

A D D R E S S

at the

Conference of the Council of Jewish Post-War Organizations,

Wednesday, April 8, 1970, 7.30 P.M.,

at Beverly Hillcrest Hotel, Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Chairman, representatives of post-war Jewish organizations, ladies and gentlemen: It is a great honor for me to speak tonight and I ~~thank you for it.~~ thank you for it.

The topic is : 25 years after the liberation.

There is a great deal to be said about it. I am not a historian, but I would like only to share with you some of my experiences concerning anti-semitism from my childhood until now.

The purpose of tonight's remarks is to make a comparison between the pre-war period and the present and draw appropriate conclusions.

I was born at the most anti-semitic country in Europe, Poland, and in its most anti-semitic city Czestochowa, site of the famous cloister Jasna Gora, a shrine as important to the Polish catholics as Lourdes is to the French. *Wald Hill*

My father ~~that~~ *Wald Hill* long before I was born there was a fire in that ~~monk~~ cloister and that Jews from all over the city were hurrying to fight the blaze because they were afraid to be accused of arson by the Poles.

My father was one of those who came to fight the flames.

As a child going to school I remember seeing pickets in front of Jewish stores with signs reading - Nie kupuj u zyda, bo to zdrada, kto kupuje u zyda sam siebie okrada - Don' buy from a Jew, by doing so, you commit ~~xxxxxx~~ treason and ~~steal~~ *steal* from yourself - and another one, #Zydzi na Madagascar - Jews to Madagascar - alluding to ~~plans~~ pre-war plans of the resettlement of Jews to that French colony off the east coast of Africa.

I remember the smearing of walls of synagogues, ~~heders~~, Jewish ~~priv~~ private and trade schools, gymnasiums, etc.

There was also in the city a domestic help agency , director of ~~whic~~ which, a converted woman, wife of the director of Bank Handlowy in Czestochowa, ~~agitated~~ *agitated* against sending Polish servants to Jewish homes.

I also heard that the Poles were spreading the news that Jews are using blood from gentile babies to prepare matzo's for ~~P~~ Passover.

The Poles used to call the Jews 'Beylis' and the Jews countered with 'Maco'ch'.

Maco'ch was a monk at the cloister Jasna Gora accused of killing a nun, Helena and hiding her ~~body~~ *corpse* in a sofa.

It was most ~~difficult~~ *difficult* for Jews to obtain employment in factories - this is why we had ~~own~~ *own* schools where young Jews could learn a trade.

Even after graduation they could not obtain ~~employment~~ *employment*

had to start on their own, often assisted by Jewish institutions.

They could hardly make enough to support their families; as you may recall, Jewish families had many children but little money. They could hardly afford meat once in a week, and if so, on Saturday a 'ciulent8.

There were ^{of course all} also many prosperous Jewish families but they were in the minority. There were 35.000 Jews in my home town.

I was brought up in a very religious home - my father belonged to 'Mizrachi' - he was also member of the 'Kehila' - Jewish Community Council, and foubder of many welfare organizations.

He was my main source of information about anti-semitism. I learnt from him a great deal about the situations of ^{the} Jews in Poland.

Every Friday evening, after the traditional supper, my father used to read aloud to us articles from the Jewish papers, 'Hajnt' and 'Moment'. I even remember the jokes about 'Helemer Nerunem'.

My father used to come sometimes late for supper and we were all waiting for him - as a member of many charitable organizations, he had often to arrange for medical and financial help in an emergency.

Many of the now adult survivors were too young at that time to realize what was going on - so no one should spread the news about the ~~general~~ general prosperity of Polish Jews - if it were so we would not have this poular saying in Poland "Zydowska nedza" - 'Jewish ~~poverty~~ ^{wisery}'.

My mother knew several families, wh~~ere~~ere people to proud to beg put on the oven pots with boling water only, pretending that they were preparing food for sabbath.

Many of the prosperous Jewish families gave freely to charity, to va rious welfare institutions, hospitals, trade schools, old ~~age~~ ^{schools} schools, orphanages, etc.

Some of them even gave money for non-jewish ^{institutions} purposes. There was a prominent Jew, Henryk Markusfeld who spent much money for the city fire department and ~~hangkixfar~~ presented it with a fire ~~engine~~ truck, named ~~by~~ ^{after} him 'Henrykowka',

Family ties were close and intimate - the parents taught us to respect them, our relatives, teachers and older people.

No matter how busy and tired they were after a days' work, poor or well-to-do, they found time in the evenings to discuss ^{with their children} ~~the day's events~~ the day's events and especially what happened at school.

