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Issued by the **AMERICAN REPRESENTATION** of the **GENERAL JEWISH WORKERS' UNION** of **POLAND**

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Szmul Zygielbojm - The Death of A Fighter

The American Representation of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland received the following cable from London on May 12th:

ZYGIELBOJM DIED SUDDENLY MAY TWELFTH ONE THIRTY AFTERNOON PROBABLY SUICIDE

Since then, news of the tragedy has been confirmed. Szmul Zygielbojm, member of the Central Committee of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, and of the Polish National Council in London, committed suicide. The following is the text of another cable, received on May 22nd:

ZYGIELBOJM SUICIDE CONFIRMED STOP LEFT LETTERS FOR PRESIDENT, SIKORSKI, KOT AND US STOP FUNERAL FRIDAY ELEVEN AM CREMATORIUM STOP CONTENT OF LETTERS WILL BE PUBLISHED WHEN RETURNED BY BRITISH LEGAL AUTHORITIES

The circumstances which led him to this desperate act, as well as the date and the place where it occurred, mark it as an act of real martyrdom.

Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and throughout Europe, has, from the outset, been marked with untold suffering, bloodshed of people, at the hands of Nazi hangmen, as well as with the blood of many who chose to take their own lives instead of suffering under the Nazi heel.

However, Szmul Zygielbojm's death belongs to quite a different category. He did not take his life in order to avoid personal suffering and torture under Hitler. Zygielbojm lived and worked in Poland during the hell of Hitler's occupation. While Poland was being overrun by the motorized hordes of Hitler's Third Reich, Zygielbojm organized the Jewish population of Warsaw to participate in the heroic resistance of the Polish Capital. When the enemy finally occupied Warsaw, and the rest of Poland, Zygielbojm immediately commenced organizing the nucleus of an organization, comprising members of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, from which, before

long, the Jewish Underground Movement of Poland arose. Despite tremendous odds, this underground movement is **still alive and fighting**. It was only after he was hounded by the Gestapo and when his existence imperiled the entire Underground Movement, that Zygielbojm shouldered the dangerous and difficult mission of slipping out of Poland, to serve the cause of his country and his people — the Jews of Poland — abroad.

In the three years that Zygielbojm left Poland, the world experienced many tragic developments. The future often seemed clouded. Zygielbojm, however, never lost faith. He, who witnessed the September tragedy of Poland, the May tragedy of Belgium and Holland, the June tragedy of France; he, who saw the Nazi beast at work, nevertheless firmly believed in the future. Recently, his hopes rose even higher, since today, the victory over Hitlerism seems assured. We can therefore take it for granted, that had the fate of the Jews of Poland, whom he represented in the Polish National Council, been identical with that of all the other subjugated nations, Zygielbojm would never have committed suicide, particularly in London, in May, 1943, from whence one could observe more clearly than anywhere else, the dawn of liberation over shackled Europe. But the fate of the Jews, under the Nazi heel, cannot be compared to that of any other nation among the big anti-Nazi coalition. Szmul Zygielbojm's death was his personal expression of the unendurable state of affairs, his protest against the tragedy of the Jewish masses in occupied Poland. For a whole year, day in and day out, from the time that he became a member of the Polish National Council in London until his tragic death, Zygielbojm received appeal upon appeal, cry upon cry, from the tortured Jews in Poland. The last appeal that he received was the most tragic because of its brevity: "Save us! Do not satisfy yourselves with mere announcements of punishment after the war is over. Some steps must be taken

immediately. Something extraordinary must be done to rescue us immediately, otherwise we will all perish."

Szumul Zygielbojm did his utmost to draw the attention of the entire world to these desperate cries from the Jewish Underground, these heartrending appeals from a people that is being annihilated in cold blood. With unusual energy he called upon the British and American Labor Movements, he appealed to the public opinion of the great democracies, he requested the leading personalities of the freedom loving peoples throughout the world to do their utmost before it was too late. His efforts brought some results. Important as these results were, they were far from sufficient in view of the crime committed against the Jews in Poland by the Nazis. No palpable attempts have been made to rescue the tortured Jews of Poland.

