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## PALESTINE AND THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION IN POLAND

BY PROFESSOR SMOLEŃSKI

TOWARDS the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Poland, that is those territories which today make up the Polish Republic, formed, after Italy and Great Britain, the main source of the emigration movement in Europe. According to statistics by Mr. S. Fogelson, at the last International Congress, held in Paris in 1937, which dealt with the question of populations, it was computed that, in the period between 1871 and 1914, that is up to the outbreak of the Great War, the regular emigration from that area reached the figure of 3·5 million. In spite, however, of this decrease in the population, and thanks to a high natural increase due to a high birth-rate, the population of Poland increased in that period of time by some 12 to 13 million. Out of the 3·5 million emigrants who left their country permanently, the majority, 1·9 million, went to the United States of America, 850,000 to Germany, 400,000 to other European countries, and 350,000 to 400,000 to countries outside Europe other than the United States—chiefly to Canada, Brazil, and the Argentine. In the last few years preceding the Great War, the regular emigration from Poland exceeded the figure of 140,000 persons yearly, thus corresponding to almost one-third of the yearly natural increase of population. Poland was one of the areas where emigration was not only numerically high, but where the urge to emigrate was exceptionally strong. Besides, it should not be forgotten, in this connection, that apart from regular emigration there also occurred seasonal migration at harvest time, for example, to Germany in particular, and this amounted to about half a million persons annually. This powerful emigratory current was the consequence of the over-population of the agricultural countryside, which had made itself felt on Polish territory as early as the end of the nineteenth century.

The World War, fought during its whole duration on Polish soil, left its indelible mark more strongly there and brought in its wake a decrease in population of some 4 million—about two-thirds of which total were those who left the country voluntarily or those who were forcibly evacuated (forced labour, etc.). It needed nine years to make good these losses, so that it was not till 1927 that Poland regained her pre-war population figures.

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After the war, all these movements in Poland took on another form. In the first years there was a noticeable decrease in emigration and, on the other hand, a powerful current of immigration which was the result of repatriation, that is the return to the country of those who had left as a result of events connected with the war. During the years 1919 to 1922 approximately 1,000,000 were repatriated. Emigration began again in 1920 with a figure of 116,000 emigrants, attaining 127,000 in the following two years. In 1924 this figure fell once more to 74,000 owing to the restrictions introduced by the United States of America. On that account new outlets for emigration had to be sought. In the years 1926 to 1930 some 363,000 persons emigrated to Germany, 285,000 to France, 120,000 to South America, and 104,000 to Canada. The total of emigrants began to increase again, reaching 170,000 in 1926 and approaching a quarter of a million in 1929. But before long Canada, Germany, and France closed their frontiers to immigration. In 1931 the number of emigrants decreased to approximately 80,000, and as at the same time the figure for re-emigration was about 90,000 the total balance was on the adverse side.

This phenomenon has not recurred, it is true, but the number of emigrants from that year onwards exceeds by only a very small margin the number of immigrants. So, for example, in 1935, we note a state of almost complete equilibrium: 53,800 emigrants as against 53,400 immigrants. In 1936, the surplus of emigration (54,600) amounts only to 10,900. It is worth noticing that in 1935 more than half the emigrants were Jews going to Palestine. Today even that flow of immigration has been firmly stemmed.

The post-war decline of emigration from Poland is the consequence of the emigration prohibitions and restrictions introduced by several countries. This decrease runs counter to the existing and ever-increasing tendency and need for emigration which is a natural outcome of Poland's demographic conditions and of her economic structure.

The Polish Republic has today over 34 million inhabitants. In the matter of population, she occupies the sixth place among the nations of Europe and the eleventh on the globe. With a density of population of an average of 88 persons per square kilometre, she exceeds the figures for Denmark, Austria, and France. Indeed a greater density of population in Europe is only to be found in the countries which are highly industrialized—and in Italy. But Poland is a country for the most part agricultural: 73 per cent. of her population live in the country; 61 per cent. earn their living exclusively from agriculture. For each inhabitant of Poland therefore who gains his livelihood from agriculture, there is 1.7 hectares of arable land. (In Germany the proportion is