We, the children, were of course certain that we are smart and ~~rix~~ right and that our parents are wrong.

My four brothers, ^{and} a sister attended Jewish private 'gymnasiums' in Czestochowa, of which my father was one of the founders. At first my brother attended a 'heder' and when they ~~they~~ enrolled at the gymnasium that had on five afternoons per week a teacher 'melamed' who taught them the Bible. ~~for~~

and even 'Gemorah'.

I was occasionally listening in, but I did not understand much.

On Saturdays and holidays in the afternoon my grandfather used to tell me stories from the Bible.

When I was 7 years old I attended a private Polish school, at which some of the teachers were lay-nuns. There was only another Jewish girl in that school. I attended that school until my graduation from the sixth class.

We had a special permission from the principal not to attend on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. Our relations with Polish class mates were very cordial, we played and visited each other.

I attended the 7th and 8th class at the State gymnasium in order to obtain a diploma enabling me to enrol at the Warsaw University.

About 50% of students in this gymnasium were Jewish. Most of the Jewish girls were much better students than the Polish. We were afraid of for anti-semitic reasons of the official delegate from the Ministry of Public Education in Warsaw, who attended the final examinations and had the right to examine students.

At the Warsaw University I faced again the anti-semitism. In the beginning I belonged to the 'Samopomoc' - Polish Students Selfhelp Organization and wore, like other students, the traditional white cap with red ~~tri~~ trimming.

One of the most obvious symptoms of anti-semitism was the ~~establishment~~ establishment of 'numerus clausus' - forbidding Jews to enrol at certain faculties. For that reason many of them went to study abroad.

There was at the University a 'ghetto lawkowe' - separate benches for Jews only, and because we opposed it, there were fights among students. Some of the Poles were ^{not} ~~not~~ ashamed to slash Jewish girls' dresses with razor blades.

There were two pogroms in Czestochowa; one in 1919, when 7 Jews ~~were~~ were killed, and in June 1937. The last one I witnessed partially myself.

I was at that time in Warsaw and called at once my father as I was afraid for his life because he had a beard and that in order to get home from his business or meetings, he had to ^{cross} ~~to~~ cross the whole city.

I immediately left Warsaw by train: on the railroad station at Rudniki, 20 minutes ^{to} the city, I noticed a train full of police. Four o'clock in the morning I arrived in Czestochowa, and asked the cab driver if it would be safe to ^{drive} ~~drive~~ home. He told me that it was all over.

I was shocked when I passed ^{the} ~~the~~ business section on Aleje 2. On both sides of the street ^{spread} ~~spread~~ plate-glass windows in stores were smashed, merchandise looted, benches overturned and broken.

When I arrived home, I found there my uncles, aunts and cousins

who had to flee from their home in the suburbs.

After three days everything came back to normal. Of course, the Polish police appeared/when ^{only} the pogrom was over. ^{all} ^{already} ^{at} ^{all over} ^{known}

The reason for the pogrom was an argument between a/Polish thief, Baran, and a Jew, Pendrak, who in self defense killed the thief.

Pendrak got 8 years in prison, inspite of doctor's and witnesses reports that the killing was accidental and in self defense.

I later learnt that the main leaders of the pogrom were university students and two lawyers, my colleagues who belonged to the right extremist party the So called Endecja - short for National Democratic party

It was for me a bitter dissapointment, as the Jewish lawyers had always the best relationship with their ^{Polish} ~~Jewish~~ colleagues. They always assured us that we won't have at the courthouse separate lawyer-rooms like in Warsaw.

There were 36 lawyers in town, the majority was Jewish. We all belonged to the same associations, like The Polish Lawyer's Association, Prisoners' Welfare Association and some of the very exclusive sport clubs.

We arranged card parties, dances, excursions and once yearly a grand gala ball., attended by lawyers, judges and public prosecutors from other cities, Prominent local Jews were also invited.

Inspite of my young age I was a board member of these associations and was for many years chairman of the Annual Ball.

Shortly before World War II one of my best Polish friends, a young and liberal judge, gave me to understand, that because of changed circumstances one should not arrange any events - he was alluding of ~~course~~ to the growing trend of anti-semitism in Poland.

The same judge advised one of my Jewish colleagues who was an excellent assistant judge in civil cases at the District Court that if he intends to become a life time judge, he should convert to catholic faith. He refused to do so and became a ^{an attorney} lawyer instead.

To become a lawyer as a Jew in 1937 was very hard - the lawyers' list was closed: from 100 applicants - 90 Jews and 10 ~~gentiles~~ gentiles- only 16 passed the ^{rigorous} ~~stringent~~ bar examinations. From this number all ten gentiles passed and ^{only} six Jews:- 5 men and one woman, myself.