It was this situation that caused Szumul Zygielbojm to commit suicide.

Szumul Zygielbojm believed that his own death would draw the attention of the world to the tragedy of his brethren in Poland. The tragic voice of his voluntary death now calls for help for the remnants of the Jews in Poland.

POLISH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE MOURNS DEATH OF SZUMUL ZYGIELBOJM

Wladyslaw Sikorski, Prime Minister of Poland and commander-in-chief of its armed forces, sent the following cable to the American Representation of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland on May 17th, 1943:

IN BEHALF OF THE POLISH GOVERNMENT THE POLISH ARMED FORCES AND MYSELF I WISH TO EXPRESS OUR DEEPEST SORROW BECAUSE OF THE TRAGIC DEATH OF SZUMUL ZYGIELBOJM OUTSTANDING MEMBER OF THE POLISH NATIONAL COUNCIL WORTHY LEADER OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT WHO CHOSE TO LEAVE US FOREVER STOP THE GENERAL JEWISH WORKERS' UNION OF POLAND ("BUND") WHICH IN A FRATERNAL ALLIANCE WITH THE POLISH SOCIALIST PARTY HAS ALWAYS WORKED FOR THE INDEPENDENCE AND GLORY OF POLAND HAS

ALREADY SUFFERED A HEAVY LOSS WITH THE EXECUTION OF THE TWO FAMOUS LEADERS ALTER AND ERLICH STOP YOUR NEW LOSS IS THEREFORE MORE PAINFUL

WLADYSLAW SIKORSKI

MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR SZUMUL ZYGIELBOJM IN LONDON

Memorial services for Szumul Zygielbojm, who committed suicide on May 11th in order to call the attention of the world to the tragedy of the Jews in Nazi Poland, took place in London on May 21st, 1943.

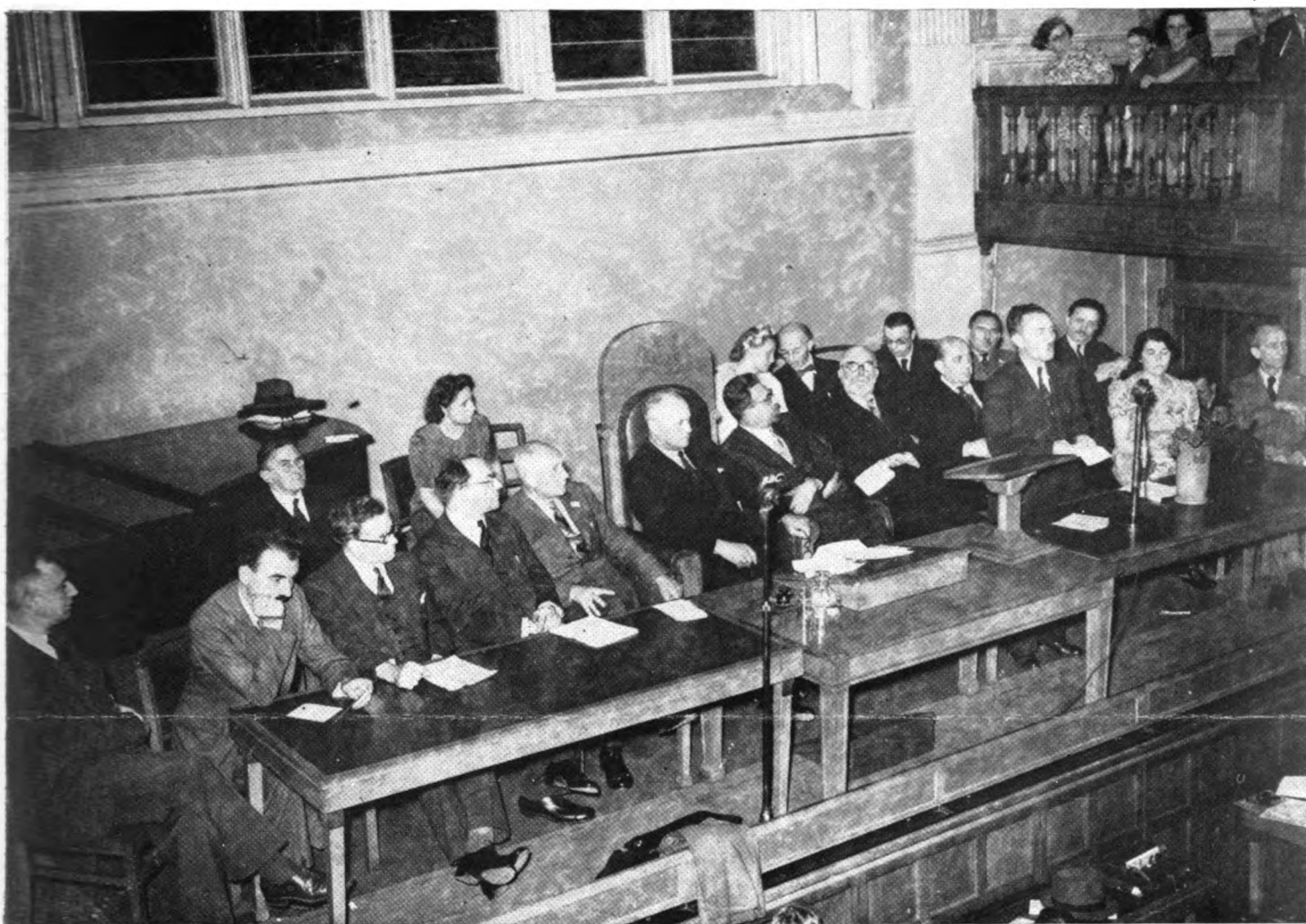
Professor Stanislaw Kot, Polish Minister of Information, who was one of the speakers, revealed, that:

