewish economic interests were ineffective. Rather it appears that those interests were damaged more by Jewish strikes against Jewish-owned enterprises than by any government measures (p. 126-27). Marcus concludes: "The Jews in Poland were poor because they lived in a poor, underdeveloped country. Discrimination added only marginally to their poverty" (p. 231).

Marcus is not the only Jewish historian to take this patently revisionist view of interwar Poland.<sup>16</sup> Polish scholars have long complained that the Jewish question in interwar Poland has been studied too much in isolation, that Jewish suffering was the result of Polish poverty and underdevelopment.<sup>17</sup> But this clearly does not absolve the National Democrats and radical right for their campaign of terror against the most vulnerable sector of the Jewish population: the small shopkeepers and traders who sold their goods from pushcarts and stalls in the marketplaces. These were the most defenseless competitors to the radical nationalists and the most frequent victims of physical attacks.

It was against such "scoundrels in student's attire" that novelist Wanda Wasilewska raised her voice in protest: "Here fifteen, sixteen people live in one room. Here five people sleep in one bed The slogan of economic struggle is raised against the paupers of the Jewish street. Why suppress when it is so easy and so safe to vent one's anger in a fight with a bowed porter, with a Jewish boy selling watches..."<sup>18</sup> Protests from the church against physical violence were considerably less eloquent than Wasilewska's. Against the boycott, there were none.

The spectacle of poor people striking out in anger and frustration at other poor people was hardly new nor peculiar to Poland. Noteworthy, though, was the considerable interest that Catholic opinion-makers took in economic matters. One does not ordinarily expect economic analysis and expertise from clerical publications, but the Polish Catholic press was anything but silent on such issues and hardly indifferent.

### ***Maly Dziennik***

Nationalization of Poland's economy was a concern for the Catholic press no less than for the *Endeks*, particularly for the *Maly Dziennik*. No issue appeared more regularly in its columns. From the first months of its publication, it advertised itself as a friend and defender of working people, which for the Catholic daily meant being an adversary to Jewish economic interests (July 28, 1935). Typical of the journalism of its day, it made no sharp distinction between news reporting and editorial opinion. Its conservative Catholic and nationalistic slant appeared in all its pages, as did its hostility to Jewish interests. A news story of a strike against a lumber mill described "incredibly low pay" and "dreadful" working conditions and pointed out that the owners were Jewish, which made it a "Jewish factory" (July 28, 1935). Similarly, badly needed foreign investment being made in the shipping city of Gdynia was interpreted to mean that Poland was becoming dependent and dominated by "foreign and Jewish capital" (July 4, 1935).

From its earliest days the *Maly Dziennik* began a practice of eliciting opinions on issues it regarded as urgent. The Catholic daily, for example, asked its readers from the countryside to relate their needs and complaints (July 28, 1935). The responses to that request were suggestive of common Polish attitudes in the villages. Life, wrote one reader, was not bad in the summer, when rooms could be rented out to tourists, especially to Jews, who paid well (August 6, 1935). Another reader complained that everyone exploited farmers, but especially Jews. Cooperatives were needed as an alternative to Jewish middlemen, who bought their grain. Unfortunately, cooperatives were difficult to organize because "our farmers do not feel confident in this way of doing things and prefer to do business with Jews" (August 11, 1935).

The *Maly Dziennik* fared better in a second opinion poll directed to Catholics in trade and commerce. This hardly disinterested segment of Polish society was asked their opinions of their Jewish competitors: Would young people leaving the villages and entering into trade change the situation in which commerce was largely in the hands of people "alien and hostile" to Poles? (January 26, 1936) The Catholic store owners responded as expected. Occasional references were made to the need for Poles to learn commercial skills, but the majority of letters complained about Jews engaging in unfair business practices. Allegations were made of Jews selling inferior or defective merchandise, advertising falsely, or selling on Saturday or Sunday.

The Catholic respondents lamented having to pay rent for their stores to Jewish landlords who owned all the commercial property. The proverb, "your streets, our buildings" (*wasze ulice, nasze kamienice*) was all too true. Writers complained about Jewish credit unions subsidized by outside Jewish capital; cheap credit allowed Jews to sell cheaper. The letters acknowledged that many Poles preferred to shop in Jewish stores. More Catholic wholesalers were needed, the respondents urged, and greater solidarity. For the "Central Association of Christian Retailers," (which had its counterpart in the "Central Association of Jewish Retailers"), the crucial issues were tax relief and government support. When a respondent suggested a governmental buyout of Jewish businesses tantamount to expropriation, the Catholic daily called it an "interesting project."<sup>19</sup>

## Poverty

The effects of the depression lasted longer in Poland than in the rest of Europe. *Maly Dziennik* described the high incidence of beggars and vagrants in Warsaw resulting from joblessness (March 20, 1936). Not untypical was the story of a Polish mother who, no longer able to take in washing, made a living for herself and her children by selling cherries from a pushcart (July 18, 1936). More unusual was an article descriptive of Jewish poverty. Instead of looking for help from the government, Poles should learn from the Jews. Not only "proverbial Jewish shrewdness" helped them to get by, but also the willingness to take even poorly paid jobs. Poles preferred to remain idle than to take a job that did not pay enough, the writer claimed. Jews, by contrast, would rather work for pennies than live off charity. Women would pluck chickens and boys would sell cooked peas on street corners (March 19, 1936). Such sentiments were certainly exceptional for the *Maly Dziennik*. More typically, when several hundred Polish retailers were fined or arrested for charging inflated prices, the *Maly Dziennik* blamed the wholesalers who were overwhelmingly Jewish (October 24, 1936).