When after two years of practice at the courts I finally passed my State examination, as a judge and public prosecutor, I went to the president of the Warsaw Appellate Court and asked him if in case I will become ~~xxxxxx~~ assistant judge will he at some later date appoint me as a full judge. I told him that I know that I have two handicaps: I am a woman and I am Jewish.

He was very much surprised with what I said, and after a while answered that he is not in favor of women judges.

I told him that Mrs. Grabowska was just appointed as judge

Juvenile Court in Sosnowiec and Mrs. Grabarzowa in Lwow.

"That's right", he said, "but the are wives of judges!"

I had the courage to tell him that he meant that to become a judge I have to marry a judge first. I assured him that I will marry a judge but ^{I myself} will become an attorney. ~~myself~~

I remember when in summer 1938 a group of Jews escaped from Czechoslovakia - they crossed the river on the Polish ~~border~~ border illegally. They were brought to Czestochowa and put in jail. in the prison on Zawodzie. We defended them without fee and appealed to the judge to give them rather long prison sentences than to extradite them to Czechoslovakia. It was heartbreking how the women described the crossing of the river, carrying children in their arms, some drowned and some were killed by the Czech frontier guards.

Our pleas were in vain - an extradition order was issued and all these poor Jews were executed by the Czechoslovaks on the border immediately after their ^{return} ~~return~~.

A few weeks before the outbreak of World War II I had a discussion with a very close friend, a judge at the Appellate Court-Criminal Division, who was a Polish aristocrat. He told me that in his opinion ~~that~~ in case of war Jews should not be permitted to fight at the front.

I can not describe how bitter and shocked I was - my youngest brother was already in the Polish army on the German boarder and my other two brothers were expecting to be called up any minute!

From my older colleagues I learnt that when they were students at the University in 1919 - 1920, during the ^{war} ~~fight~~ with the bolcheviks, they volunteered to the Polish Army, but instead of going to the front they were interned ⁱⁿ ~~at~~ a camp ^{at} Jablonna. There was even a song written about it.

A few days before the war, some of my older ~~colleagues~~ colleagues, friends of my father, advised him that I should immediately leave town, because in case of war the city would be occupied in ^{about} ~~matter~~ of a few hours, and that Jewish lawyers would be the first victims.

On September 1 1939 I left for Warsaw, where I went through the bombardment, then after the surrender of Warsaw I returned. I went ~~through~~ through the large and the small ghetto, ^{and} ~~skraj~~ and the so called 'akcje'-deportations ~~to~~ to death camps.

^{in the school} When I was a slave laborer at the amunition factory Hasag Pelcery, ^{used} I sent a messenger, a gentile worker to ask my Polish colleagues for a pair of ~~my~~ mens' shoes, because I had to wear wooden sandals which made my feet bleed. They refused told him that they are afraid to help me.

I would like to stress that untold thousand of Jews perished because of Polish denounciators and blackmailers both in the ghettos and in the so-called 'aryan' districts.

After my liberation by the American Army from Dachau-Kaufering 5

where we were living in potato cellars, full of lice and filth, one of the American officers, looking for quarters for his soldiers entered one of these so called "barracks". ~~after a while he came out very angry and ashenfaced, holding a pistol in each hand, threatening to kill the first German he will see - he could not understand how could human beings live under such conditions.~~

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In the beginning the sympathy of ~~the rank and file~~ ^{on the side of} of the American Army was with the liberated concentration camp inmates; but after a few months the attitude of the higher ranks, officers changed considerably ; many young German women who knew English became their secretaries and girl friends--and ~~and~~ this is how the insidious poison of ^{anti} ~~anti~~ semitism spread ^{slowly but} ~~slowly but~~ deadly among the unwitting Americans.

Germans who in the beginning were very polite, ~~outgoing~~, outgoing, and full of excuses that they did not know anything what was going on - became fresh and cocky again.

On Christmas 1949 I arrived in New York.

When I heard for the first time a Yiddish broadcast I was amazed. It was so new for me - I asked myself - would it be possible in Poland? I thought that at last I won't have to face anti-semitism any more. How naive and optimistic I was then!

It is really heartwarming to see how our survivors in the ~~States~~ States and in Israel built themselves up materially and spiritually - they brought up a brilliant and capable young generation - which should be the future leaders of the Jewish community.