"Nearly 1,000 Germans were killed or wounded in the battle in the ghetto of Warsaw during the past two weeks, when the Nazis undertook the final liquidation of the ghetto. Warehouses and factories were burnt down by Jewish fighters, who were assisted by Polish underground armed squads."

Professor Kot, speaking in behalf of the Polish Government, added:

"Zygielbojm did not live to know how bravely his brethren fought. He could not bear to be away from the heroic fight of the Jewish people against the German oppressors and not to share their struggle and martyrdom. He could not survive the news of that last battle. If his last call for help will be heard throughout the world, his sacrifice will not have been in vain."

Minister Zaleski spoke at the services in behalf of the Polish President; Prof. Stanislaw Grabski, in behalf of the Polish National Council; William Gillis, in behalf of the British Labor Party; Camille Huymans, in behalf of the International Socialist Movement; Adam Ciolkosz, in behalf of the P. P. S.; Lucjan Blit, in behalf of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland; Leon Oler, in behalf of the Youth Organization "Zukunft". Among the speakers there were other representatives of Labor and Jewish organizations.



SZMUL ZYGIELBOJM — PHOTOGRAPH

This picture was taken at the International Meeting Against the Nazi Slaughters in Poland and in Czechoslovakia, organized by the British Labor Party in Caxton Hall in London, on September 3rd, 1942. The persons on the picture comprise the presidium of the meeting.

In the front row, from left to right: Arne Ording (Norwegian Socialist, Foreign Vice-Minister), Andre Philippe (delegate from the Underground Socialist Movement of France), Herbert Morrison (British Minister of the Interior), Adam Ciolkosz, Jan Kwapinski (Member of Polish Government-in-Exile), Alfred J. Dobbs (National Chairman of the Labor Party and chairman of the meeting), Jaromir Necas (Czech Minister of Labor and vice-chairman of the meeting), Louis de Brouckere (former president of the Socialist International), Jan Masaryk (Czech Foreign Minister), Szmul Zygielbojm (speaker), Mary Sutherland (Women's Officer, L.P.), Camille Huysmans.