To investigate and address the problems of poverty and overpopulation in the Polish countryside, Cardinal Hlond instituted what he called a "social council." The council's recommendations were that a certain percentage of peasants be encouraged to move from the country to the cities and that the government institute land reform, subdividing and distributing Poland's larger country estates, even if it meant compulsory expropriation. *Maly Dziennik* was critical of the idea of land

reform, but it enthusiastically endorsed the idea of peasants moving to cities and displacing Jews in industry and small business (November 24, 1937). The word overpopulation was not frequently used in the Catholic press. As one could expect, given the papal prohibition against artificial birth control, no suggestion was ever made of a need for family planning. It was easier for the Catholic daily to fault Jews: Jewish clothiers were exploiting Polish cottage workers who did their sewing (March 13, 1937); Jewish grain dealers were paying farmers as little as possible so as to keep the price of bread down for Jewish city-dwellers (November 21, 1938).

In the *Rycerz Niepokalanej*, also published by Father Kolbe's Conventual Franciscans, R. Karkowska argued from a recent report of statistics (*Maly Rocznik Statystyczny*). Given its natural resources, Poland should be self-sufficient, but, because of its neighbors, Poland required an army that consumed more than a third of its budget. Because it was under-industrialized, Poland imported goods which it should be producing itself. But, most problematic were the numbers of landless peasants. Since the outlook for land redistribution was not promising and emigration did not offer a serious option, the only solution to their problems had to be found in trade, 84% of which, Karkowska alleged, was in Jewish which was to say "foreign" hands, especially in the eastern and southern parts of the country. Nationally, 52.5% of all commercial enterprises were Jewish, but in the south it was 64.9%, and in the east 71.9%. To solve the problem of joblessness, the government was nationalizing commerce and industry, forming cooperatives and credit unions, but Jewish interests were resisting the government's efforts.<sup>20</sup>

In the Catholic Action *Ruch Katolicki*, Father Jan Cierniewski blamed Poland's poverty on "Jewish capitalism." With its principles of competition and unlimited private property, capitalism had increased productivity but did not know how to divide profits fairly. Although an "aryan economic system," capitalism was influenced by "Jewish principles." Cierniewski cited the work of Jewish economist Werner Sombart on Jews and economic life, in which Sombart claimed that contemporary capitalism and culture would not have been possible without Jews. For Cierniewski, that meant Poland would not be able to dislodge the capitalist system without resolving the "Jewish question."

At the exchange rate of five zlotys to a U.S. dollar, Cierniewski had reason to call Poland one of the poorest countries in Europe. Near Lwów an organization was founded in which each member promised one potato a day for families who had nothing other than potatoes on which to live. The national average income was somewhat less than 300 zlotys per year. The "privileged" ten percent of the population had an income four times that great (1200 zlotys per year). That put the income of the remaining 30 million Poles at circa 190 zlotys per year. On the other hand, Jews dominated the most lucrative fields, Cierniewski insisted, and almost all of Poland's heavy industry depended on foreign and Jewish capital. Solving the "Jewish question" in a Catholic spirit meant repudiating excesses; the Nazis contradicted the principles of the church and the values of Polish tradition. But there would be no liberation from capitalism so long as Jews dominated Poland's economy.<sup>21</sup>

## Monopolies

The *Maly Dziennik* regularly complained about Jewish monopolies in items like salt, sugar, and meat (December 31, 1938; January 19, 1939). The Jewish wholesalers were accused of giving better prices to Jewish retailers (May 21, 1937). Poles were discouraged from eating rice, which, besides being a Jewish monopoly, the reader was assured, really did not suit Polish tastes (April 14, 1938; August 19, 1938). Krakow's *Glos Narodu* found it newsworthy that a Catholic in Warsaw was opening a fish market and so broke the Jewish fish monopoly there.<sup>22</sup>

*Maly Dziennik* encouraged its readers to inquire about the religion not only of the retailer but of the manufacturer as well (March 30, 1936). Ninety percent of the wholesale trade was in Jewish hands, the Catholic daily lamented (July 19, 1936).

The question was raised in the secular press whether there was something in the Polish temperament not conducive to commerce. Not so, answered Adolf Malyszko in the *Przegląd Katolicki*. The Polish aristocracy had erred in seeing commerce as unworthy of them. Despite that historic blunder, there were a number of areas where Poles demonstrated their entrepreneurial skills and constituted a majority (the sugar industry, publishing, retail grocery). Where the percentage of Jews was small, they benefited a national economy by stimulating competition; too great a percentage deterred the development of commercial skills in the native population. Poland's problem, Malyszko concluded, was that Warsaw alone had three times more Jews than all of France.<sup>23</sup>

In eastern Poland the preponderance of Jews in commerce was especially conspicuous and to Catholic nationalists, especially rankling. Poles used to say that Europe ended at Warsaw's Poniatowski bridge, wrote Antoni Chocieszyński, but it rather seemed that Poland did. The territories east of Warsaw appeared to him like some foreign nation. There were cities in the east where all stores were Jewish. This called for an "economic war" by pioneering spirits. For a Polish Catholic to become a store owner in the east was to become no less than a "pioneer of Polishness and a missionary of Catholicism." It was a matter not merely of economics but of faith.<sup>24</sup>