One must admit that as far as material values are concerned, these parents try to give them the best of everything - they are sending them to the best schools, ~~where~~ where most of them are excellent students and winners of scholarships. On ~~the other hand~~, ^{many} ~~they~~ also attend Hebrew schools in the afternoons. But this is not sufficient.

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This is why I began tonight's remarks with a description of some of my pre-war experiences. When I was young, I thought that I knew all the answers, that my parents were wrong and that I was always right.

After years of terrible experience , little by little it came back to me what I was taught by my parents at home and I became an entirely changed person.

The duty of our survivors is to take a better care of the moral

and spiritual upbringing of their children.

Even the best Hebrew schools won't help in this respect, if the children are not taught by their parents about Jewish tradition, about love and respect for their parents, relatives, teachers.

~~Parents~~ ^{Parents} should devote more time for ~~their~~ ^{their} children, and less for lunches and card parties; *there should be closer rapport between parent and children*

Children are too occupied with themselves to devote much time for their parents, sisters and brothers. They hang for hours on the phone talking to their friends and the parents are not opposed to it. The whole family meets mostly at meal time, then everybody retires to his room.

It is ^{quite} embarrassing for a visitor when he comes to see the parents and the children, to find that the children immediately close the door from the living room to watch television.

However there are many parents who bring up their children in the same way like their own parents. *ditto*

I am convinced that after years these children will also remember like I did their parents' teachings.

Like I mentioned before, I did not expect to face anti-semitism in the United States.

The anti-semitic excesses started in Los ANGELES ABOUT TEN YEARS ago., when Steve Broidy was president of the Jewish Community Council.

It all started with smearing of the walls of synagogues, schools and other public Jewish institutions. At that time I was president of the 1939 Club and called an emergency board meeting in this matter and sent to Broidy a letter of protest. *HC*

As a delegate I attended the ~~general~~ ^{annual} general meeting of the Jewish Federation Council, and Steve Broidy in his opening remarks mentioned ~~the~~ with excitement that he got a letter of protest from one of the organizations.

He said that one should not make any issue out of that, because a proper department of the Federation Council will discreetly deal with this matter.

This aggravated me very much, I stood up and asked for the floor. I told him what I told you previously tonight about the beginning of anti-semitism in Poland. I said, it could happen here too. I warned that one should not ~~not~~ sweep such matters under the rug - we should publicly protest in this country where five million Jews live. This was on January 31, and in April the same year, Rockwell made his debut in New York.

is mentioned
The favorite excuse for the Polish anti-semitism before the war ~~was~~ was the economic competition.

Pre-war Germany was a paradise for the Jewish intelligentsia - they had the most outstanding doctors, scientists, lawyers, professors of universities, philosophers, composers, writers, poets, artists, etc.

Even in their boldest dreams they would not believe that in their 'Vaterland', when Hitler took over such a disaster could happen.

European Jews were not sufficiently prepared to counter the tide of anti-semitism - and ~~the~~ in the final outcome six million perished.

The European Jewry of that period could not grasp the ~~gravity~~ ^{gravity} ~~seriousness~~ ^{seriousness} of their situation; if they would, they could always rely on American Jewry for assistance.

Today the situation looks different: most of European countries and United Nations are against Israel, - ramparts ^{for} of Jews of the whole world.

If we won't fight the anti-semitism in America, there is no other place to turn to for assistance.

In Germany there are now Neo-nazis, they are also in South America and in the United States.

From our experience we know that their methods and tactics are always the same.

Thousands of Nazis from Hitler's time live under changed names and are busy training a new generation of fanatics.

This is why we should cooperate with all Jewish organizations of post war survivors and American Jewish organizations in the fight against anti-semitism.

We should not be afraid to speak up, to protest, to write to our senators and congressmen, our ^P President and to the United Nations that harm is being done to Israel.

We also have another most important task to perform, namely to talk to our children about the dangers of anti-semitism and about Hitler's holocaust. Let them be prepared how to defend themselves should the need arise.

~~with gentiles at~~ One should also bring to the attention of the young generation that inspite of their present good and seemingly cordial relations ~~at~~ ^{with gentiles at} schools and universities, the time may come that they could be as bitterly dissappointed as I was., as sooner or later their anti-semitic attitude ~~will~~ ^{will} come out in the open. ma

For the benefit of those who still are ^c complacent about the present situation in Los Angeles I am showing ~~taxman~~ ^{received yesterday} a letter with a caricature of a Jew in the best German "Sturmer" fashion.

I commend the chairman of this evening, Mr. Irving Peters as initiator of the annual holocaust weeks in Los Angeles schools.

Thank you for your ^{kind} attention.

Esther Przeworski Pratt.