In the back row, from left to right: William Gillis (secretary of the International Department of the L.P.), two secretaries, Dr. G. Winter (Czech Socialist), Felix Gouin (another delegate from France), Jan Stanczyk (Minister of Labor and Social Welfare in Polish Government), B. Locker.

ARMED RESISTANCE OF THE JEWS IN POLAND

In connection with the armed resistance, which the remnants of the Jewish population of Poland are now waging against the Nazi murderers, the American Representation of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland recently received the following two reports from Poland:

April 30, 1943

EXTERMINATION OF VERY REMNANTS CONTINUES
STOP RECENTLY GHETTO STANISLAWOW
ANNIHILATED STOP BEING AFRAID OF
RESISTENCE WARSAW GHETTO GERMANS LIQUIDATE
VERY REMNANTS BY TRANSFERRING LARGE WORK-
SHOPS TO EXECUTION CAMPS TRAWNIKI AND OTHERS
STOP NUMBER REMNANTS THROUGHOUT POLAND
DOESNT REACH TEN PERCENT PREWAR FIGURE STOP
APPEALS FOR RESCUE BY MEANS OF EXCHANGE STOP
OUR FAMILY WILL CONTINUE TO THE LAST STOP
VERY STRONG RESISTANCE FIGHT CONTINUES FOR
TEN DAYS MANY BARRICADED HOUSES BURNT DOWN
BY GERMANS TO FORCE CAPITULATION

May 13, 1943

WHOLE CITY EXCITED POPULATION OF WARSAW
FOLLOWS WITH EXPRESSIVE FRIENDLINESS THE
FIGHT IN THE GHETTO STOP WE CALL FOR
IMMEDIATE RETALIATION STOP DEMAND
INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS TO INVESTIGATE
ALSO GHETTOS AND EXECUTION CAMPS OSWIECIM
TREMBLINKA BELZEC SOBIBOR MAIDANEK AND
OTHERS IN POLAND

The following is the text of a telegram, which was sent to the President of the United States in connection with the tragedy of Polish Jewry:

HEARTBROKEN WITH THE TRAGIC NEWS ABOUT THE
ATTEMPT AT THE ULTIMATE ANNIHILATION OF THE
REMAINING THIRTY FIVE THOUSAND JEWS IN THE
GHETTO OF WARSAW THEIR ARMED RESISTANCE
WHICH WAS REVEALED BY A VOICE FROM A
CLANDESTINE RADIO SET SOMEWHERE IN POLAND

AND THE PLANNED SLAUGHTER OF THE REST OF THE
JEWS THROUGHOUT THAT COUNTRY WE IMPLORE YOU
IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT IS SACRED TO DO YOUR
UTMOST TO SPEED UP THE RESCUE OF THE DOOMED
VICTIMS OF THE NAZI BEASTS STOP SPECIFIED
DEMANDS OF THE POLISH JEWS ARE INCLUDED IN
OUR STATEMENT TO THE BERMUDA CONFERENCE
WHICH WE SENT TODAY TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT

AMERICAN REPRESENTATION OF THE
GENERAL JEWISH WORKERS' UNION OF POLAND

A BILL CONDEMNING ANTI-SEMITISM

Szmul Zygielbojm, representative of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland and member of the Polish National Council, made a motion for the following project of a law, forbidding anti-Semitism in Poland, shortly before his death:

"The Polish National Council is of the opinion, that the Polish Government-in-Exile should immediately resolve to publish the following decree:

1) Anyone who insults or scoffs at the Jewish community (Jews) publicly is subject to the penalty subscribed in section #152 of the Polish Criminal Code.

2) Anyone who spreads hatred against Jews, because of their racial or national adhesion, or their religion, either orally or in print, is subject to the same penalty as is mentioned in #1.

3) Anyone who propagates maxims which tend towards economic, political, social or cultural restrictions against Polish citizens, because of their race or creed, is subject to the same penalty as is mentioned in #1."

