

# "Here is Your Jew!"

JOHN L. SPIVAK

WARSAW, POLAND.

**T**HE Jews still remaining in Germany, out of the original 560,000 who had been rooted in the soil and the cities, are being rapidly driven to the ghetto. Disfranchised, torn from the normal processes of life to which they had become accustomed, ever greater numbers are fleeing the country—to Palestine, Switzerland, France, Austria, Italy—to any land that will give them shelter.

The Jews who still remain in Germany either because they do not have the money with which to flee or because they still hope that some not-too-distant future will restore sanity to the unhappy land, have the look of hunted animals when they walk the streets of the muddy roads of the country, the look of men expecting someone to spit on them.

So much has been written of the Jew in Germany and what the Nazis, mad with power and the need of blaming someone for the hunger of a people and the disintegration of an economic system, have done to him.

The incredible acts against this people have been chronicled, but I don't think anyone has recorded the story of the Jewish farmer thirty kilometers from the thriving little city of Bamberg in central Germany. There have been millions of words written about the Jews in Germany, but I think this story is worth recording.

I cannot give his name or exactly where he can be found, for he and his family still live in Germany and I visited their home. If you have read all the millions of words written of Nazi terror and persecution you still would not understand the fear of a people lest the Nazis learn that they talked; you must talk with them in Germany and see their eyes when they plead with you not to say with whom you talked, really to understand.

He is one of the numerous Jews who settled on the land. He was a Jew who knew nothing of the history or traditions, language or customs of his people, a Jew who had been so absorbed by the German soil he and his ancestors had tilled that he knew only that he was a Jew as people know a legend handed down from generation to generation.

For eighteen years, after the war had ended and he had recovered from the wounds received in battle for his Fatherland, he had tilled the soil, never thinking that the woman he had married was a Christian or that the four children she had borne him were half Jew and half Christian. His wife was an intelligent, healthy girl of soundasant stock, simple in her wants, hard-

working, frugal—the sort of mate to help build the home and rear the family, and in the years that followed their marriage they had worked the land, the same land his father had worked before him and his father's father. He lived peacefully and contentedly, a friend to his neighbors and befriended by his neighbors.

He was a poor farmer, like most farmers in Germany, for out of the 5,000,000 farms in the land, 3,000,000 consist of less than two hectares (about five acres) and he was one of that great class who grew produce which he sold to regular customers in the surrounding villages. There was not enough soil to pasture cattle to sell cows or milk and add to his meager income like farmers with a little more land.

In the disorganized and unhappy years that followed the attempt of the victorious Allies to crush the German people, he heard of the growing anti-semitism, but dismissed it from his mind. There had always been anti-semites from the time the Jews first dispersed to the corners of the globe and the continued development of anti-semitism just before Hitler got in power still left him undisturbed. He was a German, a war veteran; this was Germany, the most civilized country in the world. All this was merely the talk of men playing politics and like most political talks, was of no consequence to him.

Then the persecutions began. Neighbors with whom they had eaten, with whose children their children played turned against them; those who had bought from them were now fearful of patronizing a Jew lest they incur the displeasure of the Nazis who by now controlled everything and were becoming vicious in the attacks on Jews. When he brought his produce to the village market they refused to buy except at absurdly low prices. Then the schools were closed to the children. A rising tide isolated them from the community in which they had lived all their lives.

**I** WAS passing a store in Bamberg when I first saw this Jew's wife lugging a milk can. I did not know then that she had married a Jew. She was a husky, solidly-built woman in her late thirties with cheeks as red as a healthy baby's and the strong hands of one used to toil. She was carrying the milk can to an old and battered car parked outside the store and since I happened to be passing at the moment I opened the door for her. She smiled a swift, "Danke, viel mal."

"Pretty big load for a woman," I commented cheerfully.

"I am strong," she smiled. "Women who work on farms have to be strong."

I could not tell whether her friendliness was just that of a neighborly country or whether she was actually glad to talk to some one; it was not until after she had accepted my invitation to have coffee in a nearby cafe that I realized that she was just simply hungry to talk to some one—any one.

"You are a foreigner," she said when we were seated with the cups before us.

"Yes," I said and added, "I am a journalist interested in conditions in Germany. I do not know many farmers so I am doubly glad that you accepted my invitation."

"What do you want to know?" she laughed. "How to raise greens?"