## The Boycott

Nationalizing Poland's economy by boycotting Jewish businesses had been a program of the National Democrats since 1912. But its highest and most celebrated Catholic endorsement came in 1936, when Cardinal Hlond issued a pastoral letter on Catholic moral principles. After warning the faithful against Nazism, communism, atheism, and Masonry, he went on to add: "One may love one's own nation more, but one may not hate anyone. Not even Jews. It is good to prefer your own kind when shopping, to avoid Jewish stores and Jewish stalls in the marketplace, but it is forbidden to demolish a Jewish store, damage their merchandise, break windows, or throw things at their homes."<sup>25</sup>

Reading the Catholic periodical literature subsequent to the Cardinal's letter, one is struck at how rarely it was cited. The impression one receives is that the Cardinal's views were hardly news and taken for granted. The *Maly Dziennik* from its inception had treated the boycott as an "obligation," a moral and civic duty for Polish Catholics. Regularly it ran a banner over its advertisements, declaring that "A Pole buys only from other Poles." Among those ads, "Gloria," a manufacturer of razor blades, not only declared itself to be a Christian firm but urged, "Let's not allow ourselves to be shaved by the enemy" (August 9, 1936). *Maly Dziennik* made its point with cartoons as well. One example depicted a Polish hostess serving her guests rolls from a Jewish bakery, only to have them all fall ill with food poisoning (June 25, 1935).

No aspect of the boycott was too trivial for *Maly Dziennik*. Readers were admonished, with the advent of the school year, to buy the children's school supplies only from Christian stores. Such purchases added up and should not be considered negligible (August 29, 1938). The Catholic daily heralded the publication of a guidebook, "Christian Warsaw," that gave the names and addresses of Christian businesses, lawyers, and medical doctors (June 19, 1935). Formerly when market days fell on Jewish holidays, they had to be transferred. In Wilno in 1938, however, the market took place despite the Jewish High Holy Days, thanks to Christian merchants. Business was slower than usual, because customers presumed there would be no market, but everything was sold and

no one missed the Jews. Those communities which postponed the market because of the Holy Days were guilty of "exaggerated philosemitism" (October 20, 1938).

A particular concern of the Catholic daily was to prevent cooperation between Christian and Jewish merchants. Polish firms were criticized for maintaining relations with Jewish contractors (November 23, 1938). The *Maly Dziennik* was incensed that a Christmas fair organized by the Association of Christian Retailers had allowed Jewish merchants to participate. Christian merchants did not have a moral right to work quietly together with Jews, the daily declared. Such cooperation gave the impression that Jewish firms with neutral names were Christian. Admittedly, some products were manufactured only by Jews, but one should either do without them or else organize a Polish firm to produce them (December 4, 1935). *Maly Dziennik* also railed against the Central Manufacturers Circle (*Centralny Okrąg Przemysłowy*) and those Polish chambers of commerce that included Jews in their membership. The numbers and influence of their Jewish members should be lessened if not eliminated altogether (March 2, 1938; October 26, 1938; June 14, 1939).

Other Catholic periodicals joined the *Maly Dziennik* in its campaign on behalf of the boycott. In the *Gazeta Kościelna* Father A. Sierzega wrote of the need for the clergy to support "Catholic commerce." Priests, he wrote, should patronize Catholic stores, because "the lay people follow our every step." The priest complained about Catholic retailers who bought goods from Jewish wholesalers when Catholic wholesalers were available. Such store owners were not worthy of support or of being called Catholic. Some Catholic merchants were hostile to other Catholic merchants and preferred Jewish to Catholic competition. Such attitudes deserved to be publicly condemned. Pastors, the priest continued, should call meetings of Catholic store owners in their parishes and instill a sense of solidarity among them.<sup>26</sup>

To get their readers thinking along the same lines, the *Przewodnik Katolicki* ran a contest, offering prizes for the best answers to questions like: What moral principles lie behind the boycott? The Catholic weekly reported over 1,500 answers from Poles in every profession, keenly aware of the "danger" of "Jewish competition." The superiority of Jewish capital threatened the very existence of Polish manufacturers, they wrote. If Poles would observe the boycott, unemployment in Poland would disappear. Supporting people who are "strange to me in faith and blood," wrote one reader, was a "sin against church and country." It meant "correcting an error made by our ancestors and assuring our children a better future." For another respondent, the boycott was an alternative to violence. Although Jews were taking away their bread, violence was unworthy of Catholic Poles and their reputation for chivalry. If Poles want to beat Jews, "let's do it on the pocketbook, not on the head."<sup>27</sup>

The Catholic press and church leaders plainly experienced no moral difficulties in encouraging the boycott. On the contrary, they saw the boycott as an aspect of their obligations to church and state. It was not a contradiction to Christian charity but a consequence of it. Loving one's country was analogous to loving one's family. Without despising or hating other nations, Catholics were bound by natural law and taught by the church to love their own nation more. This should be remembered when one went shopping, needed professional services, or was giving to charity. Indifference with regard to one's own people was as wrong as indifference in religion.<sup>28</sup>