Argumentation:

Political reasons:

"Anti-Semitic propaganda and activities are contrary to the basic principles of the Polish State, which considers itself the common home of all its citizens, regardless of race or creed. Anyone who advocates

anti-Semitism is, therefore, acting against the Polish State, complementing Poland's enemies with an additional argument for a purely ethnographical Poland. To describe the Jews of Poland as visitors in that country is false. It has been proven historically, that Jews settled in Poland many centuries ago and are, therefore, a part of her most ancient population. Anti-Semitism should be considered as one of the highly dangerous weapons of Germany's foreign policy. Her "fifth columnists" abroad make use of it constantly. Reactionary movements everywhere, whose activities are contrary to the interests of the population, have always used the weapon of anti-Semitic propaganda.

Anti-Semitism poisons and undermines the morale of the community by spreading hatred against a part of it, and by demoralizing those who succumb to it.

Anti-Semitism is detrimental to even the most moderate democracy, because it legalizes an "ex lex" state of affairs and restrictions against a part of the population, even though equality is the very essence of democracy.

Now, when the Jews of Poland are being persecuted and are faced with virtual annihilation, the proposed decree against anti-Semitism in Poland would serve as a new, distinct act on the part of the Polish Government, in opposition to the race theory and the bloody deeds of the Nazis."

Juridical reasons:

"The constitution of the Polish Republic describes the State as the common accomodation of all its citizens. One who scoffs at a part of the population, hits the totality. In accordance with this, the 152nd article of the Polish Criminal Code demands punishment for all who insult or scoff at not only the Polish Nation, but also the Polish State. Although the Jews of Poland are not mentioned specifically, the juridical description — the Polish State — includes also the Jewish population on the territory of the Polish State, which is protected by Article 152 of the Polish Criminal Code.

The suggested decree, if issued, would coincide with Article 173 of the Polish Criminal Code, which provides the protection of the State to all publicly acknowledged national and religious groups in Poland.

Such a decree would be but a realization of certain political promises, which were included in the political declaration of the Polish Government on February 24th, 1942, concerning the national minorities of Poland.

A number of nations, since Hitler came to power, have issued similar decrees in order to protect the Jews and other sections of their populations from offences committed against them because of race, religion or nationality. For example, the Government of Holland, on the suggestion of the Jews there, complemented Holland's Code, on the 19th of July, 1934, with two new paragraphs — 137c and 137d. Similarly, the State of New Jersey, in the United States, prohibited, on the 19th of February, 1934, activities which tend towards religious, national or racial hatred. That is but one of many states that acted in a similar fashion."

JEWISH ARTISANS OF PORTUGAL REFUSED TO WORK FOR GERMANY

Germany is doing her utmost to provide her armed forces with sufficient winter clothing. Since all her labor resources at home have been exhausted, she is now searching, greedily, among the few remaining neutral countries for labor. Several months ago, an agreement was reached between a representative of Germany and a group of Portugese businessmen, for the manufacture and delivery of a vast quantity of winter sweaters. The Jewish artisans in Portugal are the most skilled in this type of work and the delivery of the sweaters, therefore, depended entirely upon them. Not only did they sabotage the work for Nazi Germany, but refused to have anything to do with Germany's order.

Prime Minister Mikolajczyk, in behalf of the Polish Government, officially informed S. Zygielbojm,

the representative of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, of the refusal of the Jewish artisans in Portugal.

GERMAN WOMEN AID JEWS

The Nazi newspaper "Koenigsberger Zeitung", published in East Prussia, recently printed the following item about a characteristic trial in Koenigsberg's town court:

"Five German women from villages located in the Koenigsberg district, Johanna Klieger, Ernestine Schmiedel, Sophie Metzger, Frieda Krantz and Frieda Seifert were each condemned yesterday to six years' hard labor in jail for providing shelter for eight Jewish children, whose parents had been sent to concentration camps in Poland, and for pretending that the children in question were their own. In addition to this, these German peasant women had kept in constant contact with the Jewish parents of the children and even sent them food."