"I want to know how things are with you farmers, what you earn, how you manage, whether conditions are any better for you now than they were a few years ago."

"Some farmers are better off and some are worse," she said. "The little farmer has nothing now."

"And before?"

"Before we used to raise vegetables and sell them. We had regular customers. But now there is a decree that everybody must sell only to the public market—at wholesale prices instead of retail. The only ones who make any money out of that are the big farmers because they are the only ones with any quantity to sell. The little farmer eats up what he's got and when he sells what little there is left he doesn't get much."

"You mean that this new decree works out for the benefit of the big landowner?"

"Yes, and there is another law for his benefit, too. He cannot sell his land. There are many laws and they are all for the big landowners. There is nothing for the small farmer except work and maybe, after a bad harvest, to lose his land."

"Why is it good for the big farmer if he cannot sell his land? I should imagine that it would be bad because if he has to borrow money, the banks won't lend it to him, for if you can't sell the land how will the banks get their money back?"

She nodded. "That is right; that is why the big landowners are unhappy. But—when you have much land you can always manage to borrow money. No, no, this law is meant to build still bigger estates. It is not hard to see what happens. When the small farmer gets nothing for his greens and has to pay big taxes or has a bad harvest, he will lose his farm. Either the bank takes it for loans or he sells it to the big landowner; and if it goes to the bank it is sold to the big landowner anyway for the banks are not farmers. The big landowners

are growing bigger and the poor farmer is losing his land and just works for the big landowner."

It was not until after this conversation that I checked on her comments. Her shrewd peasant mind had seen very clearly the tendency of the Nazi regime to develop vast feudal estates and the gradual conversion of the small independent farmer to the state of a dependent peasant.

"You are a small farmer, I gather?"

"Very small," she replied. "We have less than two hectares."

I had some farm statistics in my pocket and I pulled them out.

"There are 200,000 farmers in Germany with between 20 and 100 hectares," I said. "There must be some like those around here. Are they affected as badly as you?"

"Are there that many?" she asked with a note of surprise.

"These are the figures. I think they are reliable."

"I didn't know. But it does not matter. There are farms that size around me, but they are badly off, too, because most of them raised cattle and hogs."

"Why should they be badly off? Prices for meats are rising. I should think they'd be making money."

She shook her head and her eyes twinkled. "They would be if they didn't kill all their cattle and hogs."

The puzzled look on my face must have been obvious for she continued: "The government passed a law prohibiting the importation of fodder. Most farmers have not enough pasture for many milk cows and the land is too valuable to be used only for pasture. It was cheaper to import fodder and when the government stopped that, the farmers killed their cattle and hogs. It was better to kill them and sell the meat than see them die of starvation, *nicht*? So now there is not enough meat and not enough milk cows for milk and butter and everybody is unhappy!"

"Then," I remarked, "it seems that the farmers are not very satisfied?"

She shook her head vigorously. "And they are scolding also because the government is making the farmers take the unemployed."

"I don't understand."

"There are many people without work, *nicht*? If they have no work the government or the city has to give them something to eat, *nicht*? So the government makes the farmers take some of these workers whether they are needed on the farm or not and the farmer has to pay these workers and so they are very unhappy."

"I see. Did you have to employ an unemployed man even on your small farm?"

For a moment her face clouded and then she said, "No; we have not been asked."

"Got influence with the government, eh?"

Her eyes clouded again. I wondered what caused it and I asked her.

"Oh, nothing!" she said quickly. "Probably some thought about the farm. You journalists see too much!" she concluded laughing.

"Please don't think I'm just curious, but I'm trying to understand German customs as well. Is it customary around here for the husband to send his wife out to lug large cans of milk instead of going for them himself?"

She did not answer for a moment; then she shook her head slightly and said:

"My husband is ill, so I went for the milk."

"Oh! Is your farm on the outskirts of the city?"

Again that strange look flashed in her eyes. She shook her head slowly.

"No. It is thirty kilometers from here."

"You can get a better price for your produce in the city instead of the village?"

"I came for the milk," she said in a peculiar tone.

"All the milk cows slaughtered for that many kilometers around here! The situation must be worse than I thought!"

"There are quite a few farms with milk cows left," she said a little grimly.

"I don't understand," I said, frankly puzzled. "Why, then, do you drive sixty kilometers to get milk when you can get it near your farm?"

