

It Is Still Happening

The Waffle Palace at 58 Ellis St. advertised: "Delicious three decked toasted sandwiches, five varieties, 25 and 30 cents." The St. Germain restaurant at 60 Ellis St. advertised: "Unsurpassed French dinners, \$1.25." These ads appeared almost exactly fifty years ago, July 18, 1924, in the local Jewish newspaper which preceded the *San Francisco Jewish Bulletin*.

Other things besides prices have changed in the last half century, according to the Jewish news in that same newspaper. But history is of one piece. The waves that were being made then, can be felt now, in one way or another.

The Democratic Party convention had just rejected a resolution condemning the Ku Klux Klan. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise made a bitter statement: "The Democratic Party might have done a very great and grave thing. It has failed, and many voters throughout the land may explicitly feel lukewarm about a party which could tepidly face this burning issue in American life."

This was the hey-day of the second KKK, which represented a "backlash" of many working class Americans against the emergence of the Italian and East European immigrants, who were beginning to move into the economic and political mainstream of the country. The previous mass "backlash" had occurred in the late 19th century, in the form of the American Protective Association (APA), partly a reaction to the emergence of the earlier Irish immigrants. During both periods, the country had experienced some economic difficulties.

The APA is long gone, and the KKK is vestigial, but we are in a period when another backlash is at least possible, this one in reaction to the emergence of the racial minorities (especially if we run into deep economic problems). That is of some special concern to the Jewish community, as it was fifty years ago. But the further point is that the backlash of the 1920s did not completely fail, as another item in the edition of July 18, 1924 noted:

According to Harry K. Wolff, president of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society in San Francisco, at 149 Eddy St: "The Johnson Immigration bill, restricting immigration into the United States will greatly curtail the coming of Jewish people to our land to escape the trials of Europe. . . already the result of the curtailment is being felt."

That restrictive immigration act has since been repealed. San Franciscans will remember the many JCRC activities towards that end in the 1950s. But if the restrictive law had not existed, how many more Jews might have otherwise been able to "escape the trials" of Nazi occupation and Russian oppression in Eastern Europe? The nature of those "trials" was already being foreshadowed:

"The Dutch Press," we read in that half-century-old newspaper, "is protesting strongly against the fact that a number of German professors and businessmen are conducting extensive anti-semitic propaganda. . ." And in another item in the same edition, we read a "Report from Palestine:"

"Friction with Arabs has been reported to be decreasing. But internal difficulties have not been lacking. The Mizrachi, or religious Zionists, and the extremely Orthodox Jews outside the Zionist ranks, have not been able to enforce their strict views upon the British administration. . . Compulsory Sabbath observance could not be granted, in face of probable Arab opposition, unless the entire country was populated by Jews, like Tel Aviv, the Jewish suburb of Jerusalem."

A quarter of a century in the future was the creation of Israel. . . partly a product of the tragic holocaust foreshadowed by the Dutch press. . . which many more Jews could have escaped if not for the restrictive Johnson immigration act. . . which was impelled by the backlash which the KKK symbolized. . .

The readers of the San Francisco Jewish newspaper of July 18, 1924 could not penetrate the fateful future stamped into those news items. Nor can we penetrate the future meaning of the news events reported in today's issue of the *Jewish Bulletin*. But of this much we can be certain: whatever we can do about these events — with whatever dim vision we have — will have an effect on those who will be around in July, 2024.



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