



THE SECOND IN OUR SERIES OF ARTICLES ON AMERICAN MINORITIES

THE JEWS IN AMERICA

"If the Jewish participation in banking and finance is negligible, it is virtually non-existent in heavy industry."
There is not a single sector of the heavy industry...

migrants to the American economy. The scrap-iron business, it should be emphasized, is wholly peripheral to heavy industry in general.

—CAREY McWILLIAMS in "A Mask for Privilege."

1 IF the Negroes are at the bottom of the minority ladder in America, then the Jews are at the top.

For instance, according to the well-known Fortune survey of 1936 (Jews in America): Jews are a minor influence in money and banking.

Yet it cannot be denied that the Jews (as a group) have reached a degree of success and prosperity which other groups which immigrated with them (say the

Italians or Poles) have not yet reached (and will probably not reach under the present underdog society) and which Negroes who have been here for generations longer than the Jews will also never reach in this exploitative society.

2

Jewish mass immigration to America began about 1880. This decade marked the beginning of a vast new period of Russian repression and anti-Semitic persecution (which was the negative push); and that final forward thrust of American industrial expansion which was to make her the world's leader by 1914 as the positive attraction, drawing 2,000,000 Jewish immigrants (among about 18,000,000 of other nationalities) to the gold-plated shores of the Western Empire.

"A feier oif Columbus mit zain golden land" is the title of a comic song and dialogue record, lying dusty and broken, somewhere in my father's house.

Drying to death like straw in the broken roots of a feudal-artisan economy being swiftly torn to pieces in a scenic railway Austro-Hungary (with the scenery

falling apart), and tied to the tracks of that great new apoplectic Russian locomotive called Kapitalismus, the Jewish artisans and storekeepers of Galicia and the Baltic Provinces, the tired inn keepers of Podolia and Bukovina, the wild-eyed "merchants" of Odessa, the Jewish mechanics of the Ukraine and the German border towns started on their way West: To the United States of North America, to the much-promised land, some few stopping in Vienna, Paris, Brussels, London (and leaving beginnings of Yiddish anarchist movements) and on further onward to America; the golden land; di goldene medina.

And this was a unique immigration in Jewish and perhaps in world history. For (according to various estimates) it was an immigration 60 to 90% proletarian. Jewish tailors, furriers, hatmakers, carpenters, tinworkers, textile workers were leaving an old world hostile to them and coming to the land of which Emma Lazarus could write that it spoke in these words:

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

(This and the obviously anti-Semitic quota laws of 1924 bound together would make very interesting reading.)

But in those legendary days there was some truth in this poetry and the Jews came in masses to this country.

And of the comparatively small percentage of "luft mershen" reaching here

practically none retained that status very long.

Because in America everyone worked. (It was the land of opportunity.) And the expanding country grabbed these Jewish youth into the pounding sweatshops of New York and Boston, disquieted Philadelphia, roaring Chicago.

Out of this maelstrom of terrific exploitation: of 12-hour days and miserable housing and T.B. (it used to be called "the tailor's disease"): of comparative civic freedoms and opportunity for secular education (asleep in the night school): of an expanding ever-expanding economy bursting its class seams and creating great new movements of labour like the A.F. of L. and the I.W.W.—a Jewish revolutionary movement was born.

Split almost from the beginning into a Marxist and Anarchist wing; creating two great clothing unions: the Amalgamated and the I.L.G.W.U. (and many others); playing a leading role in the I.W.W. attempt at N.Y.; with a huge labouring class in N.Y.C. in fervent turmoil; creating a proletarian literature (the poetry of Bovshover, Edelstadt, Rosenfeld; the Freie Arbeiter Stimme, the Zukunft, the Forwards (the Kropotkin Literary Society published Kropotkin and Marx, Bakunin and Lasalle and boasted 3,000 subscribing members!); a Jewish revolutionary movement was born, ascended . . . and died in the sloughs of Stalinism and . . . success.

(There is something terribly depressing about going over old beginnings and successes and seeing where they have led: because this makes us doubt even the minor successes of our own time.)

THE PACIFIC COAST INDIANS by GEORGE WOODCOCK

ONE of the factors which strikes one immediately in travelling through the part of Canada west of the Rockies, is the effect on the native peoples of the arrival of western culture and institutions.

In this article, the first of three, George Woodcock who has spent the last two years in the far west of Canada, discusses the old tribal organisation of the Coast Indians, which though not so frequently discussed as that of the Hopi or Zuni, is of no less interest to the student of human society in all its manifold forms.

carved and painted totem poles and followed other forms of craftsmanship with a vigour and originality of design rarely excelled among primitive peoples, and their dancing and dramatic festivals reached a relatively high degree of imaginative achievement.