In its support of the boycott, the *Maly Dziennik* often laced its rhetoric with military metaphors. Christian merchants were described as at war with an enemy. The Catholic daily tried to bolster its readers' morale by reporting even modest breakthroughs as victories over against impressive odds (November 30, 1935). A victory was not only a Polish store opening but a Jewish store closing (February 2, 1936). One of the recurrent motifs in the *Maly Dziennik* was a call for Poles to imitate what ultimately was a widely magnified concept of Jewish solidarity (October 9, 1937; October 25, 1937). Claiming that Jews were being forbidden by their rabbis to shop in Christian stores (April 13,



1937), the daily told of a Jewish woman being attacked by other Jews for going into a Christian store (July 26, 1937). "We understand and admire the real solidarity of Jews in the defense of their interests, but want to draw some conclusions for ourselves." (November 8, 1937). Father W. Jakowski was particularly perturbed that, in a case where there was no question of cheaper prices or better merchandise, namely the Polish lottery, Poles were purchasing tickets from Jews rather than Poles (January 30, 1939).

The *Maly Dziennik* became especially aggressive in its support of the boycott during the pre-Christmas shopping season. The Catholic daily implored Poles in 1937 to think not only of their own holiday tables but those of their fellow Poles who were merchants (December 18, 1937). The newspaper's campaign was successful enough to be reported in the Jewish and "Masonic" Press, but the *Maly Dziennik* was not satisfied. There were still Poles, especially women, who regarded Jewish stores as better bargains (January 31, 1938). One still saw elegant ladies slipping furtively into Jewish stores and hiding their purchases. As well they should, wrote the Catholic daily, since they were betraying their country's best interests. Preparing properly for Christmas meant spending "not even a penny" in Jewish stores (December 3, 1938).

To guide its readers' Christmas shopping in 1938, the *Maly Dziennik* sponsored another opinion survey. Readers were asked to respond to questions like: What are the assets of the Jews in your community? What do you think of *Shabbos goyim* ("Sabbath gentiles," i.e., non-Jews hired to perform certain tasks which are forbidden to Jews on the Sabbath) who support Jews instead of helping their fellow Poles? Among the responses to such queries was complaints about the Jewish practice of price haggling (December 12, 1938) and about Jewish wholesalers giving better goods at better terms to their co-religionists (December 19, 1938). Another reader complained that, because Jewish merchants had more capital at their disposal, they could afford to sell on credit; the unhealthy credit system was ruining Polish merchants and putting Polish customers deeper into debt (December 15, 1938). Another complained that the boycott was not working in southwest Poland, because Jews there were regarded favorably by Polish customers (December 19, 1938). Jewish firms should be nationalized and put into the hand of Poles, another reader suggested (February 23, 1939). Jews were the "grave-diggers" of Poland, carrying out the "fourth partition" (February 23, 1939).

In 1938, a "Defence of Polish Trade Week" was declared in early December. In Warsaw Polish Merchant's Day (December 8) began with a Mass in the cathedral (December 10, 1938). The *Przewodnik Katolicki* reminded Poles how during the partitions they had to combat the efforts to Germanize them. They had to defend themselves from economic servitude and feelings of inferiority. Now the danger came from Jewish industrialists and international Jewish capital. Poles should prefer not only Polish stores but products made by Polish workers. Christian firms might not be well known because they did not have the money to advertise. Patriotic Polish wives should buy their husbands Polish-made shirts, even if the cut was not quite stylish.<sup>29</sup>

The *Maly Dziennik* admitted that Polish merchants had weaknesses to overcome. They had to learn to please customers and win their confidence. With some few exceptions, Polish merchants were unwilling to make exchanges. Likewise, one could still hear of Jewish storekeepers being gracious, while in the Polish stores they acted as if they were doing you a favor. Certain segments of Polish society, however, shopped in Jewish stores simply out of "sheer snobbery" (February 3, 1938). The reporter for the *Maly Dziennik* in Wilno complained about the "philosemitism" of the "intellectuals." There would not be any Jewish grocers in Christian neighborhoods were it not for the "white collar workers" who patronized them for the sake of cheap credit (*June 7, 1939*).

## Credit Unions

The *Maly Dziennik* complained when some Jewish employers, to offset the effects of the boycott, made partial payment of their employees' salaries with coupons or certificates, redeemable only in certain Jewish stores (December 30, 1937). In some areas grain dealers were paying the farmers with certificates to Jewish stores; the farmers had no choice but to accept them since all the dealers were Jewish (December 16, 1938). But the defensive measure that aroused the most complaints in the Catholic press was the creation of credit unions where Jewish merchants, hurt by the boycott, could obtain interest-free loans or cheap credit. These credit unions had been made possible primarily by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, or "Joint," as it was called. Denouncing them as privileged institutions, harmful for Poland, the *Maly Dziennik* called for the government to set up similar credit unions for small Polish merchants.<sup>30</sup>

