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Alexander Bruce (1884-1962) Boswell
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Alexander Bruce (1884-1962) Boswell : Poland and the Poles / by A. Bruce Boswell...with Twenty-One Illustrations and Three Maps before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Poland and the Poles / by A. Bruce Boswell...with Twenty-One Illustrations and Three Maps:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Scholarly Analysis of Pre-Independence Polish National Development, Polish-Jewish Relations, Judeo-Polonia, etc. By Jan Peczkis Boswell was a research fellow in Polish at the University of Liverpool. Owing to its scope, I can only touch on a few items. Even when subject to the Partitions, the Poles continued to affirm human liberty: "In fact, Poland, in 1794, was the first nation outside Western Europe to declare all its peasants free. This was not done in Prussia till 1823, in Austria till 1848, and in Russia till 1861." (p. 84). Tsarist Russian rulers assumed that Polish national consciousness was limited to the gentry and clergy, and so peasants could be appeased by giving them land, starting in 1864. (p. 96). This was, at most, a passing phase: "The Polish peasant was scarcely conscious of his nationality even as late as the Insurrection of 1863 in which he took merely a passive part. But he has resisted the blandishments of alien governments, and declared himself a Pole, and today the main support of Polish nationalism is among the peasants." (p. 117). Roman Dmowski was not pro-Russian. He merely had seen Germany a greater enemy of Poland than Russia. (p. 105, 291). The author devotes an entire chapter to the spectacularly successful Polish thwarting of heavy-handed Prussian rule, focusing on the pioneering work of Father Piotr Wawrzyniak. His goal was to enable Poles: "...to compete with the German element and to emancipate

itself from the strangling grip of German capital and the Jewish money-lender." (p. 172). The Poles got educated, learned various trades, formed Agricultural Circles, co-operative societies, Credit Associations, banks, etc. The turnaround from Polish poverty was dramatic: "His [Piotr Wawrzyniak's] work made possible the growth of a Polish middle class of merchants and artisans; and soon the towns were re-peopled by Poles who could compete with the Germans in every branch of trade and industry. One result of this movement was the elimination of the Jew as middleman, factor and usurer. Without pogrom or boycott the Jewish population was steadily reduced in numbers and influence, until the Jewish element was either assimilated by the Germans or Poles, or forced to emigrate." (p. 177). All of this was encouraged by the fact that, unlike the other backward regions of foreign-ruled Poland, Prussian-ruled Poland had a well-developed infrastructure. (p. 170). Neo-Stalinist Jan T. Gross and his admirers would have us think that Polish peasants' belief in the blood libel is what drove their antagonism towards Jews. Boswell, in contrast, argues that (even in the period up to 1919), this was only marginally true: "The more serious accusations of ritual murder and similar superstitions, so widespread among the peasants of the Ukraine, as seen in the recent Beiliss [Mendel Beilis] trial, only lurk in remote corners of Poland. The real quarrel between Pole and Jew has arisen from the Polish attempt to free the peasant from Jewish exploitation." (p. 190). The boycotts of Jews, in Russian-ruled Poland, had been partly formal, and partly an indirect outcome of the changing economic players. "But the deepest cause of Jewish hatred for the Poles lies in the recent growth of a Polish middle class, and the attempt to eliminate the Jewish usurer from the village." (p. 39). Boswell adds: "But it must be remembered that Jewish economic solidarity has constituted an informal boycott of Polish traders for hundreds of years, so that this measure is looked on by the Poles as a policy of self-defence." (p. 191). The circumstances behind the formal boycotting of Jews, started by Roman Dmowski as payback for the Jews' insubordination to Poles in the 1912 Duma (Russian Parliamentary) election, is described by Boswell: "This Jewish nationalism is called Sionism [Zionism], but has little in common with the Western Jewish scheme for the revival of a State in Palestine. In its extreme form, it is a plan to create a joint State, Judaea-Polonia [Judeopolonia], where Poles and Jews shall have equal rights. In the main, it is a movement for the use of Yiddish in the administration and the schools, on an equality with Polish... The rise of Jewish nationalism has thus led to a great political antagonism between the two races." (p. 190). [The Zionists (actually the Bundists or Yiddishists--a different branch of Jewish nationalism) had, in effect, wanted Poland's Jews to effectively function as a separate nation on Polish soil. The reader may compare this insubordination with that of going to one's employer and telling him that, from now on, you are also boss alongside of him.] All along, Jews had frequently been, wittingly and unwittingly, out of step with Polish national goals and essential Polishness in various ways, as described by Boswell: "As Russian and Prussian oppression increased and Polish resistance stiffened, the Jews, where they did not actually support the prevailing power, yet by their mere passivity and inaction became a danger to the Polish element, which was forced to devote all its resources to self-defence." (p. 38). "Moreover, a generation of Jews, in Lithuania and the Ukraine, was growing up in Russian schools and was acquiring a scorn for everything Polish... they began to migrate into the Kingdom of Poland, and not only to display great arrogance and antagonism to everything Polish, but to infect the older Jewish residents with these antipathies." (pp. 38-39). "Litwaki [Litvaks]... roused even the friendly Polish Jews to oppose all Polish national aims." (p. 188). [Obviously, the influence of these Litvaks went far beyond their actual numbers, even if numbers have been exaggerated.] "On the whole, the life of the Jews in Warsaw is quite tolerable. They do not suffer the political disabilities that existed in the rest of Russia, and have been favoured by the [tsarist Russian] Government at the expense of the Poles." (p. 191). "The morality of the Orthodox Jews is very strict, but from the large class on the border line between Jewish and Polish society come a large proportion of the DEMI-MONDE of Warsaw, and the Jewish type is common in the cabarets, ubiquitous in the restaurants and in the streets." (p. 189). [Perhaps these low-character Jews are the ones later referred to by Maciej Giertych, Cardinal August Hlond, etc.] Social democracy was an anti-national movement. (p. 105). "The Jews... became also the chief supporters of Social Democracy in Poland, and formed a revolutionary association of their own called the 'Bund'." (p. 39). "...Jews are born financiers, naturally tend to be cosmopolitan in their attitude and to favour German rather than Polish interests." (p. 152). "The commerce and transport agencies are also largely in the hands of the wealthier Jews, who act to a great extent as representatives of German firms... [the business traveler] will find that preferential treatment is given to German firms." (p. 188). To see my review of a more recent (1941) book on Poland by Boswell, please click on, and read my detailed review. of The survival of Polish civilisation.