more than 3 hectares per person; in France about 4 hectares; in England about 7·6 hectares.) Half the agricultural population, representing more than 20 million, live from the produce of holdings having an area of less than 5 hectares, while only 6 million work on holdings exceeding that area (including the large estates or latifundia). Thus there are left several million peasants who possess no land. These form the village "proletariat." This mass of people is unable to find work in the villages and seeks it in the towns—often in vain, for the latter are but little industrialized as yet. Consequently Poland presents an area definitely over-populated, and this over-population becomes accentuated from year to year owing to the natural increase. The rate of this increase, which is now 12·1 per thousand, is one of the highest amongst civilized peoples. There are, it is true, countries in Europe where the total surplus of births is still greater, for example Greece and Yugoslavia (not counting Russia, for which more recent statistical data are not available). But in those countries the density of population is less, so that the immediate effect of the high birth-rate is smaller. Speaking numerically, the natural increase of population in Poland amounts to 400,000 to 450,000 a year. As the area of Poland covers 388,000 square kilometres, it follows that to every square kilometre there is a yearly increase of more than one person, which means that as there is no emigration the average density of population increases every year in Poland by one unit per square kilometre as a result of the natural increase of population.

There are only five countries in the world where the yearly natural increase of population exceeds one person per square kilometre. These countries are Japan (without Manchukuo), China (without Tibet and Mongolia), Holland (without her colonies), Italy (without her colonies), and Poland.

With the exception of Holland, whose affluent colonies enable her to sustain a strongly concentrated population in the mother country, all the above countries are notoriously over-populated. Poland is in the most disadvantageous position, as she does not possess any colonies or dependent territories which, by their influence on her economic life, or by the possibility of their absorbing a part of her population, might lessen the ever-growing demographic pressure within the country. The over-population is here due not to the density of the population itself, as related to the economic structure, but to the increase of this density at a rate too rapid for economic evolution.

That the real increase of the population in the course of the last ten years has proved to be the largest in the whole of Europe is due to the difficulties of emigration. In that period the population of Poland increased by 4·6 million, while in Italy the increase

was 3,870,000, and in Germany, which has a population twice the size of that of Poland, only 3·5 million. To sum up—since the recovery of her independence Poland's population has increased by 7 million.

In order to grasp fully the significance of that figure in relation to the internal conditions of Poland, it should be borne in mind that over-population had already made itself apparent in that country at the end of the nineteenth century. That period, however, was one of economic liberalism, a period of freer exchange of capital, goods, and people. The disastrous results of over-population were lessened then by the powerful current of emigration which provided an outlet for the surplus population, regulated the level of wages in the country, and ensured the return of the capital saved by those who had emigrated. This amounted to a considerable sum of money. According to an approximate estimate every year the seasonal emigrants brought back with them to the country from 150 to 200 million francs in gold, and the emigrants from overseas sent home to their families about 250 million francs in gold. In all, therefore, the emigrants before the war ensured to Poland a yearly income of some 400 to 500 million gold francs. It seems superfluous to emphasize the importance of such an influx of capital into a poor and over-populated country. Again, the World War, which wrought such havoc in Poland (the losses being roughly estimated at 6,000 million gold zlotys, that is about one-fifth of the entire wealth of the country), did not put an end to over-population, because the losses in population were compensated in the course of several years by the natural growth of the population. At the same time, as emigration was decreasing it ceased to act as a safety valve for the ever-increasing population and also that of a source of capital. Moreover, owing to the regulations which demanded that emigrants to various countries should provide themselves with—in some cases—quite considerable sums of money, emigration nowadays has come to represent a deficit in the Polish budget. Yet in spite of this Poland is faced with the necessity for finding new facilities for the expansion of her population. The situation is as follows: over 400,000 persons who represent the surplus of births annually, unable to leave the country, increase every year the number of the inhabitants and the density of the population. As this increase is more rapid than the creation—by means of savings—of capital necessary for the provision of work to all, there arise these phenomena of a harmful nature which usually accompany over-population and which are characteristic of it: a progressive pauperization of the people and a gradual lowering of their standard of life. Under these conditions the tendency to some outlet for the expansion of the population is comprehensible.

Poland can only at the moment aim at its accomplishment by means of an emigration to foreign territories; and any obstacles which she may encounter on this path must needs be overcome by international action, with a view to giving such Polish emigration access to these foreign territories which are suitable for white colonization and which are also under-populated. Poland's interest in this direction has, as is well known, been brought by the Polish Government to the attention of the League of Nations.

