

Limerick people for Limerick people

18 OCTOBER 1997

Stuart Clein speaks out on city pogrom

By EUGENE PHELAN

STUART Clein, Limerick's last Jewish resident said this week that his extensive research had shown that just two people were slightly injured in the Limerick pogrom of 1904.

He added that while history had shown that there was a pogrom in Limerick, it was not a pogrom as in the meaning of the word: no-one was killed or seriously injured.

He was speaking after the showing on Channel 4 of a programme in the "Witness" series where journalist Simon Sebag-Montefiore explored the culture of Sinn Féin and looked at its wartime involvement with Nazi Germany.

Mr Montefiore's family, like Mr Clein's, left Lithuania in a boat for the US in 1869 only to be left off in Cobh. Both families settled in Limerick.

In this week's television programme, Mr Clein made it clear how welcoming the people of Limerick had been to him when he arrived from Dublin in 1957.

"I have had a lot of success in Limerick since and I think some of it has got to do with the fact that people have gone out of their way to help



At home in Limerick this Thursday: businessman Stuart Clein (LL)

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The Jewish traders, Mr Clein explained, were bringing in cargos of goods and selling them much cheaper than the "Christian shops" who were losing business.

"They brought their case to Fr Creagh and of course this was an opportunity for him to jump on the bandwagon and say things against the Jewish people. That is what I honestly believe started the whole thing."

The programme then switched to the Redemptorist Church with Mr Montefiore reading some of the famous sermon.

"The Jews came to Limerick apparently the most miserable tribe imaginable but they enriched themselves, their rags were switched for silk; they have wormed their way into very form of business. They are in the horse trade, mineral water trade and milk trade, the drapery trade and in fact in business of every description," Fr Creagh said in his sermon.

"You are allowing yourselves to become the slaves of Jew users," he claimed.

Mr Montefiore said that

tered down the doors of those Jews living in Limerick. They were in fear of their lives.

The situation deteriorated in the following days as the Jewish traders could not leave their homes to make collections. Letters were sent out to prominent political figures to help the Jews in Limerick, but nothing happened.

The programme went on to focus on Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Fein, and his objections to the Jews.

Later, Stuart Clein recalled his first trip to Limerick in 1957, when he was warned by his friends in Dublin not to go to there.

He decided to come out straight and tell people he was a Jew. "People looked at me and said: 'I am Tom English, I am a Catholic, big deal.'"

Mr Clein explained how the people just accepted him for what he was. He has been here since and has found no anti-Semitic feelings here.

The programme also claimed that the IRA provided the Nazis with the military intelligence to carry out bombing raids on Belfast.

State at the Department of Education, William O'Dea.

Limerick Corporation said that very few resi-

flats yet to be renovated will start before Christmas as the tenders for this work will be decided on in the coming weeks.

Stuart

● FROM P1

me just because I am Jewish," he told me.

He said that when he knew he was going on the programme he researched the incidents in Limerick and looked up the Oxford Dictionary to find the exact meaning of "pogrom." It was "massacre, killing, destruction."

Mr Clein, 66, declared: "There was no pogrom in Limerick. Yes, two people were hit over the head by a lunatic with a stick but were not seriously injured."

He said that in 1903 there was a pogrom in Kishenoff, Russia, where 45 people were killed, 450 seriously injured and 1,500 homeless. That, he added, was a pogrom.

Mr Clein said that his research found that Jews in Limerick were ostracised and boycotted after the infamous sermon from the pulpit of Mount St Alphonsus by Fr Creagh.

Jews in Limerick were selling produce door to door and giving credit. Local business people could not compete and complained to Fr Creagh.

Mr Clein said that Fr Creagh was educated in a seminary in Northern France, which at the time was very anti-semitic.

"He was taught to be anti-semitic and that was the problem in Limerick," he added.

He said that as a result of the boycott many Jews left Limerick. But it was wrong to mention a pogrom—no one was killed or seriously injured.

"There is, of course, no smoke without fire and there were problems and in 1957 when I was coming down to Limerick I

was very, very nervous. I did not know what to expect," he stated.

Mr Clein decided to tell people he was a Jew. If they ignored him and threw him out, so be it.

"The complete opposite happened. They reached out to me. I have never had any problems and have suffered no anti-semitic feelings here," he stressed.

Mr Clein said that he personally knew nothing of any link between Sinn Fein and the Nazis.

"I and (Cllr) Jack Bourke went to Newry in 1970 for the peace march after Bloody Sunday and I got a great welcome from everybody. I was introduced as Stewart Clein as Jewish from Limerick and got a tremendous welcome. Not one said 'Get out of here, you are a Jew.'"

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