

News

Jewish envoy says Limerick pogrom is 'over-portrayed'

Donal O'Regan

THE Limerick pogrom is seen as a dark chapter in Limerick's history, but the new Israeli ambassador to Ireland says it has been over-portrayed.

In 1904, a young Redemptorist priest, Fr John Creagh, delivered a fiery sermon castigating Jews for their rejection of Christ, taking over the local economy and selling shoddy goods at inflated prices to be paid for in instalments.

He urged Catholics not to deal with Jews and it has been reported that 80 Jews were driven from their homes.

The new Israeli ambassador, Boaz Modai, speaking at the Jewish cemetery in Castletroy said: "I think it is a bit over-portrayed, meaning that, usually if you look up the word pogrom it is used in relation to slaughter and being killed. This is what happened in many other places in Europe, but this is not what happened here. There was a kind of a boycott against Jewish merchandise for a while, but that's not a pogrom. That's something that is, unfortunately, a bad mark for the history of this city, but I don't think it is something anyone should pay more attention to than it deserves."

Mr Modai took up his position six weeks ago and said he wanted his first visit outside of Dublin to be Limerick.

"I did this deliberately. I read and heard about Limerick. It has to do with the Chamber of Commerce and University of Limerick



The Israeli ambassador, Boaz Modai, during a visit to the Jewish graveyard in Castletroy with Gabrielle Wallace, Dr James Ring, Colm de Barra, Stuart Clein and Ger Imbusch

— one of the professors is going on a delegation to Israel. I had this interest, so that's why I started with Limerick," said Mr Modai.

The Jewish cemetery, which was restored and is maintained by Limerick Civic Trust, was another reason for his trip.

Around this time last year, Mr Modai's predecessor, Zion Evrony, visited the cemetery and told his predecessor that he couldn't omit it from his visit.

The keen historian com-

plimented Limerick Civic Trust on the upkeep of the cemetery and said it was a great experience to see it.

Mr Modai said trade links between Ireland and Israel were worth almost 400m, with 80 per cent of that being exports from Ireland.

Mr Evrony had said in Limerick that his goal was "to bridge the gap between Israel's image and its reality, as well as to promote tourism and trade between our two countries".

Mr Modai said he could-

n't have summed it up better. "There is a lot in common between our two peoples and out two societies. I think we can contribute one to another much more than it seems at first, and I'll do my best to help with that."

Jewish man Stuart Clein, who has lived in Limerick for 54 years, told the ambassador that the term "Limerick pogrom" was completely inaccurate.

"If you look up pogrom up in the Oxford Dictio-

nary it says massacres and killings. I spent months researching it and there was not an injury other than a young lad threw a stone at a rabbi. That was it. There was nobody hurt.

"There was a boycott of the Jewish dealers. This is how Fr Creagh came into it. Todds and all these shops were doing no business because the Jewish peddlers were selling all the goods so much per week or per month. So no people would buy from Todds — why should they

when they wouldn't give them credit," said Mr Clein.

He said the Chamber of Commerce went on a deputation to the Redemptorists and met Fr Creagh.

"He had been brought up as a young priest in northern France, where they were very anti-semitic. He was brought up to hear that Jews were this and that, so he ranted and raved and said there should be a boycott," said Mr Clein, who, while originally from Cork, had an aunt living in Limerick and another two aunts attended Laurel Hill in 1912.

"I would say at the end of the century at the supposed pogrom there were 200 to 300 Jewish people living in Limerick. To my knowledge, only three families left Limerick because of the pogrom, that's all," he said.

Dr James Ring, manager of Limerick Civic Trust, said it was an honour to have Mr Modai at the cemetery.

"He was very supportive about the work we do. He spoke to everyone in attendance, and despite his tight schedule, chatted at length to everyone," said Dr Ring.

Mr Ring said the late Denis Leonard initiated the clean-up of the cemetery in 1989 when "you couldn't really see the tombstones because it was so overgrown".

Since being landscaped and restored, Limerick Civic Trust, and, in particular, Ger Imbusch, have continued to maintain the graveyard to its current high standard.

Limerick schools receive €1m

Leader Reporter

SCHOOLS across the county are to benefit from more than €1m in grants to buy high-tech equipment.

The Department of Education has announced that the funds will be shared between 144 schools, as part of a governmental strategy to make technol-

ogy an integral part of the learning process.

Primary schools throughout the county will each get a block grant of €1,700 and a payment of €35.70 per capita, which will enable schools to purchase equipment leading to high-tech classrooms.

Meanwhile, schools under the Delivering

Equality of Opportunity in Ireland (DEIS) banner will each get a higher basic grant of €2,550.

Educational institutions across Limerick benefitting from this scheme include Scoil Ide in Corbally, €29,510; Scoil Neasain in Mungret, €27,261, and Monaleen National School, with €21,870.



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