The problem of emigration is not only important to Poland because of the ever-growing surplus of the population of the country and the general demographic pressure resulting from it; it is its special significance in connection with the Jewish problem which is so vital today. Poland has at present about 3·3 million Jews; she has—after the United States of America—the largest settlement of Jews in the world and largest percentage (9·8 per cent.) after Palestine. The Jewish population in Poland is characterized by an abnormal professional and social structure. It comprises an exceptionally large proportion of persons having no specialized professions, inasmuch as it is found that in Poland 40 per cent. of the whole Jewish population are representatives of commerce and middlemen, while among other race groups in the country hardly 2 per cent. pursue these occupations. Consequently, commerce in the Polish towns and boroughs is in Jewish hands and to a certain extent the arts and crafts are monopolized by the Jews. The tendency to seek work in these professions, to which the population from the agriculturally over-populated areas is turning in ever-increasing numbers, threatens the position of the small Jewish shops and workshops, which are for the most part not efficiently run, and is gradually undermining the existence of the wide masses of the Jewish population. The co-operative movement, which is developing in a satisfactory manner, has very much the same effect. The position of the Jewish population is becoming more and more difficult in proportion as the country develops economically. Under these conditions the solution of the Jewish problem in Poland is to be found in the development of the emigration movement. This movement, indeed, is desirable from the point of view of Poland's surplus population, of which a third lacks, in Poland, a healthy economic basis of existence. Emigration is in the interest both of the State and the Jews themselves. The tendency among them to emigrate is accordingly very strong—proof of which may be found, for example, in the high number of Jews among the quota emigrants which is out of all proportion to the number of Jews in Poland and to their natural rate of increase. Any voices which are from time to time raised by members of certain classes of Jewish society in Poland against emigration are politically biased and are

counterbalanced by the considered opinion of other Jewish circles—in Poland as well as abroad—who admit the necessity for emigration. But even this aspect of emigration activity requires to be dealt with on international lines. It is worth while also to note that when, during recent years, Jewish emigration was directed chiefly towards Palestine, the Polish Government initiated its own air service between Constanza (Rumania) and Jaffa. The development of events in Palestine put a stop to this movement, while the throwing open of new territories (such as Madagascar) for Jewish emigration from Poland has only reached the discussion stage.

It is clear from the above arguments that the solution of the problem of over-population in Poland by means of emigration would be efficacious under present conditions only if Poland had some outlet for her surplus population. Emigration is, naturally, not the only means by which the effects of this over-population may be combated. The solution might also be found in an increase of the productive area and of agricultural productivity in Poland itself and, finally, by a change in the whole economic structure of the country, that is by its industrialization. Owing to agrarian reform, nearly 2.5 million hectares of land have already been "parcelled" out and about 140,000 new holdings and 460,000 supplementary grants for dwarf-holdings have been made. But even with the most radical execution of such a reform—even to the suppression of all larger estates—the reserve of soil would hardly suffice for the supplementing of the dwarf holdings and there would not be enough for allocation to the village "proletariat," which now numbers several million persons. As far as the increase of the productive area is concerned, there are in the eastern provinces of Poland (for example, the marshes of Polesia) areas which are not yet tilled and which might be reclaimed for cultivation. Work in this direction has been started, but it requires large capital. But even these areas, should they be made arable, will allow at most the settlement of from 250,000 to 300,000 persons, while the yearly natural increase in the population—as we have mentioned above—amounts to 400,000. Apart from emigration, the only means which might lessen the effects of over-population by providing work for a population which multiplies so quickly would be the industrialization of the country. But the main condition of industrialization is an access to raw materials. In so far as the basic raw materials for industry are concerned, Poland has sufficient coal, but too little iron, while she lacks copper and aluminium, not to mention tropical or sub-tropical vegetable raw materials such as cotton or rubber. The purchase of these raw materials for the use of her industry forms almost half the total of Polish imports, and causes a yearly ex-

penditure (subject to the fluctuation of prices) of from five hundred to one thousand million zlotys in gold. Poland endeavours to acquire foreign currency by increasing her export of goods, since the influx of foreign capital, formerly sent home by the emigrants, has practically ceased, together with emigration. But this export, even with the aid of premiums (which are very burdensome to the internal market) on such articles as coal, sugar, etc., meets with great difficulties owing to the generally applied system of compensatory agreements, quotas, and import restrictions and the ever-growing autarchic tendencies. Just as on account of existing international difficulties, the Polish problem might be solved, not by the acquisition of colonial territories, but by proper facilities for large-scale colonial settlement and a free access to raw materials on a footing of complete equality with other nations. The lack of such raw materials, which is the effect of the restrictions which govern the international exchange of goods, is detrimental to the Polish industries, and the rectification of this injustice is essential if the industrialization of the country is to be carried through without seriously endangering the balance of the Polish budget.