Józef Białasiewicz in *Przegląd Katolicki* saw the Jewish credit unions as a means for international Jewish interests to maintain control over Poland's economy. The Polish clergy had instituted Catholic credit unions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he wrote, but they disappeared during the partitions. After the World War the Joint instituted Jewish credit unions, first offering outright financial aid and then interest-free loans. Describing the growth of Jewish credit unions from 266 in 1928 to over a thousand in 1937, Białasiewicz cited detailed statistical reports on the amount of money they had loaned each year since 1928. With this money Jewish manufacturers were able to purchase raw material with interest-free credit or at factory price. With a network of correspondents, the central organizing agency of the Jewish credit unions (the C.K.B.) served, in Białasiewicz's view, as the "command center for Jewish economic espionage" in Poland.<sup>31</sup>

A book by the leader of the C.K.B., Isaac Bornstein, proved to be a boon to advocates of the boycott. Entitled *Rzemiosło żydowskie w Polsce* (Jewish Industry in Poland), Bornstein's book provided all the statistics Alfons Prabucki needed to prove Jews were controlling Polish commerce. He listed various areas of manufacture and the percentage of Jewish ownership: hats-97%; boots-85%; leather and watch-making-75%; glass-making-72%; sheet metal-70%; tailoring-65%; furs-56%; photography-55%; barbers-58%; bakers-48%. Here, declared Prabucki, was a Jewish source confirming that Jews commanded "close to 50% of the sum total of manufacturing positions" in Poland. From Bornstein too he detailed the growth of Jewish credit unions supported by the Joint. When one added those not supported by the Joint, the numbers had to be over a thousand, Prabucki concluded, a vast and organized Jewish network.<sup>32</sup>

Without the benefit of statistical evidence, Józef Radomski exaggerated the number of Jewish credit unions in Poland to be four thousand with an operating capital of 150 million zlotys. He contrasted this imposing network with the five hundred Christian credit unions that were just beginning with only "several thousand" members and operating capital of perhaps a million zlotys. The Christian credit unions were hardly comparable to their "privileged" Jewish counterparts, lamented Radomski, but that was just one more example of the tradition that "a guest is always honored in Poland."<sup>33</sup>

## "Dishonesty"

One obvious reason *Maly Dziennik* promoted the boycott so vigorously was its apparent need to do so. That "Jews sell cheaper" (*U Żyda taniej*): was virtually a proverb in Poland (July 17, 1935). How they did it, the Catholic daily alleged, was by using "talmudic" business practices (November 7, 1935). Not only did Jewish merchants use dishonest scales and false advertising, but such "tricks" as lowering prices on some items, even below cost, and then importuning customers to buy

higher-priced goods as well (June 14, 1936). Polish peasant farmers were described as victims of the Jewish city slickers who bought their grain (September 28, 1938). Neither were these peasants up to competing with Jews when they came to the city to work in Christian stores. According to the Catholic daily, these country folk felt out of place and had a "certain inferiority complex" when dealing with city people. They needed to be made more self-assured in their new urban environment so as not to be cheated by Jewish swindlers (September 17, 1938).

Jewish merchants were also regularly accused of selling adulterated goods and junk. When a reader wrote in to the *Maly Dziennik* complaining about poor service in a Jewish store and buying a radio that would not work, the editors commented, "That's what always happens when you buy from Jews" (March 15, 1936). Reporting on actions taken by Warsaw's health department, the Catholic daily ran the banner, "Filth and vermin at Jewish bakeries" (May 16, 1936). Jews, declared the *Maly Dziennik*, were ruining Poland's economy. They were destroying any possibility of Poland enticing foreign markets by producing goods so shoddy that they created "disgust in civilized countries" (May 6, 1938).

Another regular complaint of the *Maly Dziennik* was that Jews traded illegally on Sundays. Early on, independent Poland had passed a Sunday rest law, putting Jewish merchants who observed the Sabbath (a majority in Poland) at an economic disadvantage. Claims have been made that the law was impoverishing, but Jewish leadership was divided in its attitude toward the law, and there were Poles sympathetic to modifying it for Jews.<sup>34</sup> Despite the rest law, de facto Sunday shopping "at the back door" was widespread. Polish workers and peasants often found Sunday the only convenient time to make purchases. The *Maly Dziennik* found the practice "dishonest and dirty." It was intolerable that Jews were "breaking our holy days," and compelling Christian merchants who want to compete to do the same (January 12, 1936). Yet when a reader wrote in to the *Rycerz Niepokalanej* to inquire if it was allowed to buy bread from Jews on Sunday, the answer was positive. The practice was allowed because it was a widespread custom; it was not the Jewish bakers but the Polish Christian customers who were the chief cause of the Sunday rest being violated.<sup>35</sup>

For Jewish merchants to adopt Polish names and modern rather than traditional Jewish dress was another form of "dishonesty," according to *Maly Dziennik* (December 13, 1937). The daily regularly complained about Jews who used neutral or Polish names for their stores and about Polish papers which accepted Jewish advertising (February 16, 1936). Here was the height of deceit, declared the Catholic daily, admitting that its own staff had erred more than once in accepting advertising from Jewish firms with apparently Polish names (November 4, 1936). A regulation requiring store owners to display their full names in their windows had been passed by the government but was not effective. Jewish stores were using other names or were printing their names too small. The paper advised its readers to ask owners if theirs was a Christian store and not to accept as an answer that it was a Polish store (August 14, 1937; July 1, 1938).

