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REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR

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Our New Year (September 10, 1904) was marred by an anti-Jewish disturbance in Sosnowiec, Russian Poland, thus ushering in a long series of riots to which the Russian Jews have been subjected during the year, and which culminated in the spring massacres (Zhitomir, etc.). Nevertheless, the year seemed to open auspiciously for our brethren in Russia. Only a few days before Rosh ha-Shana an imperial ukase was issued (September 4th) which, though leaving the great mass of the Jewish population to its misery in the congested towns of the Pale, conceded to merchants of the First Guild, to retired soldiers "who, having taken part in the military operations in the Far East, have been decorated, or generally served in the active forces without stigma," to specially-inscribed working artisans and to persons who have had a university or higher grade education, the right of residence outside the Pale; the graduates of universities and high schools acquiring the right "to engage in commerce and industries without having previously been First Guild merchants" but in no way to follow their profession outside the Pale.

Close upon the heels of this conciliatory edict came (September 7th) the appointment of Prince Peter Sviatopolk-Mirski as successor to M. von Plehve (assassinated July 28th). As governor of Ekaterinoslav, but especially as governor-general of the Wilna, Kovno and Grodno provinces, the Prince won general and undissimulated love and respect by his justice and humanity, and, in particular, the gratitude of the Jews for his moderation with which he executed the restrictive laws to which they are prevailing subjected, removing, wherever he could, undue harshness, protecting them against ill-treatment, discouraging anti-Semitic attacks in the local official organs and in a number of ways endeavoring to lighten the burden resting on the Jews in consequence of the special legislation.

Meantime, there was a veritable epidemic of anti-Jewish excesses. While the disturbances in Rovno, government of Wolhynia (September 4th) and Smjela, government of Kieff (September 4th and 5th) were of a general anti-Semitic character, serious riots occurred in the month of October in

connection with the calling out of the Reservists. The recruits, who with the utmost reluctance left their homes to fight in the Far East for an unpopular, and, to the majority of the people incomprehensible, cause, vented their spleen on the Jews, whom the anti-Semitic press was, with deliberate malice, representing as having brought about the present war out of revenge for Kishineff. The Jewish populations of thirty-five towns were thus ruined; in the sequel the number of localities where the reservist excesses were enacted was doubled. The loss of property is estimated at seven million roubles. The originators of these excesses chose an opportune moment; their aim was clearly to intimidate the Prince in whatever steps he contemplated for the betterment of the condition of the Jews.

An imperial manifesto of December 26th, while promising reforms, reaffirmed with the utmost definiteness and in an authoritative way the principle of autocracy, thus repudiating the demand of the zemstvos for a representative government.

It was reported in December that the ministry of the interior was actually engaged on the revision of the laws affecting the Pale of settlement. Unfortunately, however, the position of the Prince was even then not very secure. The Gomel trial was a farce; the court was presided over by an anti-Semite whose shameful attitude was denounced by all right-minded Christians. The Jews of Gomel, who had resisted the attacks of the rioters, were saddled with a criminal trial, and the affair was represented as an organized attack on "native" Russians out of revenge for Kishineff, the innocent, "unprotected" Russians having merely defended themselves against the organized attacks of the Jews. The notorious anti-Semitic governor of Mohileff, Klingenberg, remained in office although in his government the anti-Jewish outrages had assumed the most terrible dimensions without meeting with the slightest interruption on the part of the police. A deputation of Mohileff Jews obtained little satisfaction from Prince Mirski.

Each fresh mobilization of troops for the unpopular war in the Far East led, on the one hand, to reservist excesses against the

Jews, and, on the other, to desertions in which, it must be owned, Jews largely figured, although from the kingdom of Poland there fled many Polish reservists, a considerable percentage of whom belonged to the intellectual classes, and there were among the fugitives Ruthenians and even native Muscovites. The surrender of Port Arthur on January 1st was a severe blow to the bureaucracy, which stood condemned before the Russian people of having precipitated a war for which no adequate preparations had been made. The government was openly censured. While the liberals protested in their own way, there seemed to be a recrudescence of terrorism in the unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Czar with the gun of one of the saluting batteries at the ceremony of "blessing the waters" on January 19th. Of an entirely different and hitherto unparalleled nature was the industrial strike of vast proportions, developing into political riots which held the Russian capital in a state of siege and resulted in the killing by the military (on January 22nd, "Red Sunday") of 2,100 and the wounding of 5,000 of the participants, who had gathered before the Winter Palace under the leadership of Father Gapon, to present a petition to the Czar in which they prayed for relief from intolerable laws. Similar riots occurred elsewhere, notably in Moscow. Jews took, and could take, no part in these riots, for the simple reason that though they are artisans—Jewish artisans enjoy the right of residence beyond the Pale—there are no Jewish factory laborers in the two capital cities.

But in Wilna, Bialstok, Warsaw and Lodz matters were different; there the youthful section of Jewish labor ranks, which is chiefly organized by the "Bund," or "General League of Jewish Workingmen in Lithuania, Poland and Russia," certainly took a part in the labor risings, fraternizing with the other sections of Russian Socialism.

The Czar replied (January 25th) with the appointment of General Trepoff as governor-general of St. Petersburg with almost dictatorial powers. In the arrests which followed the government did not fail to see to it that a vastly disproportionate number of Jews were taken into custody. The Jews were made, as so often before, the selected scapegoats of these new occurrences. Trepoff was reported to have declared that the disturbances were solely and exclusively the machinations of the arch-fiend of the Russian people—the Jew.

On February 1st, announcement was