Hence both methods of overcoming the effects of over-population and of lessening the demographic pressure in Poland demand facilities for emigration and the free access to raw materials.

The difficulties enumerated in this statement show how complicated is the problem which has to be solved.

So long as there are empty spaces rich in natural resources and suitable for white colonization, some exit must be found for over-population. Such a settlement of the problem would be in conformity with the interests of all other countries which are over-populated and suffering from the same lack of raw materials as Poland.

As far as one can envisage the concrete possibilities of solving the raw material and emigration problems in Poland, outlets could actually be found in South America and in Africa.

1. In the South American States the level of production in the event of an influx of population and capital could be raised to a noticeably higher degree; because, owing to the natural resources of this continent and to the utilization of the uncultivated soil, colonization there requires proportionately less capital than in the European countries.

South America in general could very well prove an emigration territory *par excellence* for an agricultural emigration from Poland. As a matter of fact and even before the war this emigration admirably contributed towards the transformation of the Brazilian and Argentine wilderness into cultivated lands.

At present, as a result of the world agricultural crisis, the

settlement of emigrants from Poland is hindered by lack of capital. This question might receive an advantageous solution if the so-called international capital could come into collaboration with the immigrant and emigrant states for the purpose of developing the land lying idle, as well as the man-power, which is not now rationally utilized.

2. In Africa there undeniably exist the possibilities for partly satisfying the raw material and emigration needs of Poland. The granting to Poland of larger concessions for exploiting certain mineral or vegetable raw materials in certain African colonies, which until now have been little exploited, and in this way facilitating the access of the Polish settlers into West and East African territories, which like Madagascar are suitable for white colonization, would not only give Poland concrete benefits, but at the same time would contribute—in the ordinary course of events—towards the strengthening of the white element and towards increasing the production and consumption capacities of the respective colonies. Their capitals especially would be benefited.

Among the intricate details of the Polish emigration problems, the complicated question of Jewish emigration occupies a special place. The impetus of the rural element from the over-populated countryside into the towns, the emerging into existence of a Polish middle class and, as a consequence of this, competitive struggle with the Jewish element, 83 per cent. of which is concentrated in commerce, handicraft, and industry, has resulted in a specially heavy emigration pressure among the Jewish population. Already before the war the Polish Jews were conspicuous in the particular activity of their emigration, and from 1900 to 1914 nearly 200 per cent. of the natural Jewish increase of population was emigrating yearly. Nowadays the rate of emigration of the Polish Jews is estimated by the Jewish experts as 100,000 to 120,000 per year. (This figure was quoted in 1936 at the Jewish World Congress at Geneva.)

In the face of the closing of the United States after the war to immigration in general, and in face of the restrictions applied specially to Jews in a certain number of other cases, the Jews were deprived of their traditional immigration outlets, and were thus compelled to go out in search of new openings. At this stage came a national renaissance, and its first idealistic result, in the ordinary course of events, was a direction of thought to Palestine. Mr. Balfour's declaration followed, and it became clear that in reliance on this the Jews were expected to rebuild their own national home. In view of the turn which the Palestine question has taken recently, for reasons in a large degree outside Jewish control, it is very doubtful whether the Jewish national home will

ever become suitable for all the Jews whom the economic conditions in their adopted countries have compelled to look out for new possibilities of existence.

Undoubtedly the partition of Palestine will compel Jews, as well as the states interested in the solution of the Jewish emigration problem, to find additional territories for their surplus population. Today such possibilities do not exist in the North American continent, and the possibilities in South America are also somewhat limited. Therefore the need is felt for finding new outlets for Jewish emigration in certain colonies and in Australia, which, if only for political reasons, will have, sooner or later, to solve the problem of reinforcing its present settler population with some hardy influx of the white race.

The capacity of the Jews for colonization, as it has been shown in Palestine, and the fact that they have proved their ability to transform themselves from merchants into settlers and farmers, make Jews especially fit for courageous and large-scale pioneering activities in young countries not yet completely developed. In this way Jews are suitable for playing a conspicuous rôle as a vanguard of the white population in the countries which are already today marked out as territories for inflow and exploitation by various races.







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