*Maly Dziennik* expressed the hope that the regulation would be extended to include not only store owners but other groups as well. "Work in Poland must be only for Poles," it insisted (January 18, 1939). It likewise warned its readers against Jewish firms that tried to deceive Christian customers by hiring Christians or hanging somewhere prominently a Christian religious picture or a sign saying, "Christian firm." The Catholic daily questioned the honor of Christians willing to work as fronts for Jewish merchants. It called for legislation to ferret out such firms and require that they display a sign designating them as Jewish (March 11, 1939; June 5, 1939).

## **Ritual Slaughter**

No issue in the interwar period aroused as much agitation between Polish Catholics and Jews as did *shehitah*, the halachically-defined method by which animals are slaughtered. No other issue,

according to Joseph Marcus, aroused as much Jewish protest nor took up more debate in the Sejm (about half of its parliamentary time between 1936 and 1938).<sup>36</sup> The issue was of the utmost importance to observant Jews, since it determined whether or not the meat derived was kosher. But non-traditional, even the socialist Jews of the Bund recognized its wider implications and joined in the fray.

Jewish tradition required that kosher slaughtering be performed with an exquisitely sharp knife being drawn across the animal's throat, severing the jugular veins and arteries so that it bled to death. According to Moses Maimonides, Judaism's foremost medieval philosopher, the purpose of the law was that the death of the animal be as easy and painless as possible. The act was preceded by a benediction and performed by a rabbinically recognized slaughterer (*shohet*). Only meat slaughtered by a *shohet* was kosher. With *shehitah* under its direction, the religious leadership of a local Jewish community thus had monopolistic control over the sale of kosher meat. Income from *shehitah* came to be employed not only to defray expenses involved in the procedure itself but also to underwrite other community endeavors, charity and education. A "*shehitah* tax" often became the mainstay of a community's income.<sup>37</sup>

As early as the late nineteenth century, criticism arose against *shehitah* as cruelty to animals. Jewish religious authorities did not allow the animal to be stunned before its throat was cut, nor could it be decapitated. Switzerland outlawed the practice in 1893, Norway and Bavaria in 1930, Germany as a whole in 1933. In some instances the motives behind the efforts to ban *shehitah* were genuinely humanitarian: in others, as in Nazi Germany, they were simply antisemitic. In Poland they were also uniquely economic.

Poland's was not only Europe's largest Jewish population but also its most observant. Even more anomalous, the meat-packing industry, except for the western provinces, was almost entirely in Jewish hands, the slaughtering being performed by *shohtim* (butchers) according to the halachic procedure. The added expense of the *shehitah* tax was passed on by the meat-packing industry to the consumers, in the case of most non-Jews, without their knowing. In other words, as its critics argued, Catholic Poles were paying an indirect tax to the Jewish community.

The question of *ubój rytualny* (ritual slaughter) became a *cause célèbre* in Poland when the humane society of Warsaw sponsored a lecture on the subject by Monsignor Stanislaw Trzeciak (March 21, 1935). Trzeciak claimed that ritual slaughter was not required by Mosaic law and therefore did not enjoy the protection of religious freedom afforded by the Polish constitution. The biblical law of Moses forbade the consumption of blood but said nothing about the method of animal slaughter. Saying a benediction before the slaughter did not render it a religious act, since Jews offer benedictions before all manner of activities, including the most natural. Ritual slaughter was a "concoction" (*wymysł*) of the rabbis, Trzeciak insisted. It should be banned as a relic of "eastern barbarism" from the dark ages.<sup>38</sup>

Trzeciak's lecture created a sensation throughout Poland's religious and secular press. Within days Rabbi Schorr, a professor at the University of Warsaw, published a response in the Jewish daily, *Nasz Przegląd* (March 26, 1935). Schorr argued that the Jewish method of slaughter resulted in an instant loss of blood to the brain, so that the animal immediately lost consciousness. He pointed out the distinction between the Mosaic law or written Torah in the Bible and the oral Torah later recorded in the Talmud. *Shehitah*, he insisted, was a fundamental norm of the Jewish religion. As a rebuttal Trzeciak simply claimed that Rabbi Schorr was ignorant of the Talmud.<sup>39</sup>

More conducive to arousing public sentiment than the humanitarian or religious aspects of *shehitah* was its economics. Trzeciak continued his assault by giving statistics: in Warsaw, Bialystok, Kielce,

and Łódź, 100% of the cattle were ritually slaughtered by *shohtim*; in Lwów and Rowno, 95%; in Lublin and Wilno, 90%. Since the meat-packers paid the *kahal* as much as ten zlotys per head of cattle slaughtered, it meant that Christians were unwittingly paying huge amounts of money to the Jewish community in higher meat prices. Trzeciak gave statistics, once again drawn from Isaac Bomstein, a 1929 article on "The Budgets of Religious Jewish Communities in Poland": nearly half of the income (44.9%) of the 503 Jewish communities Bomstein studied came from *shehitah*, a total of over six million zlotys a year. In some small towns the ritual slaughter tax underwrote the entire budget.<sup>40</sup> Bomstein's article received wide attention in the Catholic press. The official organ of the Archdiocese of Warsaw called for action to end this barbarism properly described as the "ritual murder of animals."<sup>41</sup>