She shook her head with a faint smile. "You are an American journalist, eh? You can tell it to the Americans. I drive sixty kilometers to get milk because I married a Jew."

She said it with a note of defiance in her voice and a sharp glance at me as though to see my reaction to her announcement.

"You mean that because you married a Jew the farmers in your neighborhood will not sell you milk—milk needed for your children?"

"Yes," she said in a rather tense voice. "They would sell milk to us, but they are afraid of the Party people, so I have to go far from home to get it—some place where I am not known."

I had heard that Aryan farmers would not sell milk to Jews but I had been told that this was chiefly true in East Prussia where the Aryans were trying to drive out Jewish farmers and storekeepers, offering them about 15 percent of what their business or land was worth. I told her what I had heard.

"This is Bamberg," she said. "It is not far from Nuremberg."

Nuremberg and Munich, centers of the anti-Jewish manifestations, where hate against this race was so great that children ran after known Jews and spat at them while their elders stood about laughing and egging them on, was apparently as bad if not worse than East Prussia. In these areas Jews have been forced into an isolation that is a ghetto without the name. Aryans, even those whose innate decency and humaneness

have revolted against the persistence, dare not have anything to do with outcast race lest they themselves come under the ban of the Nazi leaders and members of the Nazi Party.

In Munich, I knew, Nazis tried to keep physicians from attending sick Jews but with only one or two exceptions the doctors refused to be bullied, threatening that if such pressure persisted then they would refuse to attend sick Aryans. The doctors were left alone after that, but druggists will not fill prescriptions for Jews.

I asked her if these things were true in her neighborhood and she nodded slowly.

"What do Jews do when they can't get medicines?"

"They go to a distant city where they are not known. If they have no car, a neighbor goes for them. The Jews have been driven much closer together," she added. "Many did not know it before, but now they know they are Jews."

"Do they trouble you for having married a Jew?"

"Not now," she said in a low voice. "They used to threaten me and the children. The children with whom my children played used to run after me and shout that I was a whore, that I slept with a Jew—" She shrugged her shoulders and stopped in the middle of the sentence.

"Are there many Jews in your neighborhood?"

"Not so many. Many have run away—the younger ones. The older ones have no place to go. They are too old to change or they have no money to go away."

People who leave Germany are allowed to take ten marks with them—just about enough for a night's lodging and food but Jews who have sold their business or land can take one-fourth of their money out—after they have paid the government and "flight tax." A Jew with a 100,000 mark business who wants to leave Germany can, if he is lucky, rescue around 3,000 marks from it. The Jew who gets 20 percent for his business gets a very good price. Out of these 20,000 marks the government promptly takes one-fourth as a flight tax. In order to take the remaining 15,000 marks out of the country he has to exchange it into "immigrant marks"—money he can get beyond the German borders. And he gets only one-fourth of the value in foreign money for his marks—or about 3,500 marks for a 100,000 mark business.

The loss is enormous. For the Jew in Germany it means giving up everything that he had built in his lifetime and many are giving up everything for a feeling of security again, if not for themselves, for their children. Those who cannot raise enough to transport themselves and their families simply walk about with that hunted air so evident on their faces, waiting with a fatalistic resignation for more decrees, more laws which will drive them from poverty into the ghetto.



They thought they had escaped centuries ago.

"But the German people are not savages," I said, thinking of the many kindly and gentle souls I had met. "Why should they have become so—"

"They have not. We know that some people are still friendly. They do not like this hate, but they are helpless. Party people have them terrified. I know that some neighbors are sorry for us. But—maybe that is because my husband is ill, but I don't think so. It is not the German people; it is the Party people."

"Why don't you sell and leave; you and husband are young enough—"

She shook her head. "We could not get enough money for our two hectares to pay our fare any place and what will I do in a strange land where I know no one, cannot speak the language? How will we find work when there is no work in all lands? No, we must stay here. At least from the land we get something to eat."

"No," she added thoughtfully, "I am used to it now and my husband—he does not mind either. But it is hard on the children—to be punished so because their mother married a Jew—"

I noticed her looking at a clock on the wall and I said:

"I should like to talk with your husband. Would you mind if I went out with you?"

She looked at me strangely and then nodded her head. A peculiar smile played about her lips as though she was thinking of something funny.

"You want to come to our farm? You want to see what happened to a Jew who married an Aryan so you can tell about it in the papers in America? Yes, there are things to tell. I will take you, but you must not say—"

"I have learned enough in Germany not to say with whom I talked. You need not fear."

