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EDITORIAL

THE KISHINEFF MASSACRE.

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JUST now the civilized world stands appalled at the horrors enacted during the anti-Semitic riots at Kishineff. It seems incredible that, in these days of religious tolerance, such inhuman events could take place. The atrocities connected with that massacre are, accordingly, denounced as surpassing in cruelty and fanaticism the blackest of those of the mediaeval age, when ferocious religious persecution was, unlike the present, the rule to which there were very rare exceptions.

There can be no doubt that in these riots religious hatred played a large and potent part, but, in view of the facts gradually being brought to light, it looks as if the trouble were primarily political and economic in its origin.

In all the bloody details composing the massacre, one fact stands out conspicuously, and that is the favorable attitude of the Russian government toward the Christian participants. It is well known that shortly prior to the fatalities the Russian state officials warned the Jews in a peculiarly ominous manner—in a manner that invited rather than averted the disaster. It is also well known that imperial troops were not sent to the scene of the awful affair until after the rioters had accomplished their task of murder and destruction. Finally, it is also a fact that needs no announcement that Russia has belittled the entire episode and assumed a defensive attitude toward those implicated in it. This may have been done for international reasons, but it is, nevertheless, worthy of note.

Imperial persecution is not new to the Jews of Russia. They have now been the victims of it for a long time, especially recently. Their participation in the Russian revolutionary Socialist movement has been a source of great danger to the autocrat of all the Russias, and he has, consequently, been at no pains to curtail their rights and privileges and to drive them into exile under pressure of well-organized governmental

movements against them. The incipient capitalist class of Russia have also cause for complaint against them, as they are active participants in the growing trade-union movement of Russia, especially in the large industrial centers in the Polish provinces. So they, too, are desirous of Jewish destruction and extirpation.

No time seems so favorable for renewed state activity against the Jews as the present. A panic now exists in Russia. A variety of causes have been given for it. According to a letter received from St. Petersburg by a Brooklyn Socialist, one of the causes upon which the official class lays great emphasis is the increasing number of Jews in industry, just as in this country, bad conditions are often attributed to the increasing number of immigrants coming here. This statement, which was made to divert attention from the real cause, has helped to fan the previously smouldering anti-Semitic fire so carefully banked by the Russian authorities, with the result recorded at Kishineff.

In view of all this, the agitation of the Russian Socialist Democrats in favor of demonstrations protesting against the anti-Semitic outrages are not without significance; nor is the activity of the Russian military against these agitators, considering the mild punishment meted out to the perpetrators of the massacre by that same military.

These facts lead to conclusions that, when the wave of indignant excitement now raging has subsided, the Kishineff massacre will be found to have been primarily political and economic, and not religious. They will then be found to have their mainspring in the struggle for supremacy between a dominating aristocratic and capitalist class and an incipient revolutionary working class.

To-day the economic basis of history is an established basis. Who will say, then, that the Kishineff massacre is wholly without such a basis.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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