Nationalists sympathetic to Trzeciak's views saw this as an opportunity to embarrass the government.<sup>42</sup> In February 1936, Janina Prystor, a deputy to the Sejm, introduced a bill requiring animals to be stunned before being slaughtered. The Catholic press portrayed *shehitah* as a sadistic anachronism and medieval torture.<sup>43</sup> *Nasz Przegląd*; the Jewish daily, recognized that it would serve no purpose to marshal evidence to the contrary. The bill pending in the Sejm was purely economic in motivation, intended to remove Jews from the meat-packing industry.<sup>44</sup>

The economic issues were certainly the ones emphasized by the *Maly Dziennik*. When the leading rabbis of Poland entreated the Jewish community of Warsaw to do all it could to prevent the bill's passage, liberal Jewish organizations, including the Bund, joined in the effort. Such solidarity, concluded the *Maly Dziennik*, was proof that ritual slaughter was not at all a religious matter but "exclusively economic" (February 11, 1936). Religion was but a smoke screen to cover the real issue, which it said was an indirect tax on Christian consumers to support Jewish institutions (February 13, 1936).

Rabbis from all over Poland met in Warsaw to convince the government that Trzeciak's claim was false. They insisted that ritual slaughter was one of the chief principles of Judaism and that the slightest change in the prescriptions, especially stunning before slaughter, would render the meat inedible for observant Jews (February 15, 1936). Some local communities began passing ordinances even before the national government considered the matter. Appeals for prayers and support were made to Jewish communities outside Poland. *Maly Dziennik* denied that the attempt to ban ritual slaughter was just an attempt to get Jews out of the meat-packing industry. This "Asiatic murder of animals" should have been stopped long ago, it insisted. "Only a harsh and very cruel race could agree to such a custom" (February 15, 1936; February 26, 1936).

Unlike the Catholic press, the Polish government saw the issue of *shehitah* as "unusually complicated," involving not only humanitarian and economic but also religious and legal aspects. The Jewish people had a right to kosher meat guaranteed by law. Thanks to the government's efforts, the bill to ban ritual slaughter altogether was defeated and replaced by one that limited the practice to the "factual needs" of the Jewish community (March 21, 1936). The *Maly Dziennik* criticized the government's position as too lenient. The paper was pleased that the government was finally paying attention to the "Jewish question," but complained that too much consideration was being given to minority rights. In the view of the Catholic daily, the Polish constitution, was written "especially for the majority" (March 21, 1936; March 22, 1936).

With ritual slaughter restricted to the needs of the Jewish community (January 1, 1937), public passions over the issue subsided. The practice was now limited to only 15% of Poland's meat production, and eventually kosher meat became twice the price of ordinary meat (August 18, 1939). But the editors of *Maly Dziennik* were still not satisfied. Outlawing ritual slaughter altogether was an obvious way of encouraging observant Jews to leave Poland, and in the last months before the invasion by Germany, the Catholic daily expressed its hopes for a total elimination of the

practice from Poland. In March 1939, the Sejm passed a measure that would have outlawed *shehitah* altogether by 1942. But before the Senate had a chance to consider it, Germany invaded Poland and decided the issue for them.

## Religious Articles

If interwar Poland was unusual for the number of Catholics who ate kosher meat, so too was it peculiar for the Jews who made crosses and sold rosaries. There could hardly be a more telling symptom of the underdeveloped state of manufacture and trade among ethnic Poles. Nor was there an area in the Polish economy where a widespread Jewish presence was more exasperating to Catholic nationalists. The word most used to describe it was "humiliating." As the *Ryccerz Niepokalanej* put it: "We ought to be ashamed that Jews are manufacturing even religious articles for us, as if Catholics could not manage to establish a proper business to supply such needs."<sup>45</sup>

The *Maly Dziennik* took a leading role in a campaign that, like ritual slaughter, quickly found its way to the Sejm. The number of Jewish candle firms was especially exasperating to the Catholic daily since 25% of candles were purchased by churches (March 30, 1936). It was an "outrage" that a Jewish candle manufacturer would call his firm "Honeybee" so as to appear Polish and then send its price list to Catholic churches (March 14, 1936). The paper decried the "brazenness" of Jews who manufactured not only candles but articles used in Catholic prayer and worship: crosses, medals, prayer books, pictures, rosaries. For Jews to "market" such devotional objects was a "profanation." Not satisfied with encouraging Catholics to boycott such Jewish businesses, the *Maly Dziennik* went on to question the right of Jews to engage in such trade at all (May 9, 1936). When a Jewish photographer advertised a free breakfast and gifts to all children making their first holy communion, the daily denounced his action as a Jewish "trick" and reason enough to boycott all Jewish photographers (June 4, 1936).

To counteract the Jewish trade in Catholic religious goods, Częstochowa, the national center of Polish pilgrimage, became a center for organizing a Catholic wholesale firm to supply religious articles to Catholic dealers. The Society of Polish Merchants in Częstochowa estimated that 80% of the wholesale in Catholic religious goods was owned by Jews who earned upwards of 60 million zlotys a year.<sup>46</sup> But at the hands of Monsignor Stanislaw Trzeciak, the figures swelled along with the rhetoric.