"I do not fear for myself or my husband," she said quickly. "It is the children—"

With the milk can safely tied so as not to shake too much, we drove along the winding roads southwest of Bamberg until we came to her small farm with two chickens stepping about gingerly in the mud. A boy of about eight with blond, short-cropped hair was drawing water from the well in the center of the yard. He looked curiously at the stranger with his mother as we drove up. A little girl of not more than three, with a running nose that formed bubbles on her nostrils when she breathed, ran out of the house and paused on the top of the two worn wooden steps leading to the entrance door and smiled broadly and happily at her mother. I did not see the other children.

"My husband is probably in the kitchen," she said.

She opened the door for me. A strong, healthy-looking man of about forty sat on a stool in a corner of the room near a high white-tiled stove. He looked up as we came in and smiled, a friendly little smile that seemed to hide something very funny—and something that was deep in his thoughts.

His eyes were bright, good natured, laughing.

He rose and shook hands with me, bowing low.

"You are a Jew?" he asked, his bright eyes filled with eager interrogation and before I could answer he poked his chest with a forefinger: "I am a Jew!" he announced with a gay little laugh that sent a chill down my spine. "I am a Jew!" he repeated, "and my wife is a Jew and my children are Jews!"

His Aryan wife stood aside while he kept repeating over and over again: "I am a Jew! And my wife is a Jew. My children are Jews!"

A sense of horror and pity swept over me as I realized what had happened to this man.

"Yes," his wife nodded, with that strange little smile that had played on her lips in the cafe, in answer to my unformed question. "It is more than half a year now that he took the littlest one in his arms and walked into the village. I heard later what happened. He had walked the streets, carrying the littlest one in his arms and crying loudly, 'I am a Jew! I am a war veteran! I fought for the Fatherland! See! Here is my youngest and she cannot get milk because I am a Jew!'"

"The police came and took him off the streets. They knew who he was and they brought him and the littlest one home to me saying 'Here is your Jew!'"

*Another article by John L. Spivak will appear next week.*

# Sinclair Lewis Visits a Strike

JACK WILGUS

RUTLAND, VT.

SINCLAIR LEWIS sent a messenger to get me. I found him sitting with a local newspaperman, in the best suite our best hotel offers. Lewis welcomed me cordially and then shot forward in his chair and demanded to know "where this strike differs from just any strike." I told him all I know about the strike of the five marble towns. This but supplemented his own knowledge gained from a tour of the picket lines and a visit to the strike-breakers' barracks where he carved his name on several clubs "for the boys." "And they're not bad boys either," Lewis said to me. "I didn't find a single killer among them. You would find the killer down South." No killings yet, Mr. Lewis, but those clubs have knocked down a goodly number of old women and small boys and sent scores to the hospital.

"Well, then, tell me about your strike," I said to Lewis after a long and interesting dis-

sertation on everything. So I told him in brief, how seven hundred men struck, how they still are striking, still picketing, along with their wives and children and mothers and fathers . . . in weather in which not so many strikes have lasted months, when the thermometer stays below zero and the wind howls down the valley from off the hills. I told him that the wealthiest and most reactionary family in Vermont is trying to throw these people out of their five towns, and by the greatest show of deputies ever concentrated in this state, is trying to bring other men in to steal their jobs. I told Mr. Lewis that the Vermonters have proven themselves fierce strikers. I related how every time that the thugs fall upon small bodies of strikers, men, women or children, the whole community rises and marches through the town and once, more than a thousand marched all the way across the valley to Proctor, the holy of holies, where all the company police are housed and

drove before them every sheriff, scab and deputy. I told him they have stopped the railway from running trains into these towns, that when trucks try to convey marble even with immense armed guards, something always happens, oil spills on the marble and it is spoiled, or the truck tips over, or many things may happen to marble being moved by night.

Mr. Lewis didn't see anything so very extraordinary in what I had related. He seemed mildly interested in the true tales of farmers and union men from all parts of the state who considered this their strike too and who brought in potatoes, hogs, eggs and milk. But then I told him the striking townspeople were so solid and strong, that fascist bands were being formed to prey on the workers by night. And this Mr. Lewis did not believe. Fascist bands in Vermont? It could happen? What purpose would fascists have in Rutland? The avowed purpose of first driving out the Reds, then preventing