Their social structure was complex, and it already showed many degenerative factors which are not found among more primitive peoples. There was a rigid class system which in some tribes included an approximation to royalty, and always included noblemen, commoners and slaves.

There were two parallel forms of social organisation, at least among the more northern tribes. The basic unit was the house, a group of relatives with their dependents and slaves, who lived in a large community building. The "houses" were united into clans under the badges of supernatural patrons (the Coast Indians were not strictly totemistic in that they believed that animal spirits were not their ancestors but their spiritual guides and protectors).

Outside the village, these clans were united into a number of phratries, or brotherhoods based on a common patron, and these phratries extended over linguistic as well as tribal barriers. They were exogamous, so that a member of the Ravens could not marry another member of the same phratry, no matter whether she was measurably related or belonged to a completely different tribe.

refused. In a society racked by petty wars and blood feuds it can be seen how important such an institution could be.

The actual political organisation of the tribes was rather slight and little centralised. Each "house" had its own chief. But even within the village, though the chief of the leading clan was regarded as the head man, the allegiance of the various houses to him was often voluntary, and the links between villages of the same tribe was even more tenuous.

The phratry system extended to the Haida, the Tlingit, the Tsimshian and the northern Kwakiutl, and was also imitated by some of the nomadic interior tribes. Among the Kwakiutl it was largely replaced by the ritualistic secret societies, which were so powerful that in winter, after the fishing was over, they almost usurped the authority of the chiefs.

The economic life of the coast tribes, and even of many of the interior bands, was closely bound up with that strange ritualistic institution, the potlatch. This was a feast given to celebrate a variety of occasions, such as the assumption of a title, or of the right to dance a certain dance or sing a song (such immaterial things were as strictly held as a copyright in modern society), or the building of a house or raising of a pole.

WORLD HEALTH

THE budget for 1952 of the World Health Organisation which recently held its annual Assembly at Geneva, shows that 70.39% of its income is to go as "expenditure on permanent staff", 7.31% on temporary expert advisers, 12.70% on subsidies and technical services and 9.60% on other expenses.

COMMENT

THE INFORMER

WHEN an Aidrie boot-repairer, Mr. James Morrison, boasted in a public-house that he was successfully "diddling" the income tax authorities, one of his listeners went home and wrote an anonymous letter to the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, with the result that the man was sentenced to prison for four months for fraud.

Mr. John Betjeman discussed some aspects of the case recently in Time & Tide. One surprising thing, he says, is that the man was a boot-repairer. Here was not one of those cases of restaurants "where the waiter will buy your bill from you if you have paid in cash, and sell it at a profit to an executive who can show it in for expenses. I doubt if Mr. James Morrison did this kind of thing.

What were the motives of the sender of the anonymous letter? Perhaps, speculates John Betjeman, "he is a young man, fresh from a course in Civics, and anxious to prove to himself that he is a 'good citizen'.

Mr. Betjeman then considers the "twisted official mind" which decided to investigate the charge. "Perhaps some underling opened it at first" and saw a chance of promotion. "He attached a minute to it, and sent it up higher. Thence what minuting and self-righteous shifting of responsibility must have gone up and up the Income Tax department!

Success! that guerrilla on caterpillar tank treads!

American society burgeoned from 1900 onward and created new middle class positions in accounting and controls, in retailing (salesmen and small store-keepers), in the "free" professions of law and medicine and in entertainment, in the "service" industries and the lower echelons of an expanding governmental society.

From the start of the New Immigration for total populations (Jew and non-Jew): "In terms of absolute numbers one can say that employment in the primary industries fell far behind the population increase, the secondary industries merely kept pace with the growth of population, while the group engaged in the tertiary industries increased at a rate many times faster than that of the increase in the population.

Jews, with special cultural abilities and developed talents: urbanization, tradition of education and literacy, business tradition stepped right into the vacuum.

Of Americans as a whole, 14% are in trade, 7% in professions, 26% in industry and 10% in farming. Of American Jews 40-50% are in trade, 10-12% in professions, 15-20% in industry, and less than 1% in farming.

And this is where the Jews are to-day. The impassioned Jewish revolutionary who started co-operative farms in Oregon is now the big butter and egg man down the street.

Of course, this was a universal American pattern and the German Socialist movement in America has disappeared and the sons of the Italian anarchists in America, where are they? And if the truth be told: both the Italian and Yiddish anarchist journals in America (L'Adunata and the Freie Arbeiter Stimme) are able to publish more often than the English journal Resistance.

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Yet the Jews in America (although having just about almost reversed their immigrant proletarian-middle class ratio [most Jews, however, are still employees] remain like the bride after a shotgun wedding: wondering what is going to happen when the honeymoon is over and the loving relatives have gone away.

For staring in their face is the fate of the Jews of that (up till now) perhaps most successful Jewish community of the (Continued on page 3)

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