Trzeciak was distressed that Jews were manufacturing and selling 80 to 100 percent of the crucifixes in Poland, symbols of Jesus' death and of Jewish "cruelty." The descendants of those who paid Judas thirty pieces of silver were now reaping 60 to 80 million zlotys a year from religious articles. With the help of Jewish investors abroad, Jewish manufacturers were flooding Poland with their devotional wares, which Catholics were buying because they were cheaper. Jews, wrote Trzeciak, were even supplying oil for sanctuary lamps and wine for Mass. In contrast to Polish "tolerance," Jewish law required that Jewish religious articles (prayer shawls, mezuzahs, tefillin) be prepared only by Jews. Even wine had to be produced only by Jews to be regarded as kosher. Fair was fair, and for Trzeciak that meant priests should refuse to bless religious articles which came from Jews. And only those Catholic dealers who could prove that their manufacturers and wholesalers had been Catholic should be allowed to sell religious goods near a church.<sup>47</sup>

Once Catholic leaders calculated just how much Jewish firms were supplying to churches as well as to the faithful, it became commonly accepted that they were making profits of 80 million zlotys a year. To put an end to such a "scandalous and intolerable" situation, a cooperative association was created in Warsaw to fire up the "passive and inert" masses to national-economic-religious action.<sup>48</sup> Father Stefan Downar, a deputy in the Sejm, took more direct action and introduced a bill into the Sejm requiring that objects used in the devotion of a particular religion be manufactured

and distributed only by members of that religion.<sup>49</sup> The bill passed into law (March 25, 1938), giving businesses acting otherwise two years to liquidate their inventories.<sup>50</sup> Two years was too long to wait, complained the *Maly Dziennik* and suggested that Jewish merchants should have their Catholic religious objects confiscated (December 16, 1938).

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There is no question but that Poland's interwar economy was in drastic need of radical reform: land redistribution, industrial development, creation of equal opportunities for all segments of society. Clearly there were inequities which needed to be rectified. But it is something else altogether to suggest that the "Jewish problem" in interwar Poland was essentially economic. Certainly anti-Jewish feelings among average Poles were heightened by poverty, joblessness, and major population shifts from agriculture to the urban industrial work force. But, as I have argued here, for Polish nationalists and the Catholic clergy, there was more to the issue than economics. It was not in the depths of the depression that the antisemitic campaign of the 1930s reached its height, but rather in the period of gradual recovery. And for the *Maly Dziennik*, at least, the demise of Jewish businesses was announced with equal satisfaction as the development of "Christian trade."<sup>51</sup>

The clergy and Catholic press, above all the *Maly Dziennik*, were not on the sidelines but very much in the forefront of the effort to "nationalize" Poland's economy, as they put it. They worked as energetically as the National Democrats to solve Poland's economic problems at the expense of Poland's Jews. Cardinal Hlond was but the highest-ranking churchman to voice what the rest of the bishops and priests took for granted: Polish Catholics had the same right as Jews "to prefer" their own kind. Polish church leaders saw the boycott as a peaceful and ethically proper means to offset the economic advantages which Jewish merchants enjoyed. Poles trying to enter the marketplace to make a living were in their view underdogs in a mismatch. Centuries of commercial experience had given Jewish merchants a more than competitive edge.

What is remarkable is that ordinary Poles by and large did not adhere to the boycott. One reads of various segments of Polish society, from farmers to white collar workers, preferring to do business with Jews, whether for the sake of cheaper prices, the traditional way of doing things, credit, or courtesy. With a rhetoric betraying almost frantic desperation, the *Maly Dziennik* regularly bemoaned the Catholic Poles' lack of solidarity. If peasant farmers and workers can be credited for putting economic self-interest ahead of prejudice, it should be remembered that they and not the clergy comprised the overwhelming majority of Poland's population.

The Polish clergy may be forgiven for not appreciating the complexity of economics. It is more difficult to excuse their innocence in thinking that Poland's economic needs could be met by farm boys learning the art of selling. It is almost pathetic to observe that a Catholic opening a fish market in Warsaw could make news in Krakow. Equally pathetic was the naiveté that could see attracting customers by lowering prices on some items as a "trick." To fault people for not being ahead of their time is unfair. It was not yet the era of ecumenism. But it hardly required farsightedness to recognize that Poles required precisely the kinds of skills that Jews could offer, skills that could be learned. As a matter of fact, there were Christian Poles who served as apprentices under Jews were masters in their craft. But for conservative Catholic nationalists, that was "monstrous." To be an apprentice meant being part of the master's family, and that could only result in Polish apprentices being "warped" and alienated from their own.<sup>52</sup>

In surveying what the Polish Catholic press had to say on economic issues, one cannot help but be struck that, by far, the overwhelming number of articles appeared in one paper, the *Maly Dziennik*. If it were not for that Catholic daily, there would be relatively little to relate. Here is but one more indication that for Poland's Catholic leaders, economics was neither the only nor even the central issue. In their view, whatever economic benefits might accrue to Poles from cooperating with Jews

was far outweighed by other considerations, for Jewish influence in the economy meant Jewish influence in education, the arts, and literature. Cooperating with Jews would mean allowing the secularizing influences at work in the west to destroy Poland's traditional Catholic culture. For the Catholic leadership of the 1930s, poverty in a Catholic Poland was preferable to prosperity in one that was secular.

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- 12 Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Schocken, 1980), 94-95.
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- 15 Heller, *On the Edge*, 115-16.
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- 31 *Przegląd Katolicki*, 75 (1937): 51-53.
- 32 *Pro Christo*, 13/8-9 (1937): 21-26.
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