MEMORIAL MEETING IN LONDON FOR THE EXECUTED HENRYK ERLICH AND VICTOR ALTER

A memorial meeting, dedicated to the memory of Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, internationally prominent Socialists and leaders of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland, who were executed by the Soviet Government, took place on March 28th, 1943, in London.

Camille Huysmans, president of the Socialist International, former President of the Belgian Parliament and Mayor of Brussels, expressed his sorrow and indignation in the following statement:

Comrades,

*It is with a real sadness that we learnt through an official advice from Mr. Litvinoff in America that our friends **Erlich** and **Alter** had been executed.*

I should not say that I was astonished. Their sudden arrest in Kuibeshov was a sinister omen. We knew for a

long time that Moscow had a greater respect for the life of a prominent capitalist of the United States than for the life of a prominent social-democrat, who refused to accept dictatorship as a normal system of government.

If between Social-democrats as we are, and Communists, there is a difference of political conception and of method, there is also a difference of humanity. And, once, speaking to one of my friends at the moment when he was in disgrace, Litvinoff said:

"The great difference in handling matters, between Communists and Social-democrats, is, that a Social-democrat would not have the courage to execute a Communist, whereas a Communist would not hesitate a moment."

This analysis of both our characters is very true, for we have a great tradition of tolerance. We do admit that a Communist has the right to believe in dictatorship, and we are not ready to punish him because his opinion differs from ours.

We do not believe that we are the depositors of eternal truth. Even when we claim to be Marxists, we do not admit that Marx has never committed an error and we are sure that Marx has never uttered such a pretence.

But the Communists are quite of another opinion.

In their eyes, democrats are traitors of the working class, and for this reason, they are dangerous and have to be removed.

I am obliged to remember that the men who rule at this moment in Moscow have not always been of this opinion. And, when I remember their former attitude, at the moment when they were sitting with us at the same table, before 1914, they claimed to be real democrats. We were, in their own eyes, very poor democrats, not sufficiently strong-minded in adaptation of democratic principles.

Let me give two examples.

The question of Poland has been a problem, that has been discussed at nearly all international congresses, even during the period of the First International. The liberty

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of Poland was a slogan for all Socialists of all countries. The comrade, who later was most insistent on this matter when he was alive, was Lenin. He accepted on this question no compromise, neither with Germans, nor with Austrians, and above all, with Russians. The complete liberty of Poland was a refrain that came back in all his Socialist songs. I am not quite sure that Marshall Stalin would sing the same songs to-day, with the same conviction and with the same refrain.

My second example is the result of my personal experience at the International Congress of Stuttgart in 1907.

One of our parties was asked to put on the agenda the question of death penalty, and I am not sure that the initiative did not come from one of the Russian groups. The delegate, who had the most clear ideas on this much discussed subject, was Lenin, and in the Commission he was appointed as referent. He was charged to write the report. He wrote a strong and indignant report against political executions. He thought probably of his brother, who had been hanged by the Czar. Lenin's report and draft of resolution were accepted by the whole Congress, and I remember I congratulated him on this occasion. We were not always of the same opinion. He was of the opinion that I was too moderate. But he pardoned me my political sins, because I had helped him in 1905 and 1906, when de Brouckere and I were in charge of a Belgian factory, sending weapons to our fighting comrades in Russia.

I am not sure that Stalin and his friends would be very pleased to-day, if we published the Lenin resolution of 1907 on political executions.

The two examples I gave you are really symbolic. They indicate a complete change in the mind of Lenin's political party. I have the impression that, to-day, the Communists are more Russian than Socialists, and that the spirit of Czarist autocracy and Czarist ruling methods has survived in their minds. But, what is still more disturbing is the fact that they have not the courage of their act. They find it necessary to justify brutal crimes. **Not by reason of difference of opinions**, which would be the reality. **NO!** They invent slander and calumny.

Let us take the case of our friends Alter and Erlich!

Who in this room, will believe one moment that these men — democrats of high standing — men, who have been with personal courage in the first ranks of our fight for long years, would have committed basely, and let me say, stupidly, a disgusting act of vulgar treachery?

Would Erlich and Alter have been the agents of Hitler, who has been the sadistic persecutor of their own nation and of their political friends, the oppressor of a country of which they were devoted citizens?

Nobody will believe so — even in Russia.

Nobody! Our assassinated friends had nothing in common with the Nazis, even not an idea of dictatorship of any kind and we are sure, also, that they never made any agreement with Hitler.

I shall not take your time by insisting on this aspect of the event.

The minor reasons given are still more childish, among others, that Erlich and Alter were transformed from Polish into Russian citizens, in order to give proof that they were executed by the law of their own nation.

Stalin is a better Marshall, than a political leader. In the latter, he lacks imagination. His change of civic dress reminds one of the French comedies of the last century where you see on the stage the same gentleman who is a middle-aged barber in the first scene, an old general in the following one, and a young nurse in the third.

When in the beginning of the twenty years, Stalin ordered the attack of Georgia, his native country — in opposition to the opinion of Lenin — he already employed the same system. He accused the social-democracy of Georgia with identical inventions, even with false documents, instead of saying bluntly and simply, like Bethman-Holweg did when he ordered the invasion of Belgium in 1914:

— **Not kennt kein Gebot.**

What I find really comical in this tragedy, is, that we also, we were accused in the same manner. We were the

T H E G H E T T O S P E A K S

tools of American capitalism and British greediness: We were the traitors of the international proletariat!

But twenty and twenty-five years later, the same treachery was committed by Stalin himself and his devoted friends, and to-day we may state with a certain irony, that he does what we did, with the difference that if he had understood his position better in 1932, we probably would not have had a second war.

I do not argue that Russia alone is responsible for these events, but I'm sure that a more democratic minded Russia would probably have played a better part in the history of mankind since 1918 than what we have seen till now.

I want now, in the light of the last events, to say more.

The execution of Erlich and Alter is not an accident. It is not a political error, committed in a time of special disturbance and passion. This execution is part of a system.

A number of Social-democrats have been executed, systematically since the 17th of September, 1939. They all belonged either to the P.P.S. of Poland or to the Jewish "Bund", and they have all played a remarkable part in our labor movement for democracy against Fascism and Hitlerism.

Over two hundred members of the local "Bund" Committees and Jewish trade unionists of the towns of Eastern Poland were arrested by the Soviet authorities immediately after the Red Army occupied these towns. The fate of all those comrades is still unknown. The majority of them are probably no longer alive.

Such are the facts, and I ask you:

— Have we the right to state here our indignation and our protest?

I know, we are placed in a difficult position.

If we protest, we shall be accused in certain quarters of public opinion that we are trying to disrupt the allied front — that we do not consider with sufficient reticence the big part played by the Russian Army in our common fight for liberation.

*If we do **not** protest, we must consider ourselves cowards — and traitors to our friends' sacred memory.*

We accept for ourselves, this dreadful dilemma, and shall not hesitate one moment.

We are not cowards, and have no intention to play here a part of resignation which is not ours. We refuse to remain mute, when allies commit such errors and such crimes.

The Communists of Moscow may know also that our friends here are not ready in the future to bow their heads before violence, slander or execution.

The Labor Class of the Western countries will not abandon its principles, neither under pressure of Hitlerism, nor under pressure of men who claim to be better Socialists than we are.

*Political experience has shown, for twenty years, that the future of mankind will be and must be a development of democracy, and not of tyranny. Nations in the whole world expect security and all citizens of our modern world: **liberty.***

I have still another hope to express.

*I hope, for the honor of the **Second International** and the "**Bund**", that the documents concerning this political tragedy will soon be published, and I am sure that, after the war, the occasion will be offered to repeat to Stalin the old words which are now new ones and which every civilized man knows by tradition:*

— What hast Thou done? What hast Thou done? The voice of Thy brother's blood crieth unto me, from the ground.